Our World, or, The Slaveholders Daughter

F. Colburn Adams

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Our World, or, The Slaveholders Daughter

F. Colburn Adams

This etext was created by Charles Aldarondo
(Aldarondo@yahoo.com).

"An honest tale speeds best being plainly told."

PREFACE.

IN presenting this work to the public, we are fully conscious of the grave charges of misrepresenting society, and misconstruing facts, which will be made by our friends of the South, and its very peculiar institution; but earnestly do we enjoin all such champions of "things as they are," to read and well digest what is here set before them, believing that they will find the TRUTH even "stranger than fiction." And, as an incentive to the noble exertions of those, either North or South, who would rid our country of its "darkest, foulest blot," we would say, that our attempt has been to give a true picture of Southern society in its various aspects, and that, in our judgment, the institution of Slavery is directly chargeable with the various moral, social and political evils detailed in OUR WORLD.

THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I. MARSTON'S PLANTATION.

ON the left bank of the Ashly River, in the State of South Carolina, and a few miles from its principal city, is a plantation once the property of Hugh Marston. It was near this spot, the brave Huguenots, fleeing religious and political persecution, founded their first American colony−invoked Heaven to guard their liberties−sought a refuge in a new world! And it was here the pious Huguenot forgot his appeals to high heaven−forgot what had driven him from his fatherland, and−unlike the pilgrim fathers who planted their standard on "New England's happy shore,"−became the first to oppress. It was here, against a fierce tyranny, the gallant Yamassee,

A tribe of faithful and heroic Indians. loyal to his professed friend, struggled and died for his liberty. It was here the last remnant of his tribe fought the fierce battle of right over might! It was here, in this domain, destined to be the great and powerful of nations−the asylum of an old world's shelter seeking poor, and the proud embodiment of a people's sovereignty,−liberty was first betrayed! It was here men deceived themselves, and freedom proclaimers became freedom destroyers. And, too, it was here Spanish cupidity, murderous in its search for gold, turned a deaf ear to humanity's cries, slaughtered the friendly Indian, and drenched the soil with his innocent blood. And it is here, at this moment, slavery−fierce monster, threatening the peace of a happy people−runs riot in all its savage vicissitudes, denying man his commonest birthright.

If history did but record the barbarous scenes yet enacted on the banks of this lovely stream, the contrast with its calm surface sweeping gently onward to mingle its waters with the great deep, would be strange indeed. How mellowed by the calm beauty of a summer evening, the one!−how stained with scenes of misery, torment, and death, the other!

Let us beg the reader to follow us back to the time when Marston is found in possession of the plantation, and view it as it is when his friends gather round him to enjoy his bounteous hospitality.

We have ascended the Ashly on a bright spring morning, and are at a jut covered with dark jungle, where the river, about twenty rods wide, sweeps slowly round ;−flowering brakes, waving their tops to and fro in the breeze, bedeck the river banks, and far in the distance, on the left, opens the broad area of the plantation. As we near it, a beautifully undulating slope presents itself, bounded on its upper edge by a long line of sombre−looking pines. Again we emerge beneath clustering foliage overhanging the river; and from out this−sovereign of a southern clime−the wild azalia and fair magnolia diffuse their fragrance to perfume the air. From the pine ridge the slope recedes till it reaches a line of jungle, or hedge, that separates it from the marshy bottom, extending to the river, against which it is protected by a dyke. Most of the slope is under a high state of cultivation, and on its upper edge is a newly cleared patch of ground, which negroes are preparing for the cotton−seed.

Smoking piles burn here and there, burned stumps and trees point their black peaks upward in the murky atmosphere, half−clad negroes in coarse osnaburgs are busy among the smoke and fire: the scene presents a smouldering volcano inhabited by semi−devils. Among the sombre denizens are women, their only clothing being osnaburg frocks, made loose at the neck and tied about the waist with a string: with hoes they work upon the "top surface," gather charred wood into piles, and waddle along as if time were a drug upon life.

Far away to the right the young corn shoots its green sprouts in a square plat, where a few negroes are quietly engaged at the first hoeing. Being tasked, they work with system, and expect, if they never receive, a share of the fruits. All love and respect Marston, for he is generous and kind to them; but system in business is at variance with his nature. His overseer, however, is just the reverse: he is a sharp fellow, has an unbending will, is proud of his office, and has long been reckoned among the very best in the county. Full well he knows what sort of negro makes the best driver; and where nature is ignorant of itself, the accomplishment is valuable. That he watches Marston's welfare, no one doubts; that he never forgets his own, is equally certain. From near mid−distance of the slope we see him approaching on a bay−coloured horse. The sun's rays are fiercely hot, and, though his features are browned and haggard, he holds a huge umbrella in one hand and the inseparable whip in the other. The former is his protector; the latter, his sceptre. John Ryan, for such is his name, is a tall, athletic man, whose very look excites terror. Some say he was born in Limerick, on the Emerald Isle, and only left it because his proud spirit

would not succumb to the unbending rod England held over his poor bleeding country.

Running along the centre of the slope is a line of cotton−fields, in which the young plants, sickly in spots, have reached a stage when they require much nursing. Among them are men, women, and children, crouched on the ground like so many sable spectres, picking and pulling at the roots to give them strength. John Ryan has been keeping a sharp eye on them. He will salute you with an air of independence, tell you how he hated oppression and loved freedom, and how, at the present day, he is a great democrat. Now, whether John left his country for his country's good, is a question; but certain it is he dearly delights to ply the lash,−to whip mankind merely for amusement's sake. In a word, John has a good Irish heart within him, and he always lays particular emphasis on the good, when he tells us of its qualities; but let us rather charge to the State that spare use he makes of its gentler parts.

John Ryan, his face indicating tyranny stereotyped, has just been placing drivers over each gang of workmen. How careful he was to select a trustworthy negro, whose vanity he has excited, and who views his position as dearly important. Our driver not unfrequently is the monster tyrant of his circle; but whether from inclination to serve the interests of his master, or a knowledge of the fierce system that holds him alike abject, we know not. At times he is more than obedient to his master's will.

Excuse, reader, this distant view of the plantation at early spring, and follow us back to the Ashly. Here we will still continue along the river−bank, pass borders of thick jungle, flowering vines, and rows of stately pines, their tops moaning in the wind,−and soon find we have reached Marston's landing. This is situated at the termination of an elevated plat extending from thence to the mansion, nearly a mile distant. Three negroes lay basking on the bank; they were sent to wait our coming. Tonio! Murel! Pompe!−they ejaculate, calling one another, as we surprise them. They are cheerful and polite, are dressed in striped shirts and trousers, receive us with great suavity of manner, present master's compliments, tell us with an air of welcome that master will be "right glad" to see us, and conclude by making sundry inquiries about our passage and our "Missuses." Pompe, the "most important nigger" of the three, expresses great solicitude lest we get our feet in the mud. Black as Afric's purest, and with a face of great good nature, Pompe, in curious jargon, apologises for the bad state of the landing, tells us he often reminds Mas'r how necessary it is to have it look genteel. Pompe, more than master, is deeply concerned lest the dignity of the plantation suffer.

Planks and slabs are lain from the water's edge to the high ground on the ridge, upon which we ascend to the crown, a piece of natural soil rising into a beautiful convex of about six rods wide, extending to the garden gate. We wend our way to the mansion, leaving Pompe and his assistants in charge of our luggage, which they will see safely landed. The ridge forms a level walk, sequestered by long lines of huge oaks, their massive branches forming an arch of foliage, with long trailing moss hanging like mourning drapery to enhance its rural beauty. At the extreme of this festooned walk the mansion is seen dwindling into an almost imperceptible perspective. There is something grand and impressive in the still arch above us−something which revives our sense of the beauty of nature. Through the trunks of the trees, on our right and left, extensive rice fields are seen stretching far into the distance. The young blades are shooting above the surface of the water, giving it the appearance of a frozen sheet clothed with green, and protected from the river by a serpentine embankment. How beautiful the expanse viewed from beneath these hoary−headed oaks!

On the surface and along the banks of the river aligators are sporting; moccason snakes twist their way along, and scouring kingfishers croak in the balmy air. If a venerable rattlesnake warn us we need not fear−being an honourable snake partaking of the old southerner's affected chivalry;−he will not approach disguised;−no! he will politely give us warning. But we have emerged from the mossy walk and reached a slab fence, dilapidated and broken, which encloses an area of an acre of ground, in the centre of which stands the mansion: the area seems to have been a garden, which, in former days, may have been cultivated with great care. At present it only presents a few beds rank with weeds. We are told the gardener has been dismissed in consideration of his more lucrative services in the corn−field. That the place is not entirely neglected, we have only to add that Marston's hogs are exercising an independent right to till the soil according to their own system. The mansion is a quadrangular building, about sixty feet long by fifty wide, built of wood, two stories high, having upper and lower verandas.

We pass the dilapidated gate, and reach it by a narrow passage through the garden, on each side of which is a piece of antique statuary, broken and defaced. Entering the lower veranda, we pace the quadrangle, viewing innumerable cuttings and carvings upon the posts: they are initials and full names, cut to please the vanity of those

anxious to leave the Marston family a memento. Again we arrive at the back of the mansion where the quadrangle opens a courtyard filled with broken vines, blackened cedars, and venerable−looking leaks;−they were once much valued by the ancient and very respectable Marston family. A few yards from the left wing of the mansion are the "yard houses"−little, comely cabins, about twelve feet by twenty, and proportionately high. One is the kitchen: it has a dingy look, the smoke issuing from its chinks regardless of the chimney; while from its door, sable denizens, ragged and greasy, and straining their curious faces, issue forth. The polished black cook, with her ample figure, is foaming with excitement, lest the feast she is preparing for master's guests may fail to sustain her celebrity. Conspicuous among these cabins are two presenting a much neater appearance: they are brightly whitewashed, and the little windows are decorated with flowering plants. Within them there is an air of simple neatness and freshness we have seldom seen surpassed; the meagre furniture seems to have been arranged by some careful hand, and presents an air of cheerfulness in strange contrast with the dingy cabins around. In each there is a neatly arranged bed, spread over with a white cover, and by its side a piece of soft carpet. It is from these we shall draw forth the principal characters of our story.

Upon a brick foundation, about twenty rods from the right wing of the mansion, stands a wood cottage, occupied by the overseer. Mr. John Ryan not being blessed with family, when Marston is not honoured with company takes his meals at the mansion. In the distance, to the left, is seen a long line of humble huts, standing upon piles, and occupied by promiscuous negro families:—we say promiscuous, for the marriage−tie is of little value to the master, nor does it give forth specific claim to parentage. The sable occupants are beings of uncertainty; their toil is for a life−time−a weary waste of hope and disappointment. Yes! their dreary life is a heritage, the conditions of which no man would share willingly. Victors of husbandry, they share not of the spoils; nor is the sweat of their brows repaid with justice.

Near these cabins, mere specks in the distance, are two large sheds, under which are primitive mills, wherein negroes grind corn for their humble meal. Returning from the field at night, hungry and fatigued, he who gets a turn at the mill first is the luckiest fellow. Now that the workpeople are busily engaged on the plantation, the cabins are in charge of two nurses, matronly−looking old bodies, who are vainly endeavouring to keep in order numerous growing specimens of the race too young to destroy a grub at the root of a cotton plant. The task is indeed a difficult one, they being as unruly as an excited Congress. They gambol round the door, make pert faces at old mamma, and seem as happy as snakes in the spring sun. Some are in a nude state, others have bits of frocks covering hapless portions of their bodies; they are imps of mischief personified, yet our heart bounds with sympathy for them. Alive with comicality, they move us, almost unconsciously, to fondle them. And yet we know not why we would fondle the sable "rascals." One knot is larking on the grass, running, toddling, yelling, and hooting; another, ankle−deep in mud, clench together and roll among the ducks, work their clawy fingers through the tufts of each other's crispy hair, and enjoy their childish sports with an air of genial happiness; while a third sit in a circle beside an oak tree, playing with "Dash," whose tail they pull without stint. "Dash" is the faithful and favourite dog; he rather likes a saucy young "nigger," and, while feeling himself equal to the very best in the clan, will permit the small fry, without resenting the injury, to pull his tail.

It being "ration day," we must describe the serving, that being an interesting phase of plantation life. Negroes have gathered into motley groups around two weatherbeaten store−houses—the overseer has retired to his apartment−when they wait the signal from the head driver, who figures as master of ceremonies. One sings:—−"Jim Crack corn, an' I don't care, Fo'h mas'r's gone away! way! way!" Another is croaking over the time he saved on his task, a third is trying to play a trick with the driver (come the possum over him), and a third unfolds the scheme by which the extra for whiskey and molasses was raised. Presenting a sable pot pourri, they jibber and croak among themselves, laugh and whistle, go through the antics of the "break−down" dance, make the very air echo with the music of their incomprehensible jargon. We are well nigh deafened by it, and yet it excites our joy. We are amused and instructed; we laugh because they laugh, our feelings vibrate with theirs, their quaint humour forces itself into our very soul, and our sympathy glows with their happy anticipations. The philosophy of their jargon is catching to our senses; we listen that we may know their natures, and learn good from their simplicity. He is a strange mortal who cannot learn something from a fool!

The happy moment has arrived: "Ho, boys!" is sounded,−the doors open, the negroes stop their antics and their jargon; stores are exposed, and with one dinning mutter all press into a half−circle at the doors, in one of which stands the huge figure of Balam, the head driver. He gives a scanning look at the circle of anxious faces; he

would have us think the importance of the plantation centred in his glowing black face. There he stands−a measure in his hand−while another driver, with an air of less dignity, cries out, with a stentorian voice, the names of the heads of families, and the number of children belonging thereto. Thus, one by one, the name being announced in muddled accents, they step forward, and receive their corn, or rice, as may be. In pans and pails they receive it, pass it to the younger members of the family; with running and scampering, they carry the coarse allotment to their cabin with seeming cheerfulness. Marston, esteemed a good master, always gives bacon, and to receive this the negroes will gather round the store a second time. In this, the all−fascinating bacon is concealed, for which the children evince more concern; their eyes begin to shine brighter, their watchfulness becomes more intent. Presently a negro begins to withdraw the meat, and as he commences action the jargon gets louder, until we are deafened, and would fain move beyond it. Just then, the important driver, with hand extended, commands,−"Order!" at the very top of his loud voice. All is again still; the man returns to his duty. The meat is somewhat oily and rancid, but Balam cuts it as if it were choice and scarce. Another driver weighs it in a pair of scales he holds in his hands; while still another, cutting the same as before, throws it upon some chaff at the door, as if it were a bone thrown to a hungry dog. How humbly the recipient picks it up and carries it to his or her cabin! Not unfrequently the young "imps" will scramble for it, string it upon skewers, and with great nonchalance throw it over their shoulders, and walk off. If it bathe their backs with grease so much more the comfort. Those little necessaries which add so much to the negro's comfort, and of which he is so fond, must be purchased with the result of his extra energy. Even this allowance may serve the boasted hospitality; but the impression that there is a pennyworth of generosity for every pound of parsimony, forces itself upon us. On his little spot, by moonlight or starlight, the negro must cultivate for himself, that his family may enjoy a few of those fruits of which master has many. How miserable is the man without a spark of generosity in his soul; and how much more miserable the man who will not return good for good's worth! To the negro, kindness is a mite inspiring the impulses of a simple heart, and bringing forth great good.

Let us again beg the reader to return with us to those conspicuous cottages near the court−yard, and in which we will find several of our characters.

We cross the threshold of one, and are accosted by a female who, speaking in musical accents, invites us to sit down. She has none of Afric's blood in her veins;−no! her features are beautifully olive, and the intonation of her voice discovers a different origin. Her figure is tall and well−formed; she has delicately−formed hands and feet, long, tapering fingers, well−rounded limbs, and an oval face, shaded with melancholy. How reserved she seems, and yet how quickly she moves her graceful figure! Now she places her right hand upon her finely−arched forehead, parts the heavy folds of glossy hair that hang carelessly over her brown shoulders, and with a half−suppressed smile answers our salutation. We are welcome in her humble cabin; but her dark, languishing eyes, so full of intensity, watch us with irresistible suspicion. They are the symbols of her inward soul; they speak through that melancholy pervading her countenance! The deep purple of her cheek is softened by it, while it adds to her face that calm beauty which moves the gentle of our nature. How like a woman born to fill a loftier sphere than that to which a cruel law subjects her, she seems!

Neither a field nor a house servant, the uninitiated may be at a loss to know what sphere on the plantation is her's? She is the mother of Annette, a little girl of remarkable beauty, sitting at her side, playing with her left hand. Annette is fair, has light auburn hair−not the first tinge of her mother's olive invades her features. Her little cheerful face is lit up with a smile, and while toying with the rings on her mother's fingers, asks questions that person does not seem inclined to answer. Vivacious and sprightly, she chatters and lisps until we become eager for her history. "It's only a child's history," some would say. But the mother displays so much fondness for it; and yet we become more and more excited by the strange manner in which she tries to suppress an outward display of her feelings. At times she pats it gently on the head, runs her hands through its hair, and twists the ends into tiny ringlets.

In the next cabin we meet the shortish figure of a tawny female, whose Indian features stand boldly out. Her high cheek bones, long glossy black hair, and flashing eyes, are the indexes of her pedigree. "My master says I am a slave:" in broken accents she answers our question. As she sits in her chair near the fire−place of bricks, a male issue of the mixed blood toddles round and round her, tossing her long coarse hair every time he makes a circut. The little boy is much fairer than the brawny daughter who seems his mother. Playful, and even mischievous, he delights in pulling the hair which curls over his head; and when the woman calls him he answers with a childish

heedlessness, and runs for the door. Reader! this woman's name is Ellen Juvarna; she has youth on her side, and though she retains the name of her ancient sire, is proud of being master's mistress. She tells us how comfortable she is; how Nicholas, for such is his name, resembles his father, how he loves him, but how he fails to acknowledge him. A feud, with its consequences, is kept up between the two cabins; and while she makes many insinuations about her rival, tells us she knows her features have few charms. Meanwhile, she assures us that neither good looks nor sweet smiles make good mothers. "Nicholas!" she exclaims, "come here; the gentlemen want to know all about papa." And, as she extends her hand, the child answers the summons, runs across the room, fondles his head in his mother's lap,−seems ashamed!

CHAPTER II. HOW A NIGHT WAS SPENT ON MARSTON'S PLANTATION.

EARTH is mantled with richest verdure; far away to the west and south of the mansion the scene stretches out in calm grandeur. The sun sinks beneath glowing clouds that crimson the horizon and spread refulgent shadows on the distant hills, as darkness slowly steals its way on the mellow landscape.

Motley groups of negroes are returned from the field, fires are lighted in and about the cabins, and men mutter their curious jargon while moving to prepare the coarse meal. Their anxious countenances form a picture wild and deeply interesting.

Entering Marston's mansion, we find its interior neater than its weather−stained and paintless sides portended. Through the centre runs a broad passage, and on the left and right are large parlours, comfortably furnished, divided by folding doors of carved walnut. We are ushered into the one on the right by a yellow servant, who, neatly dressed in black, has prepared his politeness for the occasion. With great suavity, accompanied by a figurative grin, he informs us that master will pay his respects presently. Pieces of singularly antique furniture are arranged round the room, of which, he adds, master is proud indeed. Two plaster figures, standing in dingy niches, he tells us are wonders of the white man's genius. In his own random style he gives us an essay on the arts, adding a word here and there to remind us of master's exquisite taste, and anxiously waits our confirmation of what he says.

A large open fire−place, with fancifully carved framework and mantel−pieces, in Italian marble of polished blackness, upon which stood massive silver candlesticks, in chased work, denotes the ancient character of the mansion. It has many years been the home of the ever−hospitable Marston family.

In another part of the room is a mahogany side−board of antique pattern, upon which stand sundry bottles and glasses, indicative of Marston having entertained company in the morning. While we are contemplating the furniture around us, and somewhat disappointed at the want of taste displayed in its arrangement, the door opens, and Sam, the yellow servant, bows Marston in with a gracious smile. It is in the south where the polite part is played by the negro. Deacon Rosebrook and Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy, a man of the world, follow Marston into the room. Marston is rather tall of figure, robust, and frank of countenance. A florid face, and an extremely large nose bordering on the red, at times give him an aldermanic air. He rubs his fingers through the short, sandy−coloured hair that bristles over a low forehead (Tom, the barber, has just fritted it) smiles, and introduces us to his friends. He is vain−vanity belongs to the slave world−is sorry his eyes are grey, but adds an assurance every now and then that his blood is of the very best stock. Lest a doubt should hang upon our mind, he asserts, with great confidence, that grey eyes indicate pure Norman birth. As for phrenology! he never believed in a single bump, and cites his own contracted forehead as the very strongest proof against the theory. Indeed, there is nothing remarkable in our host's countenance, if we except its floridness; but a blunt nose protruding over a wide mouth and flat chin gives the contour of his face an expression not the most prepossessing. He has been heard to say, "A man who didn't love himself wasn't worth loving:" and, to show his belief in this principle of nature, he adorns his face with thick red whiskers, not the most pleasing to those unaccustomed to the hairy follies of a fashionable southron.

Times are prosperous; the plantation puts forth its bounties, and Marston withholds nothing that can make time pass pleasantly with those who honour him with a visit. He is dressed in an elaborately cut black coat, with sweeping skirts, a white vest, fancy−coloured pantaloons, and bright boots. About his neck is an enormous shirt collar, turned carelessly over, and secured with a plain black ribbon. Elder Praiseworthy is of lean figure, with sharp, craven features. The people of the parish have a doubtful opinion of him. Some say he will preach sermons setting forth the divine right of slavery, or any other institution that has freedom for its foe, provided always there is no lack of pay. As a divine, he is particularly sensitive lest anything should be said disparagingly against the institution he lends his aid to protect. That all institutions founded in patriarchal usage are of God's creation, he holds to be indisputable; and that working for their overthrow is a great crime, as well as an unpardonable sin, he never had the slightest doubt. He is careful of his clerical dress, which is of smoothest black; and remembering

how essential are gold−framed spectacles, arranges and re−arranges his with greatest care. He is a great admirer of large books with gilt edges and very expensive bindings. They show to best advantage in the southern parlour library, where books are rarely opened. To say the Elder is not a man of great parts, is to circulate a libel of the first magnitude. Indeed, he liked big books for their solidity; they reminded him of great thoughts well preserved, and sound principles more firmly established. At times he had thought they were like modern democratic rights, linked to huge comprehending faculties, such as was his good fortune to use when expounding state rights and federal obligations.

Deacon Rosebrook is a comely, fair−faced man, a moderate thinker, a charitable Christian, a very good man, who lets his deeds of kindness speak of him. He is not a politician−no! he is a better quality of man, has filled higher stations. Nor is he of the modernly pious−that is, as piety professes itself in our democratic world, where men use it more as a necessary appliance to subdue the mind than a means to improve civilization. But he was always cautious in giving expression to his sentiments, knowing the delicate sensibilities of those he had to deal with, and fearing lest he might spring a democratic mine of very illiberal indignation.

"Come, gentlemen guests, you are as welcome as the showers," says Marston, in a stentorious voice: "Be seated; you are at home under my roof. Yes, the hospitality of my plantation is at your service." The yellow man removes a table that stood in the centre of the room, places chairs around it, and each takes his seat.

"Pardon me, my dear Marston, you live with the comfort of a nabob. Wealth seems to spring up on all sides," returns the Deacon, good−naturedly.

"And so I think," joins the Elder: "the pleasures of the plantation are manifold, swimming along from day to day; but I fear there is one thing our friend has not yet considered."

"Pray what is that? Let us hear it; let us hear it. Perhaps it is the very piety of nonsense," rejoined Marston, quickly. "Dead men and devils are always haunting us." The Elder draws his spectacles from his pocket, wipes them with his silk handkerchief, adjusts them on his nose, and replies with some effort, "The Future."

"Nothing more?" Marston inquires, quaintly: "Never contented; riches all around us, favourable prospects for the next crop, prices stiff, markets good, advices from abroad exciting. Let the future take care of itself; you are like all preachers, Elder, borrowing darkness when you can't see light."

"The Elder, so full of allegory!" whispers the Deacon. "He means a moral condition, which we all esteem as a source of riches laid up in store for the future."

"I discover; but it never troubles me while I take care of others. I pray for my negro property−pray loudly and long. And then, their piety is a charge of great magnitude; but when I need your assistance in looking after it, be assured you will receive an extra fee."

"That's personal−personal, decidedly personal."

"Quite the reverse," returns Marston, suddenly smiling, and, placing his elbows on the table, rests his face on his hands. "Religion is well in its place, good on simple minds; just the thing to keep vassals in their places: that's why I pay to have it talked to my property. Elder, I get the worth of my money in seeing the excitement my fellows get into by hearing you preach that old worn−out sermon. You've preached it to them so long, they have got it by heart. Only impress the rascals that it's God's will they should labour for a life, and they'll stick to it like Trojans: they are just like pigs, sir."

"You don't comprehend me, my friend Marston: I mean that you should prepare−it's a rule applicable to all−to meet the terrible that may come upon us at any moment." The Elder is fearful that he is not quite explicit enough. He continues: "Well, there is something to be considered;"−he is not quite certain that we should curtail the pleasures of this life by binding ourselves with the dread of what is to come. "Seems as if we owed a common duty to ourselves," he ejaculates.

The conversation became more exciting, Marston facetiously attempting to be humorous at the Elder's expense: "It isn't the pleasure, my dear fellow, it's the contentment. We were all born to an end; and if that end be to labour through life for others, it must be right. Everything is right that custom has established right."

"Marston, give us your hand, my friend. 'Twould do to plead so if we had no enemies, but enemies are upon us, watching our movements through partizans' eyes, full of fierceness, and evil to misconstruct."

"I care not," interrupts Marston. "My slaves are my property−I shall do with them as it pleases me; no insinuations about morality, or I shall mark you on an old score. Do you sound? Good Elders should be good men; but they, as well as planters, have their frailties; it would not do to tell them all, lest high heaven should cry

out." Marston points his finger, and laughs heartily. "I wish we had seven lives to live, and they were all as happy as most of our planters could desire to make them."

The Elder understood the delicate hint, but desiring to avoid placing himself in an awkward position before the Deacon, began to change the conversation, criticising the merits of several old pictures hung upon the walls. They were much valued by Marston, as mementoes of his ancestry: of this the Elder attempted in vain to make a point. During this conversation, so disguised in meaning, the mulatto servant stood at the door waiting Marston's commands. Soon, wine and refreshments were brought in, and spread out in old plantation style. The company had scarcely filled glasses, when a rap sounded at the hall door: a servant hastened to announce a carriage; and in another minute was ushered into the room the graceful figure of a young lady whose sweet and joyous countenance bespoke the absence of care. She was followed by a genteelly−dressed young man of straight person and placid features.

"Oh! Franconia," said Marston, rising from his seat, grasping her hand affectionately, and bestowing a kiss on her fair cheek, for it was fair indeed.

Taking her right hand in his left, he added, "My niece, gentlemen; my brother's only daughter, and nearly spoiled with attentions." A pleasant smile stole over her face, as gracefully she acknowledged the compliment. In another minute three or four old negroes, moved by the exuberance of their affection for her, gathered about her, contending with anxious faces for the honour of seeing her comfortable.

"I love her!" continued Marston; "and, as well as she could a father, she loves me, making time pass pleasantly with her cheerfulness." She was the child of his affections; and as he spoke his face glowed with animation. Scarce seventeen summers had bloomed upon his fair niece, who, though well developed in form, was of a delicate constitution, and had inherited that sensitiveness so peculiar to the child of the South, especially she who has been cradled in the nursery of ease and refinement. As she spoke, smiled, and raised her jewelled fingers, the grace accompanying the words was expressive of love and tenderness. Turning to the gentleman who accompanied her, "My friend!" she added, simply, with a frolicsome laugh. A dozen anxious black faces were now watching in the hall, ready to scamper round her ere she made her appearance to say, "How de'h!" to young Missus, and get a glimpse at her stranger friend. After receiving a happy salute from the old servants, she re−enters the room. "Uncle's always drinking wine when I come;−but Uncle forgets me; he has not so much as once asked me to join him!" She lays her hand on his arm playfully, smiles cunningly, points reproachfully at the Elder, and takes a seat at her uncle's side. The wine has seized the Elder's mind; he stares at her through his spectacles, and holds his glass with his left hand.

"Come, Dandy," said Marston, addressing himself to the mulatto attendant, "bring a glass; she shall join us." The glass is brought, Marston fills it, she bows, they drink to her and to the buoyant spirits of the noble southern lady. "I don't admire the habit; but I do like to please so," she whispers, and, excusing herself, skips into the parlour on the right, where she is again beset by the old servants, who rush to her, shake her hand, cling playfully to her dress: some present various new−plucked flowers others are become noisy with their chattering jargon. At length she is so beset with the display of their affection as to be compelled to break away from them, and call for Clotilda. "I must have Clotilda!" she says: "Tell her to come soon, Dandy: she alone can arrange my dress." Thus saying, she disappeared up a winding stair leading from the hall into the second story.

We were anxious to know who Clotilda was, and why Franconia should summon her with so much solicitude. Presently a door opened: Franconia appeared at the top of the stairs, her face glowing with vivacity, her hair dishevelled waving in beautiful confusion, giving a fascination to her person. "I do wish she would come, I do!" she mutters, resting her hands upon the banisters, and looking intently into the passage: "she thinks more of fussing over Annette's hair, than she does about taking care of mine. Well, I won't get cross−I won't! Poor Clotilda, I do like her; I can't help it; it is no more than natural that she should evince so much solicitude for her child: we would do the same." Scarcely had she uttered these words, when the beautiful female we have described in the foregoing chapter ran from her cabin, across the yard, into the mansion. "Where is young Miss Franconia?" she inquires; looks hastily around, ascends the stairs, greets Franconia with a fervent shake of the hand, commences adjusting her hair. There is a marked similarity in their countenances: it awakens our reflections. Had Clotilda exhibited that exactness of toilet for which Franconia is become celebrated, she would excel in her attractions. There was the same oval face, the same arched brows; there was the same Grecian contour of features, the same sharply lined nose; there was the same delicately cut mouth, disclosing white, pearly teeth; the same

eyes, now glowing with sentiment, and again pensive, indicating thought and tenderness; there was the same classically moulded bust, a shoulder slightly converging, of beautiful olive, enriched by a dark mole.

Clotilda would fain have kissed Franconia, but she dare not. "Clotilda, you must take good care of me while I make my visit. Only do my hair nicely, and I will see that Uncle gets a new dress for you when he goes to the city. If Uncle would only get married, how much happier it would be," says Franconia, looking at Clotilda the while.

"And me, too,−I would be happier!" Clotilda replies, resting her arms on the back of Franconia's lolling chair, as her eyes assumed a melancholy glare. She heaved a sigh.

"You could not be happier than you are; you are well cared for; Uncle will never see you want; but you must be cheerful when I come, Clotilda,−you must! To see you unhappy makes me feel unhappy."

"Cheerful!−its better said than felt. Can he or she be cheerful who is forced to sin against God and himself? There is little to be cheerful with, where the nature is not its own. Why should I be the despised wretch at your Uncle's feet: did God, the great God, make me a slave to his licentiousness?"

"Suppress such feelings, Clotilda; do not let them get the better of you. God ordains all things: it is well to abide by His will, for it is sinful to be discontented, especially where everything is so well provided. Why, Uncle has learned you to read, and even to write."

"Ah! that's just what gave me light; through it I knew that I had a life, and a soul beyond that, as valuable to me as yours is to you."

"Be careful, Clotilda," she interrupts; "remember there is a wide difference between us. Do not cross Uncle; he is kind, but he may get a freak into his head, and sell you."

Clotilda's cheeks brightened; she frowned at the word, and, giving her black hair a toss from her shoulder, muttered, "To sell me!−Had you measured the depth of pain in that word, Franconia, your lips had never given it utterance. To sell me!−'tis that. The difference is wide indeed, but the point is sharpest. Was it my mother who made that point so sharp? It could not! a mother would not entail such misery on her offspring. That name, so full of associations dear to me−so full of a mother's love and tenderness,−could not reflect pain. Nay; her affections were bestowed upon me,−I love to treasure them, I do. To tell me that a mother would entail misery without an end, is to tell me that the spirit of love is without good!"

"Do not make yourself unhappy, Clotilda. Perhaps you are as well with us as you would be elsewhere. Even at the free north, in happy New England, ladies would not take the notice of you we do: many of your class have died there, poor and wretched, among the most miserable creatures ever born to a sad end. And you are not black−"

"All is not truth that is told for such," Clotilda interrupts Franconia. "If I were black, my life would have but one stream: now it is terrible with uncertainty. As I am, my hopes and affections are blasted."

"Sit down, Clotilda," rejoins Franconia, quickly.

Clotilda, having lavished her skill on Franconia's hair, seats herself by her side. Franconia affectionately takes her tapering hand and presses it with her jewelled fingers. "Remember, Clotilda," she continues, "all the negroes on the plantation become unhappy at seeing you fretful. It is well to seem happy, for its influence on others. Uncle will always provide for Annette and you; and he is kind. If he pays more attention to Ellen at times, take no notice of it. Ellen Juvarna is Indian, moved to peculiarities by the instincts of her race. Uncle is imprudent, I admit; but society is not with us as it is elsewhere!"

"I care not so much for myself," speaks the woman, in a desponding voice; "it is Annette; and when you spoke of her you touched the chord of all my troubles. I can endure the sin forced upon myself; but, O heavens! how can I butcher my very thoughts with the unhappy life that is before her? My poor mother's words haunt me. I know her feelings now, because I can judge them by my own−can see how her broken heart was crushed into the grave! She kissed my hand, and said, 'Clotilda, my child, you are born to a cruel death. Give me but a heart to meet my friends in judgment!'"

The child with the flaxen hair, humming a tune, came scampering up the stairs into the room. It recognises Franconia, and, with a sportive laugh, runs to her and fondles in her lap; then, turning to its mother, seems anxious to divide its affections between them. Its features resembled Franconia's−the similarity was unmistakeable; and although she fondled it, talked with it, and smoothed its little locks, she resisted its attempts to climb on her knee: she was cold.

"Mother says I look like you, and so does old Aunt Rachel, Miss Franconia−they do," whispers the child, shyly, as it twisted its fingers round the rings on Franconia's hand. Franconia blushed, and cast an inquiring look at Clotilda.

"You must not be naughty," she says; "those black imps you play with around Aunt Rachel's cabin teach you wrong. You must be careful with her, Clotilda; never allow her to such things to white people: she may use such expressions before strangers,−which would be extremely painful−"

"It seems too plain: if there be no social sin, why fear the degradation?" she quietly interrupts. "You cannot keep it from the child. O, how I should like to know my strange history, Franconia,−to know if it can be that I was born to such cruel misfortunes, such bitter heart−achings, such gloomy forebodings. If I were, then am I content with my lot."

Franconia listened attentively, saw the anguish that was bursting the bounds of the unhappy woman's feelings, and interrupted by saying, "Speak of it no more, Clotilda. Take your child; go to your cabin. I shall stay a few days: to−morrow I will visit you there." As she spoke, she waved her hand, bid Clotilda good night, kissing Annette as she was led down stairs. Now alone, she begins to contemplate the subject more deeply. "It must be wrong," she says to herself: "but few are brought to feel it who have the power to remove it. The poor creature seems so unhappy; and my feelings are pained when they tell me how much she looks like me—and it must be so; for when she sat by my side, looking in the glass the portrait of similarity touched my feelings deeply. 'Tis not the thing for Uncle to live in this way. Here am I, loved and beloved, with the luxury of wealth, and friends at my pleasure; I am caressed: she is but born a wretch to serve my Uncle's vanity; and, too, were I to reproach him, he would laugh at what he calls our folly, our sickly sensitiveness; he would tell me of the pleasures of southern life, southern scenery, southern chivalry, southern refinement;—yes, he would tell me how it were best to credit the whole to southern liberality of custom:—so it continues! There is a principle to be served after all: he says we are not sent into the world to excommune ourselves from its pleasures. This may be good logic, for I own I don't believe with those who want the world screwed up into a religious vice; but pleasure is divided into so many different qualities, one hardly knows which suits best now−a−days. Philosophers say we should avoid making pleasure of that which can give pain to others; but philosophers say so many things, and give so much advice that we never think of following. Uncle has a standard of his own. I do, however, wish southern society would be more circumspect, looking upon morality in its proper light. Its all doubtful! doubtful! doubtful! There is Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy; he preaches, preaches, preaches!—his preaching is to live, not to die by. I do pity those poor negroes, who, notwithstanding their impenetrable heads, are bored to death every Sunday with that selfsame sermon. Such preaching, such strained effort, such machinery to make men pious,—it's as soulless as a well. I don't wonder the world has got to be so very wicked, when the wickedness of the slavery church has become so sublime. And there's Uncle, too,—he's been affected just in that way; hearing pious discourses to uphold that which in his soul he knew to be the heaviest wickedness the world groaned under, he has come to look upon religion as if it were a commodity too stale for him. He sees the minister of God's Word a mere machine of task, paid to do a certain amount of talking to negroes, endeavouring to impress their simple minds with the belief that it is God's will they should be slaves. And this is all for necessity's sake!" In this musing mood she sits rocking in her chair, until at length, overcome with the heat, she reclines her head against the cushion, resigning herself to the soothing embrace of sweet sleep.

The moon's silver rays were playing on the calm surface of the river, the foliage on its banks seemed bathed in quiet repose, the gentle breeze, bearing its balmy odours, wafted through the arbour of oaks, as if to fan her crimson cheeks; the azalia and magnolia combined their fragrance, impregnating the dew falling over the scene, as if to mantle it with beauty. She slept, a picture of southern beauty; her auburn tresses in undulating richness playing to and fro upon her swelling bosom,−how developed in all its delicacy!−her sensitive nature made more lovely by the warmth and generosity of her heart. Still she slept, her youthful mind overflowing with joy and buoyancy: about her there was a ravishing simplicity more than earthly: a blush upon her cheek became deeper,−it was the blush of love flashing in a dream, that tells its tale in nervous vibrations, adding enchantment to sleeping voluptuousness;−and yet all was sacred, an envied object no rude hand dare touch!

Franconia had been educated at the north, in a land where—God bless the name—Puritanism is not quite extinct; and through the force of principles there inculcated had outgrown much of that feeling which at the south admits to be right what is basely wrong. She hesitated to reproach Marston with the bad effect of his life, but

resolved on endeavouring to enlist Clotilda's confidence, and learn how far her degraded condition affected her feelings. She saw her with the same proud spirit that burned in her own bosom; the same tenderness, the same affection for her child, the same hopes and expectations for the future, and its rewards. The question was, what could be done for Clotilda? Was it better to reason with her,−to, if possible, make her happy in her condition? Custom had sanctioned many unrighteous inconsistencies: they were southern, nothing more! She would intercede with her Uncle, she would have him sign free papers for Clotilda and her child; she saw a relationship which the law could not disguise, though it might crush out the natural affections. With these thoughts passing in her mind, her imagination wandered until she dropped into the sleep we have described.

There she slept, the blushes suffusing her cheeks, until old Aunt Rachel, puffing and blowing like an exhausting engine, entered the room. Aunty is the pink of a plantation mother: she is as black as the blackest, has a face embodying all the good−nature of the plantation, boasts of her dimensions, which she says are six feet, well as anybody proportioned. Her head is done up in a flashy bandana, the points nicely crosslain, and extending an elaborate distance beyond her ears, nearly covering the immense circular rings that hang from them. Her gingham dress, starched just so, her whitest white apron, never worn before missus come, sets her off to great advantage. Aunty is a good piece of property−tells us how many hundred dollars there is in her−feels that she has been promoted because Mas'r told somebody he would not take a dollar less for her. She can superintend the domestic affairs of the mansion just as well as anybody. In one hand she bears a cup of orange−grove coffee, in the other a fan, made of palmetto−leaves.

"Gi'h−e−you!" she exclaimed. "If young missus aint nappin' just so nice! I likes to cotch 'em just so;" and setting her tray upon a stand, she views Franconia intently, and in the exuberance of her feelings seats herself in front of her chair, fanning her with the palmetto. The inquisitive and affectionate nature of the good old slave was here presented in its purity. Nothing can be stronger, nothing show the existence of happy associations more forcibly. The old servant's attachment is proverbial,−his enthusiasm knows no bounds,−Mas'r's comfort absorbs all his thoughts. Here, Aunt Rachel's feelings rose beyond her power of restraint: she gazed on her young missus with admiration, laughed, fanned her more and more; then grasping her little jewelled hand, pressed it to her spacious mouth and kissed it. "Young Missus! Franconia, I does lub ye so!" she whispers.

"Why, Aunt Rachel!" ejaculated Franconia, starting suddenly: "I am glad you wakened me, for I dreamed of trouble: it made me weak−nervous. Where is Clotilda?" And she stared vacantly round the room, as if unconscious of her position. "Guess 'e aint 'bout nowhere. Ye see, Miss, how she don't take no care on ye,−takes dis child to stir up de old cook, when ye comes to see us." And stepping to the stand she brings the salver; and in her excitement to serve Missus, forgets that the coffee is cold. "Da'h he is; just as nice as 'em get in de city. Rachel made 'em!"

"I want Clotilda, Rachel; you must bring her to me. I was dreaming of her and Annette; and she can tell dreams−"

The old slave interrupts her. "If Miss Franconia hab had dream, 'e bad, sartin. Old Mas'r spoil dat gal, Clotilda,−make her tink she lady, anyhow. She mos' white, fo'h true; but aint no better den oder nigger on de plantation," she returns. Franconia sips her coffee, takes a waf from the plate as the old servant holds it before her, and orders Dandy to summon Clotilda.

CHAPTER III. THINGS ARE NOT SO BRIGHT AS THEY SEEM.

THE following morning broke forth bright and serene. Marston and his guests, after passing a pleasant night, were early at breakfast. When over, they joined him for a stroll over the plantation, to hear him descant upon the prospects of the coming crop. Nothing could be more certain, to his mind, than a bountiful harvest. The rice, cotton, and corn grounds had been well prepared, the weather was most favourable, he had plenty of help, a good overseer, and faithful drivers. "We have plenty,−we live easy, you see, and our people are contented," he says, directing his conversation to the young Englishman, who was suspected of being Franconia's friend. "We do things different from what you do in your country. Your countrymen will not learn to grow cotton: they manufacture it, and hence we are connected in firm bonds. Cotton connects many things, even men's minds and souls. You would like to be a planter, I know you would: who would not, seeing how we live? Here is the Elder, as happy a fellow as you'll find in forty. He can be as jolly as an Englishman over a good dinner: he can think with anybody, preach with anybody!" Touching the Elder on the shoulder, he smiles, and with an insinuating leer, smooths his beard. "I am at your service," replies the Elder, folding his arms.

"I pay him to preach for my nigger property,−I pay him to teach them to be good. He preaches just as I wants him to. My boys think him a little man, but a great divine. You would like to hear the Elder on Sunday; he's funny then, and has a very funny sermon, which you may get by heart without much exertion." The young man seems indifferent to the conversation. He had not been taught to realise how easy it was to bring religion into contempt.

"Make no grave charges against me, Marston; you carry your practical jokes a little too far, Sir. I am a quiet man, but the feelings of quiet men may be disturbed." The Elder speaks moodily, as if considering whether it were best to resent Marston's trifling sarcasm. Deacon Rosebrook now interceded by saying, with unruffled countenance, that the Elder had but one thing funny about him,−his dignity on Sundays: that he was, at times, half inclined to believe it the dignity of cogniac, instead of pious sentiment.

"I preach my sermon,−who can do more?" the Elder rejoins, with seeming concern for his honour. "I thought we came to view the plantation?"

"Yes, true; but our little repartee cannot stop our sight. You preach your sermon, Elder,—that is, you preach what there is left of it. It is one of the best−used sermons ever manufactured. It would serve as a model for the most stale Oxonian. Do you think you could write another like it? It has lasted seven years, and served the means of propitiating the gospel on seven manors. Can they beat that in your country?" says Marston, again turning to the young Englishmam, and laughing at the Elder, who was deliberately taking off his glasses to wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

"Our ministers have a different way of patching up old sermons; but I'm not quite sure about their mode of getting them," the young man replies, takes Deacon Rosebrook's arm, and walks ahead.

"The Elder must conform to the doctrines of the South; but they say he bets at the race−course, which is not an uncommon thing for our divines," rejoins the Deacon, facetiously.

The Elder, becoming seriously inclined, thinks gentlemen had better avoid personalities. Personalities are not tolerated in the South, where gentlemen are removed far above common people, and protect themselves by the code duello. He will expose Marston.

Marston's good capon sides are proof against jokes. He may crack on, that individual says.

"My friend," interposed the Elder, "you desired me to preach to your niggers in one style and for one purpose,−according to the rule of labour and submission. Just such an one as your niggers would think the right stripe, I preached, and it made your niggers wonder and gape. I'll pledge you my religious faith I can preach a different−"

"Oh! oh! oh! Elder," interrupted Marston, "pledge something valuable."

"To me, my faith is the most sacred thing in the world. I will−as I was going to say−preach to your moulding and necessities. Pay for it, and, on my word, it shall be in the cause of the South! With the landmarks from my planter customers, I will follow to their liking," continues Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy, not a smile on his hard

face.

Deacon Rosebrook thinks it is well said. Pay is the great desideratum in everything. The Elder, though not an uncommon southern clergyman, is the most versatile preacher to be met with in a day's walk. Having a wonderful opinion of nigger knowledge, he preaches to it in accordance, receiving good pay and having no objection to the wine.

"Well, Gentlemen," Marston remarks, coolly, "I think the Elder has borne our jokes well; we will now go and moisten our lips. The elder likes my old Madeira−always passes the highest compliments upon it." Having sallied about the plantation, we return to the mansion, where Dandy, Enoch, and Sam−three well−dressed mulattoes−their hair frizzed and their white aprons looking so bright, meet us at the veranda, and bow us back into the parlour, as we bear our willing testimony of the prospects of the crop. With scraping of feet, grins, and bows, they welcome us back, smother us with compliments, and seem overwilling to lavish their kindness. From the parlour they bow us into a long room in the right wing, its walls being plain boarded, and well ventilated with open seams. A table is spread with substantial edibles,−such as ham, bacon, mutton, and fish. These represent the southern planter's fare, to which he seldom adds those pastry delicacies with which the New Englander is prone to decorate his table. The party become seated as Franconia graces the festive board with her presence, which, being an incentive of gallantry, preserves the nicest decorum, smooths the conversation. The wine−cup flows freely; the Elder dips deeply−as he declares it choice. Temperance being unpopular in the south, it is little regarded at Marston's mansion. As for Marston himself, he is merely preparing the way to play facetious jokes on the Elder, whose arm he touches every few minutes, reminding him how backward he is in replenishing his glass.

Not at all backward in such matters, the Elder fills up, asks the pleasure of drinking his very good health, and empties the liquid into the safest place nearest at hand. Repeated courses have their effect; Marston is pleased, the Elder is mellow. With muddled sensibilities his eyes glare wildly about the table, and at every fresh invitation to drink he begs pardon for having neglected his duty, fingers the ends of his cravat, and deposits another glass,−certainly the very last. Franconia, perceiving her uncle's motive, begs to be excused, and is escorted out of the room. Mr. Praiseworthy, attempting to get a last glass of wine to his lips without spilling, is quite surprised that the lady should leave. He commences descanting on his own fierce enmity to infidelity and catholicism. He would that everybody rose up and trampled them into the dust; both are ruinous to negro property.

Marston coolly suggests that the Elder is decidedly uncatholicised.

"Elder," interrupted Deacon Rosebrook, touching him on the shoulder, "you are modestly undone−that is, very respectably sold to your wine."

"Yes," rejoined Marston; "I would give an extra ten dollars to hear him preach a sermon to my niggers at this moment."

"Villainous inconsistency!" exclaimed the Elder, in an indistinct voice, his eyes half closed, and the spectacles gradually falling from his nose. "You are scandalising my excellent character, which can't be replaced with gold." Making another attempt to raise a glass of wine to his lips, as he concluded, he unconsciously let the contents flow into his bosom, instead of his mouth.

"Well, my opinion is, Elder, that if you get my nigger property into heaven with your preaching, there'll be a chance for the likes of me," said Marston, watching the Elder intently. It was now evident the party were all becoming pretty deeply tinctured. Rosebrook thought a minister of the gospel, to get in such a condition, and then refer to religious matters, must have a soul empty to the very core. There could be no better proof of how easily true religion could be brought into contempt. The Elder foreclosed with the spirit, considered himself unsafe in the chair, and was about to relieve it, when Dandy caught him in his arms like a lifeless mass, and carried him to a settee, upon which he spread him, like a substance to be bleached in the sun.

"Gentlemen! the Elder is completely unreverenced,−he is the most versatile individual that ever wore black cloth. I reverence him for his qualities," says Marston: then, turning to Maxwell, he continued, "you must excuse this little joviality; it occurs but seldom, and the southern people take it for what it is worth, excusing, or forgetting its effects."

"Don't speak of it−it's not unlike our English do at times−nor do our ministers form exceptions; but they do such things under a monster protection, without reckoning the effect," the Englishman replied, looking round as if he missed the presence of Franconia.

The Elder, soon in a profound sleep, was beset by swarms of mosquitoes preying upon his haggard face, as if

it were good food. "He's a pretty picture," says Marston, looking upon the sleeping Elder with a frown, and then working his fingers through his crispy red hair. "A hard subject for the student's knife he'll make, won't he?" To add to the comical appearance of the reverend gentleman, Marston, rising from his seat, approached him, drew the spectacles from his pocket, and placed them on the tip of his nose, adding piquancy to his already indescribable physiognomy.

"Don't you think this is carrying the joke a point too far?" asked Deacon Rosebrook, who had been some time silently watching the prostrate condition of Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy.

Marston shrugs his shoulders, whispers a word or two in the ear of his friend Maxwell, twirls his glass upon the table. He is somewhat cautious how he gives an opinion on such matters, having previously read one or two law books; but believes it does'nt portray all things just right. He has studied ideal good−at least he tells us so−if he never practises it; finally, he is constrained to admit that this 'ere's all very well once in a while, but becomes tiresome—especially when kept up as strong as the Elder does it. He is free to confess that southern mankind is curiously constituted, too often giving license to revelries, but condemning those who fall by them. He feels quite right about the Elder's preaching being just the chime for his nigger property; but, were he a professing Christian, it would'nt suit him by fifty per cent. There is something between the mind of a "nigger" and the mind of a white man,—something he can't exactly analyse, though he is certain it is wonderfully different; and though such preaching can do niggers no harm, he would just as soon think of listening to Infidelity. Painful as it was to acknowledge the fact, he only appeared at the "Meet'n House" on Sundays for the looks of the thing, and in the hope that it might have some influence with his nigger property. Several times he had been heard to say it was mere machine−preaching−made according to pattern, delivered according to price, by persons whose heads and hearts had no sympathy with the downcast.

"There's my prime fellow Harry; a right good fellow, worth nine hundred, nothing short, and he is a Christian in conscience. He has got a kind of a notion into his head about being a divine. He thinks, in the consequence of his black noddle, that he can preach just as well as anybody; and, believe me, he can't read a letter in the book,—at least, I don't see how he can. True, he has heard the Elder's sermon so often that he has committed every word of it to memory,—can say it off like a plantation song, and no mistake." Thus Marston discoursed. And yet he declared that nobody could fool him with the idea of "niggers" having souls: they were only mortal,—he would produce abundant proof, if required.

Deacon Rosebrook listened attentively to this part of Marston's discourse. "The task of proving your theory would be rendered difficult if you were to transcend upon the scale of blood," he replied, getting up and spreading his handkerchief over the Elder's face, to keep off the mosquitoes.

"When our most learned divines and philosophers are the stringent supporters of the principle, what should make the task difficult? Nevertheless, I admit, if my fellow Harry could do the preaching for our plantation, no objections would be interposed by me; on the contrary, I could make a good speculation by it. Harry would be worth two common niggers then. Nigger property, christianised, is the most valuable of property. You may distinguish a christianised nigger in a moment; and piety takes the stubborn out of their composition better than all the cowhides you can employ; and, too, it's a saving of time, considering that it subdues so much quicker," says Marston, stretching back in his chair, as he orders Dandy to bring Harry into his presence. He will tell them what he knows about preaching, the Elder's sermon, and the Bible!

Maxwell smiles at such singularly out of place remarks on religion. They are not uncommon in the south, notwithstanding.

A few minutes elapsed, when Dandy opened the door, and entered the room, followed by a creature−a piece of property!−in which the right of a soul had been disputed, not alone by Marston, but by southern ministers and southern philosophers. The thing was very good− looking, very black;−it had straight features, differing from the common African, and stood very erect. We have said he differed from the common African−we mean, as he is recognised through our prejudices. His forehead was bold and well−developed−his hair short, thick and crispy, eyes keen and piercing, cheeks regularly declining into a well−shaped mouth and chin. Dejected and forlorn, the wretch of chance stood before them, the fires of a burning soul glaring forth from his quick, wandering eyes. "There!" exclaimed Marston. "See that," pointing at his extremes; "he has foot enough for a brick−maker, and a head equal to a deacon−no insinuation, my friend," bowing to Deacon Rosebrook. "They say it takes a big head to get into Congress; but I'm afraid, Harry, I'd never get there."

The door again opened, and another clever−looking old negro, anxious to say "how de do" to mas'r and his visitors, made his appearance, bowing, and keeping time with his foot. "Oh, here's my old daddy−old Daddy Bob, one of the best old niggers on the plantation; Harry and Bob are my deacons. There,—stand there, Harry; tell these gentlemen,—they are right glad to see you,—what you know about Elder Praiseworthy's sermon, and what you can do in the way of preaching," says Marston, laughing good−naturedly.

"Rather a rough piece of property to make a preacher of," muttered Maxwell.

The poor fellow's feet were encrusted as hard as an alligator's back; and there he stood, a picture upon which the sympathies of Christendom were enlisted−a human object without the rights of man, in a free republic. He held a red cap in his left hand, a pair of coarse osnaburg trousers reached a few inches below his knees, and, together with a ragged shirt of the same material, constituted his covering.

"You might have dressed yourself before you appeared before gentlemen from abroad−at least, put on your new jacket," said Marston.

"Why, mas'r, t'ant de clothes. God neber make Christian wid'e his clothes on;−den, mas'r, I gin' my new jacket to Daddy Bob. But neber mind him, mas'r−you wants I to tell you what I tinks ob de Lor. I tink great site ob the Bible, mas'r, but me don' tink much ob Elder's sermon, mas'r."

"How is that, Harry?" interrupted the deacon.

"Why, Mas'r Deacon, ye sees how when ye preaches de good tings ob de Lor', ye mus'nt 'dulge in 'e wicked tings on 'arth. A'h done want say Mas'r Elder do dem tings−but 'e seem to me t' warn't right wen 'e join de wickedness ob de world, and preach so ebery Sunday. He may know de varse, and de chapter, but 'e done preach what de Lor' say, nohow."

"Then you don't believe in a one−sided sermon, Harry?" returned the deacon, while Marston and Maxwell sat enjoying the negro's simple opinion of the Elder's sermon.

"No, mas'r. What the Bible teach me is to lob de Lor'−be good myself, and set example fo'h oders. I an't what big white Christian say must be good, wen 'e neber practice him,—but I good in me heart when me tink what de Lor' say be good. Why, mas'r, Elder preach dat sarmon so many Sundays, dat a' forgot him three times, since me know 'im ebery word," said Harry; and his face began to fill with animation and fervency.

"Well, now, Harry, I think you are a little too severe on the Elder's sermon; but if you know so much about it, give these gentlemen a small portion of it, just to amuse them while the Elder is taking a nap," said Marston.

"Ay, mas'r, be nap dat way too often for pious man what say he lobe de Lor'," replied Harry; and drawing himself into a tragic attitude, making sundry gesticulations, and putting his hand to his forehead, commenced with the opening portion of the Elder's sermon. "And it was said−Servants obey your masters, for that is right in the sight of the Lord," and with a style of native eloquence, and rich cantation, he continued for about ten minutes, giving every word, seriatim, of the Elder's sermon; and would have kept it up, in word and action, to the end, had he not been stopped by Marston. All seemed astonished at his power of memory. Maxwell begged that he might be allowed to proceed.

"He's a valuable fellow, that−eh?" said Marston. "He'll be worth three−sixteenths of a rise on cotton to all the planters in the neighbourhood, by−and−by. He's larned to read, somehow, on the sly−isn't it so, Harry? come, talk up!"

"Yes, mas'r, I larn dat when you sleepin'; do Lor' tell me his spirit warn't in dat sarmon what de Elder preach,—dat me must sarch de good book, and make me own tinking valuable. Mas'r tink ignorant nigger lob him best, but t'ant so, mas'r. Good book make heart good, and make nigger love de Lor', and love mas'r too."

"I'll bet the rascal's got a Bible, or a Prayer−book, hid up somewhere. He and old Daddy Bob are worse on religion than two old coons on a fowl−yard," said Marston. Here old Aunt Rachel entered the room to fuss around a little, and have a pleasant meeting with mas'r's guests. Harry smiled at Marston's remark, and turned his eyes upward, as much as to say, "a day will come when God's Word will not thus be turned into ridicule!"

"And he's made such a good old Christian of this dark sinner, Aunt Rachel, that I wouldn't take two thousand dollars for her. I expect she'll be turning preacher next, and going north to join the abolitionists."

"Mas'r," said Rachel, "'t wouldn't do to mind what you say. Neber mind, you get old one ob dese days; den you don't make so much fun ob old Rachel."

"Shut up your corn−trap," Marston says, smiling; and turning to his guests, continues−"You hear that, gentlemen; she talks just as she pleases, directs my household as if she were governor." Again, Aunt Rachel,

summoning her dignity, retorts,

"Not so, Mas'r Deacon, (turning to Deacon Rosebrook,) "'t won't square t' believe all old Boss tell, dat it won't! Mas'r take care ob de two cabins in de yard yonder, while I tends de big house." Rachel was more than a match for Marston; she could beat him in quick retort. The party, recognising Aunt Rachel's insinuation, joined in a hearty laugh. The conversation was a little too pointed for Marston, who, changing the subject, turned to Harry, saying, "now, my old boy, we'll have a little more of your wisdom on religious matters." Harry had been standing the while like a forlorn image, with a red cap in his hand.

"I can preach, mas'r; I can do dat, fo'h true," he replied quickly. "But mas'r, nigger got to preach against his colour; Buckra tink nigger preachin' ain't good, cus he black."

"Never mind that, Harry," interrupts Marston: "We'll forget the nigger, and listen just as if it were all white. Give us the very best specimen of it. Daddy Bob, my old patriarch, must help you; and after you get through, he must lift out by telling us all about the time when General Washington landed in the city; and how the people spread carpets, at the landing, for him to walk upon." The entertainment was, in Marston's estimation, quite a recherch, concern: that his guests should be the better pleased, the venerable old Daddy Bob, his head white with goodly years of toil, and full of genuine negro humour, steps forward to perform his part. He makes his best bows, his best scrapes, his best laughs; and says, "Bob ready to do anything to please mas'r." He pulls the sleeves of his jacket, looks vacantly at Harry, is proud to be in the presence of mas'r's guests. He tells them he is a better nigger "den" Harry, points to his extremes, which are decorated with a pair of new russet broghans.

"Daddy's worth his weight in gold," continues Marston, "and can do as much work as any nigger on the plantation, if he is old."

"No, no, mas'r; I ain't so good what I was. Bob can't tote so much wid de hoe now. I work first−rate once, mas'r, but 'a done gone now!"

"Now, Bob, I want you to tell me the truth,—niggers will lie, but you are an exception, Bob; and can tell the truth when there's no bacon in the way."

"Gih! Mas'r, I do dat sartin," replied Bob, laughing heartily, and pulling up the little piece of shirt that peeped out above the collar of his jacket.

"How did Harry and you come by so much knowledge of the Bible? you got one somewhere, hav'n't you?" enquired Marston, laconically.

This was rather a "poser" on Bob; and, after stammering and mumbling for some time−looking at Harry slyly, then at Marston, and again dropping his eyes on the floor, he ejaculated,

"Well, mas'r, 'spose I might as well own 'im. Harry and me got one, for sartin!"

"Ah, you black rascals, I knew you had one somewhere. Where did you get it? That's some of Miss Franconia's doings."

"Can't tell you, mas'r, whar I got him; but he don't stop my hoein' corn, for' true."

Franconia had observed Harry's tractableness, and heard him wish for a Bible, that he might learn to read from it,—and she had secretly supplied him with one. Two years Harry and Daddy Bob had spent hours of the night in communion over it; the latter had learned to read from it, the former had imbibed its great truths. The artless girl had given it to them in confidence, knowing its consolatory influences and that they, with a peculiar firmness in such cases, would never betray her trust. Bob would not have refused his master any other request; but he would never disclose the secret of Miss Franconia giving it.

"Well, my old faithful," said Marston, "we want you to put the sprit into Harry; we want to hear a sample of his preaching. Now, Harry, you can begin; give it big eloquence, none of the new fashion preaching, give us the old plantation break−down style."

The negro's countenance assumed a look indicative of more than his lips dare speak. Looking upward pensively, he replied,—"Can't do dat, mas'r; he ain't what do God justice; but there is something in de text,—where shall I take 'em from?"

"Ministers should choose their own; I always do," interrupted Deacon Rosebrook.

Daddy Bob, touching Harry on the arm, looks up innocently, interposes his knowledge of Scripture. "D'ar, Harry, I tells you what text to gin 'em. Gin 'em dat one from de fourt' chapter of Ephes: dat one whar de Lor' say:—'Great mas'r led captivity captive, and gin gifts unto men.' And whar he say, 'Till we come unto a unity of the faith of the knowledge of the son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of

Christ; that we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to deceive.'"

"And you tink dat 'll do,—eh, Daddy?" Harry replies, looking at the old man, as if to say, were he anything but a slave he would follow the advice.

"Den, dars t' oder one, away 'long yonder, where 'e say in Isaiah, fifty−eight chapter—'Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness." The old man seemed perfectly at home on matters of Scripture; he had studied it in stolen moments.

The young Englishman seemed surprised at such a show of talent. He saw the humble position of the old man, his want of early instruction, and his anxiety to be enlightened. "How singular!" he ejaculated, "to hear property preach, and know so much of the Bible, too! People in my country would open their eyes with surprise." The young man had been educated in an atmosphere where religion was prized−where it was held as a sacred element for the good of man. His feelings were tenderly susceptible; the scene before him awakened his better nature, struck deep into his mind. He viewed it as a cruel mockery of Christianity, a torture of innocent nature, for which man had no shame. He saw the struggling spirit of the old negro contending against wrong,—his yearnings for the teachings of Christianity, his solicitude for Marston's good. And he saw how man had cut down the unoffending image of himself−how Christian ministers had become the tyrant's hand−fellow in the work of oppression. It incited him to resolution; a project sprung up in his mind, which, from that day forward, as if it had been a new discovery in the rights of man, he determined to carry out in future, for the freedom of his fellows.

Harry, in accordance with Bob's advice, chose the latter text. For some minutes he expounded the power of divine inspiration, in his simple but impressive manner, being several times interrupted by the Deacon, who assumed the right of correcting his philosophy. At length, Marston interrupted, reminding him that he had lost the "plantation gauge." "You must preach according to the Elder's rule," said he.

With a submissive stare, Harry replied: "Mas'r, a man what lives fo'h dis world only is a slave to himself; but God says, he dat lives fo'h de world to come, is the light of life coming forth to enjoy the pleasures of eternity;" and again he burst into a rhapsody of eloquence, to the astonishment and admiration of Maxwell, and even touching the feelings of Marston, who was seldom moved by such displays. Seeing the man in the thing of merchandise, he inclined to look upon him as a being worthy of immortality; and yet it seemed next to impossible that he should bring his natural feelings to realise the simple nobleness that stood before him,—the man beyond the increase of dollars and cents in his person! The coloured winter's hand leaned against the mantel−piece, watching the changes in Marston's countenance, as Daddy stood at Harry's side, in patriarchal muteness. A tear stealing down Maxwell's cheek told of the sensation produced; while Marston, setting his elbow on the table, supported his head in his hands, and listened. The Deacon, good man that he was, filled his glass,—as if to say, "I don't stand nigger preaching." As for the Elder, his pishes and painful gurglings, while he slept, were a source of much annoyance. Awaking suddenly−raising himself to a half−bent position−he rubs his little eyes, adjusts his spectacles on his nose, stares at Harry with surprise, and then, with quizzical demeanour, leaves us to infer what sort of a protest he is about to enter. He, however, thinks it better to say nothing.

"Stop, Harry," says Marston, interrupting him in a point of his discourse: then turning to his guests, he inquired, with a look of ridicule, "Gentlemen, what have you got to say against such preaching? Elder, you old snoring Christian, you have lost all the best of it. Why didn't you wake up before?"

"Verri−ly, truly! ah, indeed: you have been giving us a monkey−show with your nigger, I suppose. I thought I'd lost nothing; you should remember, Marston, there's a future," said the Elder, winking and blinking sardonically.

"Yes, old boosey," Marston replies, with an air of indifference, "and you should remember there's a present, which you may lose your way in. That venerable sermon won't keep you straight−"

The Elder is extremely sensitive on this particular point−anything but speak disparagingly of that sermon. It has been his stock in trade for numerous years. He begs they will listen to him for a minute, excuse this little trifling variation, charge it to the susceptibility of his constitution. He is willing to admit there is capital in his example which may be used for bad purposes, and says, "Somehow, when I take a little, it don't seem to go right." Again he gives a vacant look at his friends, gets up, resting his hands on the table, endeavours to keep a perpendicular, but declares himself so debilitated by his sleep that he must wait a little longer. Sinking back upon

the settee, he exclaims, "You had better send that nigger to his cabin." This was carrying the amusement a little beyond Marston's own "gauge," and it being declared time to adjourn, preparations were made to take care of the Elder, who was soon placed horizontally in a waggon and driven away for his home. "The Elder is gone beyond himself, beyond everything," said Marston, as they carried him out of the door. "You can go, Harry, I like your preaching; bring it down to the right system for my property, and I'll make a dollar or two out of it yet," he whispers, shaking his head, as Harry, bowing submissively, leaves the door.

Just as they were making preparations to retire, a carriage drove to the gate, and in the next minute a dashing young fellow came rushing into the house, apparently in great anxiety. He was followed by a well−dressed man, whose countenance and sharp features, full of sternness, indicated much mechanical study. He hesitated as the young man advanced, took Marston by the hand, nervously, led him aside, whispered something in his ear. Taking a few steps towards a window, the intruder, for such he seemed, stood almost motionless, with his eyes firmly and watchfully fixed upon them, a paper in his right hand. "It is too often, Lorenzo; these things may prove fatal," said Marston, giving an inquiring glance at the man, still standing at the window.

"I pledge you my honour, uncle, it shall be the last time," said the young stranger. "Uncle, I have not forgotten your advice." Marston, much excited, exhibited changes of countenance peculiar to a man labouring under the effect of sudden disappointment. Apologising to his guests, he dismissed them−with the exception of Maxwell−ordered pen and ink, drew a chair to the table, and without asking the stranger to be seated, signed his name to a paper. While this was being done, the man who had waited in silence stepped to the door and admitted two gentlemanly−looking men, who approached Marston and authenticated the instrument. It was evident there was something of deep importance associated with Marston's signature. No sooner had his pen fulfilled the mission, than Lorenzo's face, which had just before exhibited the most watchful anxiety, lighted up with joy, as if it had dismantled its care for some new scene of worldly prosperity.

CHAPTER IV. AN UNEXPECTED CONFESSION.

HAVING executed the document, Marston ordered one of the servants to show Maxwell his room. The persons who had acted the part of justices, authenticating the instrument, withdrew without further conversation; while the person who had followed Lorenzo, for such was the young man's name, remained as if requiring some further negotiation with Marston. He approached the table sullenly, and with one hand resting upon it, and the other adjusted in his vest, deliberately waited the moment to interrupt the conversation. This man, reader, is Marco Graspum, an immense dealer in human flesh,—great in that dealing in the flesh and blood of mankind which brings with it all the wickedness of the demon. It is almost impossible to conceive the suddenness with which that species of trade changes man into a craving creature, restless for the dross of the world. There he was, the heartless dealer in human flesh, dressed in the garb of a gentleman, and by many would have been taken as such. Care and anxiety sat upon his countenance; he watched the chances of the flesh market, stood ready to ensnare the careless youth, to take advantage of the frailer portions of a Southerner's noble nature. "A word or two with you, Mr. Marston," said he.

"Sit down, Graspum, sit down," Marston rejoined, ordering Dandy to give him a chair; which being done he seats himself in front of Marston, and commences dilating upon his leniency. "You may take me for an importune feller, in coming this time o'night, but the fact is I've been−you know my feelings for helpin' everybody−good−naturedly drawn into a very bad scrape with this careless young nephew of yourn: he's a dashing devil, and you don't know it, he is. But I've stood it so long that I was compelled to make myself sure. This nephew of yourn," said he, turning to Lorenzo, "thinks my money is made for his gambling propensities, and if he has used your name improperly, you should have known of it before." At this Lorenzo's fine open countenance assumed a glow of indignation, and turning to his uncle, with a nervous tremor, he said, "Uncle, he has led me into this trouble. You know not the snares of city life; and were I to tell you him−this monster−yea, I say monster, for he has drawn me into a snare like one who was seeking to devour my life−that document, uncle, which he now holds in his hand saves me from a shame and disgrace which I never could have withstood before the world."

"Ah! you are just like all gamblers: never consider yourself in the light of bringing yourself into trouble. Take my advice, young man; there is a step in a gambler's life to which it is dangerous to descend, and if you have brought your father and uncle into trouble, blame neither me nor my money," returned Graspum.

"You do not say that there is forgery connected with this affair, do you?" inquired Marston, grasping Lorenzo by the arm.

"I wish it were otherwise, uncle," replied Lorenzo, leaning forward upon the table and covering his face with his hands. "It was my folly, and the flattery of this man, which have driven me to it," he continued.

"Oh! cursed inconsistency: and you have now fallen back upon the last resource, to save a name that, once gone, cannot reinstate itself. Tell me, Marco Graspum; are you not implicated in this affair? Your name stands full of dark implications; are you not following up one of those avenues through which you make so many victims? What is the amount?" returned Marston.

"You will know that to−morrow. He has given paper in your name to an uncertain extent. You should have known this before. Your nephew has been leading a reckless gambler's life−spending whatsoever money came into his possession, and at length giving bills purporting to be drawn by you and his father. You must now honour them, or dishonour him. You see, I am straightforward in business: all my transactions are conducted with promptness; but I must have what is due to me. I have a purpose in all my transactions, and I pursue them to the end. You know the purport of this document, Marston; save yourself trouble, and do not allow me to call too often." Thus saying, he took his hat and left the room.

Uncle," said Lorenzo, as soon as Graspum had left, "I have been led into difficulty. First led away by fashionable associations, into the allurements with which our city is filled, from small vices I have been hurried onward, step by step, deeper and deeper, until now I have arrived at the dark abyss. Those who have watched me

through each sin, been my supposed friends, and hurried me onwards to this sad climax, have proved my worst enemies. I have but just learned the great virtue of human nature,—mistrust him who would make pleasure of vice. I have ruined my father, and have involved you by the very act which you have committed for my relief to−night. In my vain struggle to relieve myself from the odium which must attach to my transactions, I have only added to your sorrows. I cannot ask you to forgive me, nor can I disclose all my errors−they are manifold."

"This is an unexpected blow−one which I was not prepared to meet. I am ready to save your honour, but there is something beyond this which the voice of rumour will soon spread. You know our society, and the strange manner in which it countenances certain things, yet shuts out those who fall by them. But what is to be done? Although we may discharge the obligation with Graspum, it does not follow that he retains the stigma in his own breast. Tell me, Lorenzo, what is the amount?" inquired Marston, anxiously.

"My father has already discharged a secret debt of fourteen thousand dollars for me, and there cannot be less than thirty thousand remaining. Uncle, do not let it worry you; I will leave the country, bear the stigma with me, and you can repudiate the obligation," said he, pleading nervously, as he grasped his uncle's hand firmer and firmer.

Among the many vices of the south, spreading their corrupting influence through the social body, that of gambling stands first. Confined to no one grade of society, it may be found working ruin among rich and poor, old and young. Labour being disreputable, one class of men affect to consider themselves born gentlemen, while the planter is ever ready to indulge his sons with some profession they seldom practise, and which too often results in idleness and its attendants. This, coupled to a want of proper society with which the young may mix for social elevation, finds gratification in drinking saloons, fashionable billiard rooms, and at the card table. In the first, gentlemen of all professions meet and revel away the night in suppers and wine. They must keep up appearances, or fall doubtful visitors of these fashionable stepping−stones to ruin. Like a furnace to devour its victims, the drinking saloon first opens its gorgeous doors, and when the burning liquid has inflamed the mental and physical man, soon hurries him onward into those fascinating habitations where vice and voluptuousness mingle their degrading powers. Once in these whirlpools of sin, the young man finds himself borne away by every species of vicious allurement−his feelings become unrestrained, until at length that last spark of filial advice which had hovered round his consciousness dies out. When this is gone, vice becomes the great charmer, and with its thousand snares and resplendent workers never fails to hold out a hope with each temptation; but while the victim now and then asks hope to be his guardian, he seldom thinks how surely he is sinking faster and faster to an irretrievable depth.

Through this combination of snares−all having their life−springs in slavery−Lorenzo brought ruin upon his father, and involved his uncle. With an excellent education, a fine person, frank and gentle demeanour, he made his way into the city, and soon attracted the attention of those who affect to grace polished society. Had society laid its restraints upon character and personal worth, it would have been well for Lorenzo; but the neglect to found this moral conservator only serves to increase the avenues to vice, and to bring men from high places into the lowest moral scale. This is the lamentable fault of southern society; and through the want of that moral bulwark, so protective of society in the New England States−personal worth−estates are squandered, families brought to poverty, young men degraded, and persons once happy driven from those homes they can only look back upon with pain and regret. The associations of birth, education, and polished society−so much valued by the southerner−all become as nothing when poverty sets its seal upon the victim.

And yet, among some classes in the south there exists a religious sentiment apparently grateful; but what credit for sincerity shall we accord to it when the result proves that no part of the organisation itself works for the elevation of a degraded class? How much this is to be regretted we leave to the reader's discrimination. The want of a greater effort to make religious influence predominant has been, and yet is, a source of great evil. But let us continue our narrative, and beg the reader's indulgence for having thus transgressed.

Flattered and caressed among gay assemblages, Lorenzo soon found himself drawn beyond their social pleasantries into deeper and more alluring excitements. His frequent visits at the saloon and gambling−tables did not detract, for a time, from the social position society had conferred upon him.

His parents, instead of restraining, fostered these associations, prided themselves on his reception, providing means of maintaining him in this style of living. Vanity and passion led him captive in their gratifications; they were inseparable from the whirlpool of confused society that triumphs at the south,—that leads the proud heart

writhing in the agony of its follies. He cast himself upon this, like a frail thing upon a rapid stream, and—forgetting the voyage was short—found his pleasures soon ended in the troubled waters of misery and disgrace.

There is no fundamental morality in the south, nor is education invested with the material qualities of social good; in this it differs from the north, against which it is fast building up a political and social organisation totally at variance. Instead of maintaining those great principles upon which the true foundation of the republic stands, the south allows itself to run into a hyper− aristocratic vagueness, coupled with an arbitrary determination to perpetuate its follies for the guidance of the whole Union. And the effect of this becomes still more dangerous, when it is attempted to carry it out under the name of democracy,—American democracy! In this manner it serves the despotic ends of European despots: they point to the freest government in the world for examples of their own absolutism, shield their autocracy beneath its democracy, and with it annihilate the rights of the commoner.

Heedlessly wending his way, the man of rank and station at one side, the courtesan with his bland smiles at the other, Lorenzo had not seen the black poniard that was to cut the cord of his downfall,—it had remained gilded. He drank copious draughts at the house of licentiousness, became infatuated with the soft music that leads the way of the unwary, until at length, he, unconsciously at it were, found himself in the midst of a clan who are forming a plot to put the black seal upon his dishonour. Monto Graspum, his money playing through the hands of his minions in the gambling rooms, had professed to be his friend. He had watched his pliable nature, had studied the resources of his parents, knew their kindness, felt sure of his prey while abetting the downfall. Causing him to perpetrate the crime, from time to time, he would incite him with prospects of retrieve, guide his hand to consummate the crime again, and watch the moment when he might reap the harvest of his own infamy. Thus, when he had brought the young man to that last pitiless issue, where the proud heart quickens with a sense of its wrongs−when the mind recurs painfully to the past, imploring that forgiveness which seems beyond the power of mankind to grant, he left him a poor outcast, whose errors would be first condemned by his professed friends. That which seemed worthy of praise was forgotten, his errors were magnified; and the seducer made himself secure by crushing his victim, compromising the respectability of his parents, making the disgrace a forfeiture for life.

Unexpected as the shock was to Marston, he bore it with seeming coolness, as if dreading the appearance of the man who had taken advantage of the moment to bring him under obligations, more than he did the amount to be discharged. Arising from the table, he took Lorenzo by the hand, saying:—"Veil your trouble, Lorenzo! Let the past be forgotten, bury the stigma in your own bosom; let it be an example to your feelings and your actions. Go not upon the world to wrestle with its ingratitude; if you do, misfortune will befall you−you will stumble through it the remainder of your life. With me, I fear the very presence of the man who has found means of engrafting his avarice upon our misfortunes; he deals with those in his grasp like one who would cut the flesh and blood of mankind into fragments of gain. Be firm, Lorenzo; be firm! Remember, it is not the province of youth to despair; be manly−manliness even in crime lends its virtue to the falling." At which he bid him good night, and retired to rest.

The young man, more pained at his uncle's kindness,—kindness stronger in its effects than reproof,—still lingered, as if to watch some change of expression on his uncle's countenance, as he left the door. His face changed into pallid gloominess, and again, as if by magic influence, filled with the impress of passion; it was despair holding conflict with a bending spirit. He felt himself a criminal, marked by the whispers of society; he might not hear the charges against him, nor be within the sound of scandal's tongue, but he would see it outlined in faces that once smiled at his seeming prosperity. He would feel it in the cold hand that had welcomed him,—that had warmly embraced him; his name would no longer be respected. The circle of refined society that had kindly received him, had made him one of its attractions, would now shun him as if he were contagion. Beyond this he saw the fate that hovered over his father's and his uncle's estates;−all the filial affection they had bestowed upon him, blasted; the caresses of his beloved and beautiful sister; the shame the exposure would bring upon her; the knave who held him in his grasp, while dragging the last remnants of their property away to appease dishonest demands, haunted him to despair. And, yet, to sink under them−to leave all behind him and be an outcast, homeless and friendless upon the world, where he could only look back upon the familiar scenes of his boyhood with regret, would be to carry a greater amount of anguish to his destiny. The destroyer was upon him; his grasp was firm and painful. He might live a life of rectitude; but his principles and affections would be

unfixed. It would be like an infectious robe encircling him,—a disease which he never could eradicate, so that he might feel he was not an empty vessel among honourable men. When men depicted their villains, moving in the grateful spheres of life, he would be one of their models; and though the thoughtlessness of youth had made him the type haunting himself by day and night, the world never made a distinction. Right and wrong were things that to him only murmured in distrust; they would be blemishes exaggerated from simple error; but the judgment of society would never overlook them. He must now choose between a resolution to bear the consequences at home, or turn his back upon all that had been near and dear to him,—be a wanderer struggling with the eventful trials of life in a distant land! Turning pale, as if frantic with the thought of what was before him, the struggle to choose between the two extremes, and the only seeming alternative, he grasped the candle that flickered before him, gave a glance round the room, as if taking a last look at each familiar object that met his eyes, and retired.

CHAPTER V. THE MAROONING PARTY.

A MAROONING pic−nic had been proposed and arranged by the young beaux and belles of the neighbouring plantations. The day proposed for the festive event was that following the disclosure of Lorenzo's difficulties. Every negro on the plantation was agog long before daylight: the morning ushered forth bright and balmy, with bustle and confusion reigning throughout the plantation,—the rendezvous being Marston's mansion, from which the gay party would be conveyed in a barge, overspread with an awning, to a romantic spot, overshaded with luxuriant pines, some ten miles up the stream. Here gay fˆtes, mirth and joy, the mingling of happy spirits, were to make the time pass pleasantly. The night passed without producing any decision in Lorenzo's mind; and when he made his appearance on the veranda an unusual thoughtfulness pervaded his countenance; all his attempts to be joyous failed to conceal his trouble. Marston, too, was moody and reserved even to coldness; that frank, happy, and careless expression of a genial nature, which had so long marked him in social gatherings, was departed. When Maxwell, the young Englishman, with quiet demeanour, attempted to draw him into conversation about the prospects of the day, his answers were measured, cold, beyond his power of comprehending, yet inciting.

To appreciate those pleasant scenes−those scenes so apparently happy, at times adding a charm to plantation life−those innocent merry−makings in spring time−one must live among them, be born to the recreations of the soil. Not a negro on the plantation, old or young, who does not think himself part and parcel of the scene−that he is indispensably necessary to make Mas'r's enjoyment complete! In this instance, the lawn, decked in resplendent verdure, the foliage tinged by the mellow rays of the rising sun, presented a pastoral loveliness that can only be appreciated by those who have contemplated that soft beauty which pervades a southern landscape at morning and evening. The arbour of old oaks, their branches twined into a panoply of thick foliage, stretching from the mansion to the landing, seemed like a sleeping battlement, its dark clusters soaring above redolent brakes and spreading water−leaks. Beneath their fretted branches hung the bedewed moss like a veil of sparkling crystals, moving gently to and fro as if touched by some unseen power. The rice fields, stretching far in the distance, present the appearance of a mirror decked with shadows of fleecy clouds, transparent and sublime. Around the cabins of the plantation people−the human property−the dark sons and daughters of promiscuous families−are in "heyday glee:" they laughed, chattered, contended, and sported over the presence of the party;−the overseer had given them an hour or two to see the party "gwine so;" and they were overjoyed. Even the dogs, as if incited by an instinctive sense of some gay scene in which they were to take part, joined their barking with the jargon of the negroes, while the mules claimed a right to do likewise. In the cabins near the mansion another scene of fixing, fussing, toddling, chattering, running here and there with sun−slouches, white aprons, fans, shades, baskets, and tin pans, presented itself; any sort of vessel that would hold provender for the day was being brought forth. Clotilda, her face more cheerful, is dressed in a nice drab merino, a plain white stomacher, a little collar neatly turned over: with her plain bodice, her white ruffles round her wrists, she presents the embodiment of neatness. She is pretty, very pretty; and yet her beauty has made her the worst slave−a slave in the sight of Heaven and earth! Her large, meaning eyes, glow beneath her arched brows, while her auburn hair, laid in smooth folds over her ears and braided into a heavy circle at the back of her head, gives her the fascinating beauty of a Norman peasant. Annette plays around her, is dressed in her very best,—for Marston is proud of the child's beauty, and nothing is withheld that can gratify the ambition of the mother, so characteristic, to dress with fantastic colours: the child gambols at her feet, views its many−coloured dress, keeps asking various unanswerable questions about Daddy Bob, Harry, and the pic−nic. Again it scrambles pettishly, sings snatches of some merry plantation song, pulls its braided hat about the floor, climbs upon the table to see what is in the basket.

Passing to the cabin of Ellen Juvarna, we see her in the same confusion which seems to have beset the plantation: her dark, piercing eyes, display more of that melancholy which marks Clotilda's; nor does thoughtfulness pervade her countenance, and yet there is the restlessness of an Indian about her,—she is Indian by blood and birth; her look calls up all the sad associations of her forefathers; her black glossy hair, in heavy folds, hangs carelessly about her olive shoulders, contrasting strangely with the other.

"And you, Nicholas! remember what your father will say: but you must not call him such," she says, taking by the hand a child we have described, who is impatient to join the gay group.

"That ain't no harm, mother! Father always is fondling about me when nobody's lookin'," the child answers, with a pertness indicating a knowledge of his parentage rather in advance of his years.

We pass to the kitchen,—a little, dingy cabin, presenting the most indescribable portion of the scene, the smoke issuing from every crevice. Here old Peggy, the cook,—an enveloped representative of smoke and grease,—as if emerging from the regions of Vulcan, moves her fat sides with the independence of a sovereign. In this miniature smoke−pit she sweats and frets, runs to the door every few minutes, adjusts the points of her flashy bandana, and takes a wistful look at the movements without. Sal, Suke, Rose, and Beck, young members of Peggy's family, are working at the top of their energy among stew−pans, griddles, pots and pails, baskets, bottles and jugs. Wafs, fritters, donjohns and hominy flap−jacks, fine doused hams, savoury meats, ices, and fruit−cakes, are being prepared and packed up for the occasion. Negro faces of every shade seem full of interest and freshness, newly brightened for the pleasures of the day. Now and then broke upon our ear that plaintive melody with the words, "Down on the Old Plantation;" and again, "Jim crack corn, an' I don't care, for Mas'r's gone away." Then came Aunt Rachel, always persisting in her right to be master of ceremonies, dressed in her Sunday bombazine, puffed and flounced, her gingham apron so clean, her head "did up" with the flashiest bandana in her wardrobe; it's just the colour for her taste−real yellow, red, and blue, tied with that knot which is the height of plantation toilet: there is as little restraint in her familiarity with the gentry of the mansion as there is in her control over the denizens of the kitchen. Even Dandy and Enoch, dressed in their best black coats, white pantaloons, ruffled shirts, with collars endangering their ears, hair crisped with an extra nicety, stand aside at her bidding. The height of her ambition is to direct the affairs of the mansion: sometimes she extends it to the overseer. The trait is amiably exercised: she is the best nigger on the plantation, and Marston allows her to indulge her feelings, while his guests laugh at her native pomposity, so generously carried out in all her commands. She is preparing an elegant breakfast, which "her friends" must partake of before starting. Everything must be in her nicest: she runs from the ante−room to the hall, and from thence to the yard, gathering plates and dishes; she hurries Old Peggy the cook, and again scolds the waiters.

Daddy Bob and Harry have come into the yard to ask Marston's permission to join the party as boatmen. They are in Aunt Rachel's way, and she rushes past them, pushing them aside, and calling Mas'r to come and attend to their wants. Marston comes forward, greets them with a familiar shake of the hand, granting their request without further ceremony. Breakfast is ready; but, anxious for the amusement of the day, their appetites are despoiled. Franconia, more lovely than ever, presenting that ease, elegance, and reserve of the southern lady, makes her appearance in the hall, is escorted to the table leaning on the arm of Maxwell. Delicacy, sensitiveness, womanly character full of genial goodness, are traits with which the true southern lady is blessed:—would she were blessed with another, an energy to work for the good of the enslaved! Could she add that to the poetry of her nature, how much greater would be her charm−how much more fascinating that quiet current of thought with which she seems blessed! There is a gentleness in her impulses—a pensiveness in her smile—a softness in her emotions—a grace in her movements—an ardent soul in her love! She is gay and lightsome in her youth; she values her beauty, is capricious with her admirers, and yet becomes the most affectionate mother; she can level her frowns, play with the feelings, make her mercurial sympathy touching, knows the power of her smiles: but once her feelings are enlisted, she is sincere and ardent in her responses. If she cannot boast of the bright carnatic cheek, she can swell the painter's ideal with her fine features, her classic face, the glow of her impassioned eyes. But she seldom carries this fresh picture into the ordinary years of womanhood: the bloom enlivening her face is but transient; she loses the freshness of girlhood, and in riper years, fades like a sensitive flower, withering, unhappy with herself, unadmired by others.

Franconia sat at the table, a pensiveness pervading her countenance that bespoke melancholy: as she glanced inquiringly round, her eyes rested upon Lorenzo fixedly, as if she detected something in his manner at variance with his natural deportment. She addressed him; but his cold reply only excited her more: she resolved upon knowing the cause ere they embarked. Breakfast was scarcely over before the guests of the party from the neighbouring plantations began to assemble in the veranda, leaving their servants in charge of the viands grouped together upon the grass, under a clump of oaks a few rods from the mansion. Soon the merry−makers, about forty in number, old and young, their servants following, repaired to the landing, where a long barge, surrounded by

brakes and water−lilies, presented another picture.

"Him all straight, Mas'r−him all straight, jus so!" said Daddy Bob, as he strode off ahead, singing "Dis is de way to de jim crack corn."

Servants of all ages and colour, mammies and daddies, young 'uns and prime fellows,—"wenches" that had just become hand−maids,—brought up the train, dancing, singing, hopping, laughing, and sporting: some discuss the looks of their young mistresses, others are criticising their dress. Arrived at the landing, Daddy Bob and Harry, full of cares, are hurrying several prime fellows, giving orders to subordinate boatmen about getting the substantial on board,—the baskets of champagne, the demijohns, the sparkling nectar. The young beaux and belles, mingling with their dark sons and daughters of servitude, present a motley group indeed−a scene from which the different issues of southern life may be faithfully drawn.

A band of five musicians, engaged to enliven the sports of the day with their music, announce, "All on board!" and give the signal for starting by striking up "Life on the Ocean Wave." Away they speed, drawn by horses on the bank, amidst the waving of handkerchiefs, the soft notes of the music reverberating over the pine−clad hills. Smoothly and gently, onward they speed upon the still bosom of the Ashly;−the deep, dark stream, its banks bedecked with blossoms and richest verdure, is indeed enough to excite the romantic of one's nature. Wild, yet serene with rural beauty, if ever sensations of love steal upon us, it is while mingling in the simple convivialities so expressive of southern life. On, on, the barge moved, as lovers gathered together, the music dancing upon the waters. Another party sing the waterman's merry song, still another trail for lilies, and a third gather into the prow to test champagne and ice, or regale with choice Havannas. Marston, and a few of the older members, seated at midships, discuss the all−absorbing question of State−rights; while the negroes are as merry as larks in May, their deep jargon sounding high above the clarion notes of the music. Now it subsides into stillness, broken only by the splashing of an alligator, whose sports call forth a rapturous shout.

After some three hours' sailing the barge nears a jut of rising ground on the left bank. Close by it is a grove of noble old pines, in the centre of which stands a dilapidated brick building, deserted for some cause not set forth on the door: it is a pretty, shaded retreat−a spot breathing of romance. To the right are broad lagoons stretching far into the distance; their dark waters, beneath thick cypress, presenting the appearance of an inundated grove. The cypress−trees hang their tufted tops over the water's surface, opening an area beneath studded with their trunks, like rude columns supporting a panoply of foliage.

The barge stops, the party land; the shrill music, still dancing through the thick forest, re−echoes in soft chimes as it steals back upon the scene. Another minute, and we hear the voices of Daddy Bob and Harry, Dandy and Enoch: they are exchanging merry laughs, shouting in great good−nature, directing the smaller fry, who are fagging away at the larder, sucking the ice, and pocketing the lemons. "Dat ain't just straight, nohow: got de tings ashore, an' ye get 'e share whin de white folk done! Don' make 'e nigger ob yourse'f, now, old Boss, doing the ting up so nice," Daddy says, frowning on his minions. A vanguard have proceeded in advance to take possession of the deserted house; while Aunt Rachel, with her cortŠge of feminines, is fussing over "young missus." Here, a group are adjusting their sun−shades; there, another are preparing their fans and nets. Then they follow the train, Clotilda and Ellen leading their young representatives by the hand, bringing up the rear among a cluster of smaller fry. Taking peaceable possession of the house, they commence to clear the rooms, the back ones being reserved for the sumptuous collation which Rachel and her juniors are preparing. The musicians are mustered,—the young belles and beaux, and not a few old bachelors, gather into the front room, commence the fˆtes with country dances, and conclude with the polka and schottische.

Rachel's department presents a bustling picture; she is master of ceremonies, making her sombre minions move at her bidding, adjusting the various dishes upon the table. None, not even the most favoured guests, dare intrude themselves into her apartments until she announces the completion of her tables, her readiness to receive friends. And yet, amidst all this interest of character, this happy pleasantry, this seeming contentment, there is one group pauses ere it arrives at the house,—dare not enter. The distinction seems undefinable to us; but they, poor wretches, feel it deeply. Shame rankles deep, to their very heart's core. They doubt their position, hesitate at the door, and, after several nervous attempts to enter, fall back,—gather round a pine−tree, where they enjoy the day, separated from the rest. There is a simplicity−a forlornness, about this little group, which attracts our attention, excites our sympathies, unbends our curiosity: we would relieve the burden it labours under. They are Ellen Juvarna, Clotilda, and their children. Socially, they are disowned; they are not allowed to join the festivities with

those in the dance, and their feelings revolt at being compelled to associate with the negroes. They are as white as many of the whitest, have the same outlines of interest upon their faces; but their lives are sealed with the black seal of slavery. Sensible of the injustice that has stripped them of their rights, they value their whiteness; the blood of birth tinges their face, and through it they find themselves mere dregs of human kind,—objects of sensualism in its vilest associations.

Maxwell has taken a deep interest in Clotilda; and the solicitude she manifests for her child has drawn him still further in her favour; he is determined to solve the mystery that shrouds her history. Drawing near to them, he seats himself upon the ground at their side, inquires why they did not come into the house. "There's no place there for us,—none for me," Clotilda modestly replies, holding down her head, placing her arm around Annette's waist.

"You would enjoy it much better, and there is no restraint upon anyone."

"We know not why the day was not for us to enjoy as well as others; but it is ordained so. Where life is a dreary pain, pleasure is no recompense for disgrace enforced upon us. They tell us we are not what God made us to be; but it is the worst torture to be told so. There is nothing in it−it is the curse only that remains to enforce wrong. Those who have gifts to enjoy life, and those who move to make others happy, can enjoy their separate pleasures; our lives are between the two, hence there is little pleasure for us," she answered, her eyes moistening with tears.

"If you will but come with me−"

"Oh, I will go anywhere," she rejoined, quickly; "anywhere from this; that I may know who I am−may bear my child with me−may lead a virtuous life, instead of suffering the pangs of shame through a life of unholy trouble."

"She never knows when she's well off. If Marston was to hear her talk in that way, I wouldn't stand in her shoes," interrupted Ellen, with a significant air.

Touched by this anxious reply, Maxwell determined to know more of her feelings−to solve the anxiety that was hanging upon her mind, and, if possible, to carry her beyond the power that held her and her child in such an uncertain position.

"I meant into the house," said he, observing that Ellen was not inclined to favour Clotilda's feelings; and just at that moment the shrill sounds of a bugle summoned the party to the collation. Here another scene was enacted, which is beyond the power of pen to describe. The tables, decorated with wild flowers, were spread with meats of all descriptions,—fowl, game, pastry, and fruit, wines, and cool drinks. Faces wearing the blandest smiles, grave matrons, and cheerful planters,—all dressed in rustic style and neatness−gathered around to partake of the feast, while servants were running hither and thither to serve mas'r and missus with the choicest bits. Toasts, compliments, and piquant squibs, follow the wine−cup. Then came that picture of southern life which would be more worthy of praise if it were carried out in the purity of motive:—as soon as the party had finished, the older members, in their turn, set about preparing a repast for the servants. This seemed to elate the negroes, who sat down to their meal with great pomp, and were not restrained in the free use of the choicest beverage. While this was going on, Marston ordered Rachel to prepare fruit and pastry for Ellen and Clotilda. "See to them; and they must have wine too," whispered Marston.

"I know's dat, old Boss," returned Rachel, with a knowing wink.

After the collation, the party divided into different sections. Some enjoyed the dance, others strolled through the pine−grove, whispering tales of love. Anglers repaired to the deep pond in quest of trout, but more likely to find water−snakes and snapping turtles. Far in the distance, on the right, moving like fairy gondolas through the cypress−covered lagoon, little barks skim the dark surface. They move like spectres, carrying their fair freight, fanned by the gentle breeze pregnant with the magnolia' sweet perfume. The fair ones in those tiny barks are fishing; they move from tree to tree trailing their lines to tempt the finny tribe here, and there breaking the surface with their gambols.

Lorenzo, as we have before informed the reader, exhibited signs of melancholy during the day. So evident were they that Franconia's sympathies became enlisted in his behalf, and even carried so far, that Maxwell mistook her manner for indifference toward himself. And, as if to confirm his apprehensions, no sooner had the collation ended than she took Lorenzo's arm and retired to the remains of an old mill, a few rods above the landing. It was a quiet, sequestered spot−just such an one as would inspire the emotions of a sensitive heart, recall the associations of childhood, and give life to our pent−up enthusiasm. There they seated themselves, the one

waiting for the other to speak.

"Tell me, Lorenzo," said Franconia, laying her hand on his arm, and watching with nervous anxiety each change of his countenance, "why are you not joyous? you are gloomy to−day. I speak as a sister−you are nervous, faltering with trouble−"

"Trouble!" he interrupted, raising his eyes, and accompanying an affected indifference with a sigh. It is something he hesitates to disclose. He has erred! his heart speaks, it is high−handed crime! He looks upon her affectionately, a forced smile spreads itself over his face. How forcibly it tells its tale. "Speak out," she continues, tremulously: "I am a sister; a sister cannot betray a brother's secrets." She removes her hand and lays it gently upon his shoulder.

Looking imploringly in her face for a few minutes, he replies as if it were an effort of great magnitude. "Something you must not know−nor must the world! Many things are buried in the secrets of time that would make great commotion if the world knew them. It were well they passed unknown, for the world is like a great stream with a surface of busy life moving on its way above a troubled current, lashing and foaming beneath, but only breaking here and there as if to mark the smothered conflict. And yet with me it is nothing, a moment of disappointment creeping into my contemplations, transplanting them with melancholy−"

"Something more!" interrupted Franconia, "something more; it is a step beyond melancholy, more than disappointment. Uncle feels it sensibly−it pains him, it wears upon him. I have seen it foremost in his thoughts." Her anxiety increases, her soft meaning eyes look upon him imploringly, she fondles him with a sister's tenderness, the tears trickling down her cheeks as she beholds him downcast and in sorrow. His reluctance to disclose the secret becomes more painful to her.

"You may know it soon enough," he replies. "I have erred, and my errors have brought me to a sad brink. My friends−those who have indulged my follies−have quickened the canker that will destroy themselves. Indulgence too often hastens the cup of sorrow, and when it poisons most, we are least conscious. It is an alluring charmer, betraying in the gayest livery−"

"Lorenzo," she interrupts, wiping the tears from her eyes. "Tell me all; remember woman's influence−she can relieve others when she cannot relieve herself. Make me your confidant—relieve your feelings."

"This night, Franconia, I shall bid a painful good−bye to those familiar scenes which have surrounded my life,—to you, my sister, to those faithful old friends of the plantation, Daddy Bob and Harry. They have fondled me, protected me, played with me in my childhood, led me to my boyish sports when all was bright and pleasant, when the plantation had its merry scenes for slave and master. I must go upon the world, mingle with strange life, make experience my guardian. I have committed a crime−one which for ever disgraces the honourable−"

Crime, crime, crime! weighed itself in her mind. "And what of that?" she rejoined, suddenly; "a sister can forgive a brother any crime; and even a lover, if she love truly, can forget them in her affections. Do not go upon the world; be a man above crime, above the bar of scandal. Have confidence in yourself; do not let the injustice overcome you. Once on the world a wanderer, remember the untold tale of misery, speeding its victims to that death of conscience burning unseen."

"Nay, Franconia, you mean well; but you have not learned the world. Take this as my advice, remember it when I am gone, and in years to come you will acknowledge its truth—Fortune at the south rests on an unsound foundation! We are lofty in feelings, but poor in principle, poor in government,—poor in that which has built our great republic. Uncertainty hangs over us at every step; but, whatever befall you, stand firm through adversity. Never chide others for the evils that may befall you; bear your burdens without casting reflections on others,—it is nobler! Befriend those who have no power to befriend themselves; and when the world forgets you, do not forget yourself. There is no step of return for those who falter in poverty. To−night I shall leave for the city; in a few days you will know all." Thus saying, he conducted Franconia back to rejoin the party, already making preparations to return.

He gave her an insight of his troubles, in such a manner as to create deep agitation; and, although satisfied that an event of more than ordinary magnitude was at hand, she could not associate it with the commission of crime. The day, spent with all the conviviality of southern life, ended amidst the clang of merry voices, and soft music: a gay group assembled at the bank, ready to return under the cheering influence of music and moonlight.

The bugle sounded,—the soft notes of "Home, sweet Home!" followed: the party, forming into double file, gay and grotesque, marched through the grove to the barge. Servants, old and young, were in high glee; some

joining in chorus with the music; some preparing the barge, others strewing branches and flowers in the pathway, to the delight of young "mas'r" and "missus,"−all singing. Aunt Rachel, high above her minions in authority, is poised on the bank, giving directions at the very top of her voice. Daddy Bob, Harry, and Dandy−the latter named after "mas'r's" fleetest horse−are freighting their young "missusses" in their arms to the boat, shielding their feet from the damp.

"Now, mas'r, Old Boss," Bob says, directing himself to Marston, after completing his charge with the young ladies, "Jus' lef' 'um tote, old mas'r safe da'? So 'e don' mus e' foot." And forthwith he shoulders Marston, lands him like a bale of cotton on one of the seats, much to the amusement of those on board, sending forth shouts of applause. The party are on board; all is quiet for a minute; again the music strikes up, the barge is gliding over the still bosom of the fairy−like stream.

The sun has just sunk into a fiery cloud that hangs its crimson curtains high in the heavens, shedding refulgent beauty over the dark jungle lining the river's banks. And then, twilight, as if stealing its way across the hills, follows, softening the scene. Soon it has gone, the landscape sleeps, tranquilly arched by the serene vault of a southern sky. Everything seems peaceful, reposing, and serene; the air breathes warm and balmy, distributing its invigorating influence. The music has ceased, nothing but the ripple of the water is heard; then the stars, like pearls suspended over the dark surface, begin to glimmer and shine. Above all is the moon, like a silver goddess, rising stealthily and shedding her pale light upon the calm glow.

Onward, onward, onward, over the still stream, winding its way to the great deep, they move; and again the music echoes and re−echoes through the forest, over the lawn; dying away in chimes that faintly play around us. The sudden changes in the heavens,—monitor of things divine,—call up in Lorenzo's feelings the reverses of fortune that will soon take place on the plantation. He had never before recognised the lesson conveyed by heavenly bodies; and such was the effect at that moment that it proved a guardian to him in his future career.

It was near midnight when the barge reached the plantation. Fires were lighted on the bank, negroes were here and there stretched upon the ground, sleeping with such superlative comfort that it landed ere they awoke. One by one the parties returned for their homes; and, after shaking hands with Marston, taking an affectionate adieu of Franconia (telling her he would call on the morrow), lisping a kind word to the old negroes, Lorenzo ordered a horse, and left for the city. He took leave of the plantation, of its dearest associations, like one who had the conflict of battle before him, and the light of friendship behind.

CHAPTER VI. ANOTHER SCENE IN SOUTHERN LIFE.

IN the city, a few miles from the plantation, a scene which too often affords those degrading pictures that disgrace a free and happy country, was being enacted. A low brick building, standing in an area protected by a high fence, surmounted with spikes and other dangerous projectiles, formed the place. The upper and lower windows of this building were strongly secured with iron gratings, and emitted the morbid air from cells scarcely large enough to contain human beings of ordinary size. In the rear, a sort of triangular area opened, along which was a line of low buildings, displaying single and double cells. Some had iron rings in the floor; some had rings in the walls; and, again, others had rings over head. Some of these confines of misery−for here men's souls were goaded by the avarice of our natures−were solitary; and at night, when the turmoil of the day had ceased, human wailings and the clank of chains might be heard breaking through the walls of this charnel−house. These narrow confines were filled with living beings−beings with souls, souls sold according to the privileges of a free and happy country,—a country that fills us with admiration of its greatness. It is here, O man, the tyrant sways his hand most! it is here the flesh and blood of the same Maker, in chains of death, yearns for freedom.

We walk through the corridor, between narrow arches containing the abodes of misery, while our ears drink the sad melancholy that sounds in agitated throbs, made painful by the gloom and darkness. Touching an iron latch, the door of a cell opens, cold and damp, as if death sat upon its walls; but it discloses no part of the inmate's person, and excites our sympathies still more. We know the unfortunate is there,—we hear the murmuring, like a death−bell in our ears; it is mingled with a dismal chaos of sound, piercing deep into our feelings. It tells us in terror how gold blasts the very soul of man−what a dark monster of cruelty he can become,—how he can forget the grave, and think only of his living self,—how he can strip reason of its right, making himself an animal with man for his food. See the monster seeking only for the things that can serve him on earth−see him stripping man of his best birth−right, see him the raving fiend, unconscious of his hell−born practices, dissevering the hope that by a fibre hangs over the ruins of those beings who will stand in judgment against him. His soul, like their faces, will be black, when theirs has been whitened for judgment in the world to come!

Ascending a few steps, leading into a centre building−where the slave merchant is polished into respectability−we enter a small room at the right hand. Several men, some having the appearance of respectable merchants, some dressed in a coarse, red−mixed homespun, others smoking cigars very leisurely, are seated at a table, upon which are several bottles and tumblers. They drank every few minutes, touched glasses, uttered the vilest imprecations. Conspicuous among them is Marco Graspum: it is enough that we have before introduced him to the reader at Marston's mansion. His dark peering eyes glisten as he sits holding a glass of liquor in one hand, and runs his fingers through his bristly hair with the other. "The depths of trade are beyond some men," he says, striking his hand on the table; then, catching up a paper, tears it into pieces. "Only follow my directions; and there can be no missing your man," he continued, addressing one who sat opposite to him; and who up to that time had been puffing his cigar with great unconcern. His whole energies seemed roused to action at the word. After keeping his eyes fixed upon Graspum for more than a minute, he replied, at the same time replenishing his cigar with a fresh one—

"Yee'h sees, Marco,—you'r just got to take that ar' say back, or stand an all−fired chaffing. You don't scar' this 'un, on a point a' business. If I hain't larned to put in the big pins, no fellow has. When ye wants to 'sap' a tall 'un, like Marston, ye stands shy until ye thinks he's right for pulling, and then ye'll make a muffin on him, quicker. But, ye likes to have yer own way in gettin' round things, so that a fellow can't stick a pinte to make a hundred or two unless he weaves his way clean through the law−unless he understands Mr. Justice, and puts a double blinder on his eye. There's nothing like getting on the right side of a fellow what knows how to get on the wrong side of the law; and seeing how I've studied Mr. Justice a little bit better than he's studied his books, I knows just what can be done with him when a feller's got chink in his pocket. You can't buy 'em, sir, they're so modest; but you can coax 'em at a mighty cheaper rate−you can do that!" "And ye can make him feel as if law and his business warn't two and two," rejoined Anthony Romescos, a lean, wiry man, whose small indescribable face, very much

sun−scorched, is covered with bright sandy hair, matted and uncombed. His forehead is low, the hair grows nearly to his eyebrows, profuse and red; his eyes wander and glisten with desperation; he is a merciless character. Men fear him, dread him; he sets the law at defiance, laughs when he is told he is the cunningest rogue in the county. He owns to the fearful; says it has served him through many a hard squeeze; but now that he finds law so necessary to carry out villainy, he's taken to studying it himself. His dress is of yellow cotton, of which he has a short roundabout and loose pantaloons. His shirt bosom is open, the collar secured at the neck with a short black ribbon; he is much bedaubed with tobacco−juice, which he has deposited over his clothes for the want of a more convenient place. A gray, slouch hat usually adorns his head, which, in consequence of the thinking it does, needs a deal of scratching. Reminding us how careful he is of his feet, he shows them ensconced in a pair of Indian moccasins ornamented with bead−work; and, as if we had not become fully conscious of his power, he draws aside his roundabout, and there, beneath the waist of his pantaloons, is a girdle, to which a large hunting−knife is attached, some five inches of the handle protruding above the belt. "Now, fellers, I tell ye what's what, ye'r point−up at bragin'; but ye don't come square up to the line when there's anything to put through what wants pluck. 'Tain't what a knowin' 'un like I can do; it's just what he can larn to be with a little training in things requiring spunk. I'm a going to have a square horse, or no horse; if I don't, by the great Davy, I'll back out and do business on my own account,—Anthony Romescos always makes his mark and then masters it. If ye don't give Anthony a fair showin', he'll set up business on his own account, and pocket the comins in. Now! thar's Dan Bengal and his dogs; they can do a thing or two in the way of trade now and then; but it requires the cunnin as well as the plucky part of a feller. It makes a great go when they're combined, though,—they ala's makes sure game and slap−up profit."

"Hold a stave, Anthony," interrupted a grim−visaged individual who had just filled his glass with whiskey, which he declared was only to counteract the effect of what he had already taken. He begs they will not think him half so stupid as he seems, says he is always well behaved in genteel society, and is fully convinced from the appearance of things that they are all gentlemen. He wears a semi−banditical garb, which, with his craven features, presents his character in all its repulsiveness. "You needn't reckon on that courage o' yourn, old fellow; this citizen can go two pins above it. If you wants a showin', just name the mark. I've seed ye times enough,—how ye would not stand ramrod when a nigger looked lightning at ye. Twice I seed a nigger make ye show flum; and ye darn't make the cussed critter toe the line trim up, nohow," he mumbles out, dropping his tumbler on the table, spilling his liquor. They are Graspum's "men;" they move as he directs−carry out his plans of trade in human flesh. Through these promulgators of his plans, his plots, his desperate games, he has become a mighty man of trade. They are all his good fellows−they are worth their weight in gold; but he can purchase their souls for any purpose, at any price! "Ah, yes, I see−the best I can do don't satisfy. My good fellows, you are plum up on business, do the square thing; but you're becomin' a little too familiar. Doing the nigger business is one thing, and choosing company's another. Remember, gentlemen, I hold a position in society, I do," says Graspum, all the dignity of his dear self glowing in his countenance.

"I see! There's no spoilin' a gentleman what's got to be one by his merits in trade. Thar's whar ye takes the shine out of us. Y'er gentleman gives ye a right smart chance to walk into them ar' big bugs what's careless,—don't think yer comin' it over 'em with a sort o' dignity what don't 'tract no s'picion." rejoined Romescos, taking up his hat, and placing it carelessly on his head, as if to assure Graspum that he is no better than the rest.

"Comprehend me, comprehend me, gentlemen! There can, and must be, dignity in nigger trading; it can be made as honourable as any other branch of business. For there is an intricacy about our business requiring more dignity and ability than general folks know. You fellers couldn't carry out the schemes, run the law down, keep your finger on people's opinion, and them sort o' things, if I didn't take a position in society what 'ud ensure puttin' ye straight through. South's the place where position's worth somethin'; and then, when we acts independent, and don't look as if we cared two toss−ups, ah!"

"I wonder you don't set up a dignity shop, and go to selling the article;−might have it manufactured to sell down south."

"Ah, Romescos," continued Graspum, "you may play the fool; but you must play it wisely to make it profitable. Here, position puts law at defiance!−here it puts croakers over humanity to rest−here, when it has money, it makes lawyers talk round the points, get fat among themselves, fills the old judge's head with anything;

so that he laughs and thinks he don't know nothin'. Listen to what I'm goin' to say, because you'll all make somethin' out on't. I've just got the dignity to do all; and with the coin to back her up, can safe every chance. When you fellers get into a snarl running off a white 'un, or a free nigger, I has to bring out the big talk to make it seem how you didn't understand the thing. 'Tain't the putting the big on, but it's the keepin' on it on. You'd laugh to see how I does it; it's the way I keeps you out of limbo, though."

We have said these men were Graspum's "men;" they are more−they are a band of outlaws, who boast of living in a free country, where its institutions may be turned into despotism. They carry on a system of trade in human bodies; they stain the fairest spots of earth with their crimes. They set law at defiance−they scoff at the depths of hell that yawn for them,—the blackness of their villainy is known only in heaven. Earth cares little for it; and those familiar with the devices of dealers in human bodies shrink from the shame of making them known to the world. There was a discontent in the party, a clashing of interests, occasioned by the meagre manner in which Graspum had divided the spoils of their degradation. He had set his dignity and position in society at a much higher value than they were willing to recognise,—especially when it was to share the spoils in proportion. Dan Bengal, so called from his ferocity of character, was a celebrated dog−trainer and negro−hunter, "was great in doing the savager portion of negro business." This, Romescos contended, did not require so much cunning as his branch of the business−which was to find "loose places," where doubtful whites see out remnants of the Indian race, and free negroes could be found easy objects of prey; to lay plots, do the "sharp," carry out plans for running all free rubbish down south, where they would sell for something.

"True! it's all true as sunshine," says Romescos; "we understand Mr. Graspum inside and out. But ye ain't paid a dime to get me out of any scrape. I was larned to nigger business afore I got into the 'tarnal thing; and when I just gits me eye on a nigger what nobody don't own, I comes the sly over him−puts him through a course of nigger diplomacy. The way he goes down to the Mississippi is a caution to nigger property!"

He has enlisted their attention, all eyes are set upon him, every voice calls out to know his process. He begs they will drink round; they fill their glasses, and demand that he will continue the interest of his story.

"My plans are worth a fortune to those who follow the business," he says, giving his glass a twirl as he sets it upon the table, and commences—

"Born 'cute, you see; trade comes natural. Afore a free 'un don't know it, I has him bonded and tucked off for eight or nine hundred dollars, slap−up, cash and all. And then, ye sees, it's worth somethin' in knowin' who to sell such criturs too−so that the brute don't git a chance to talk about it without getting his back troubled. And then, it requires as much knowin' as a senator's got just to fix things as smooth so nobody won't know it; and just like ye can jingle the coin in yer pocket, for the nigger, what everybody's wonderin' where he can be gone to. I tell ye what, it takes some stameny to keep the price of a prime feller in your pocket, and wonder along with the rest where the rascal can be. If you'd just see Bob Osmand doe it up, you'd think his face was made for a methodist deacon in camp meeting−time. The way he comes it when he wants to prove a free nigger's a runaway, would beat all the disciples of Blackstone between here and old Kentuck. And then, Bob's any sort of a gentleman, what you don't get in town every day, and wouldn't make a bad senator, if he'd bin in Congress when the compromise was settled upon,—'cos he can reason right into just nothin' at all. Ye see it ain't the feelings that makes a feller a gentleman in our business, it's knowing the human natur o' things; how to be a statesman, when ye meets the like, how to be a gentleman, and talk polite things, and sich like; how to be a jolly fellow, an' put the tall sayings into the things of life; and when ye gets among the lawyers, to know all about the pintes of the law, and how to cut off the corners, so they'll think ye're bin a parish judge. And then, when ye comes before the squire, just to talk dignity to him−tell him where the law is what he don't seem to comprehend. You've got to make a right good feller of the squire by sticking a fee under his vest−pocket when he don't obsarve it. And then, ye know, when ye make the squire a right good feller, you must keep him to the point; and when there's any swarin' to be done, he's just as easily satisfied as the law. It's all business, you see; and thar's just the same kind a thing in it; because profit rules principle, and puts a right smart chance o' business into their hands without troubling their consciences. But then, Bob ain't got the cunnin' in him like I−nor he can't "rope−in on the sly,"−knock down and drag out, and just tell a whole possee to come on, as I do. And that's what ye don't seem to come at, Graspum," said Romescos, again filling his glass, and drawing a long black pipe from his pocket prepares it for a smoke.

"Now, the trouble is, you all think you can carry out these matters on your own hook; but it's no go, and you'll find it so. It's a scheme that must have larger means at the head of it; and each man's rights must be stipulated, and

paid according to his own enterprise. But this discontent is monstrous and injurious, and if continued will prove unprofitable. You see, fellers, you've no responsibility, and my position is your protection, and if you don't get rich you must not charge the blame to me; and then just see how you live now to what you did when ranging the piny woods and catching a stray nigger here and there, what didn't hardly pay dog money. There's a good deal in the sport of the thing, too; and ye know it amounts to a good deal to do the gentleman and associate with big folks, who puts the business into one's hands, by finding out who's got lean purses and prime niggers," rejoined Graspum, very coolly.

"Ah, yes; that's the way ye comes it over these haristocrats, by doin' the modest. Now, Graspum, 'tain't no trouble to leak a sap like that Lorenzo, and make his friends stand the blunt after we've roped him into your fixings," replied Romescos.

"No, no; not a bit of it," resounded several voices. "We do all the dragwork with the niggers, and Graspum gets the tin."

"But he pays for the drink. Come, none of this bickering; we must agree upon business, and do the thing up brown under the old system," interrupted another.

"Hold! close that bread trap o' yourn," Romescos shouts at the top of his voice. "You're only a green croaker from the piny woods, where gophers crawl independent; you ain't seen life on the borders of Texas. Fellers, I can whip any man in the crowd,—can maker the best stump speech, can bring up the best logic; and can prove that the best frightenin' man is the best man in the nigger business. Now, if you wants a brief sketch of this child's history, ye can have it." Here Romescos entered into an interesting account of himself. He was the descendant of a good family, living in the city of Charleston; his parents, when a youth, had encouraged his propensities for bravery. Without protecting them with that medium of education which assimilates courage with gentlemanly conduct, carrying out the nobler impulses of our nature, they allowed him to roam in that sphere which produces its ruffians. At the age of fifteen he entered a counting−room, when his quick mercurial temperament soon rendered him expert at its minor functions. Three years had hardly elapsed when, in a moment of passion, he drew his dirk, (a weapon he always carried) and, in making a plunge at his antagonist, inflicted a wound in the breast of a near friend. The wound was deep, and proved fatal. For this he was arraigned before a jury, tried for his life. He proved the accident by an existing friendship−he was honourably acquitted. His employer, after reproaching him for his proceedings, again admitted him into his employment. Such, however, was his inclination to display the desperado, that before the expiration of another year he killed a negro, shot two balls at one of his fellows, one of which was well nigh proving fatal, and left the state. His recklessness, his previous acts of malignity, his want of position, all left him little hope of escaping the confines of a prison. Fleeing to parts unknown, his absence relieved the neighbourhood of a responsibility. For a time, he roamed among farmers and drovers in the mountains of Tennessee; again he did menial labour, often forced to the direst necessity to live. One day, when nearly famished, he met a slave−driver, conducting his coffle towards the Mississippi, to whom he proffered his services. The coarse driver readily accepted them; they proceeded on together, and it was not long before they found themselves fitting companions. The one was desperate−the other traded in desperation. An ardent nature, full of courage and adventure, was a valuable acquisition to the dealer, who found that he had enlisted a youngster capable of relieving him of inflicting that cruelty so necessary to his profession. With a passion for inflicting torture, this youth could now gratify it upon those unfortunate beings of merchandise who were being driven to the shambles: he could gloat in the exercise of those natural propensities which made the infliction of pain a pleasant recreation. In the trade of human flesh all these cruel traits became valuable; they enabled him to demand a good price for his services. Initiated in all the mysteries of the trade, he was soon entrusted with gangs of very considerable extent; then he made purchases, laid plans to entrap free negroes, performed the various intricacies of procuring affidavits with which to make slave property out of free flesh. Nature was nature, and what was hard in him soon became harder; he could crib "doubtful white stuff" that was a nuisance among folks, and sell it for something he could put in his pocket. In this way Romescos accumulated several hundred dollars; but avarice increased, and with it his ferocity. It belonged to the trade, a trade of wanton depravity. He became the terror of those who assumed to look upon a negro's sufferings with sympathy, scoffing at the finer feelings of mankind. Twice had his rapacity been let loose−twice had it nearly brought him to the gallows, or to the tribunal of Judge Lynch. And now, when completely inured in the traffic of human flesh,—that traffic which transposes man into a demon, his progress is checked for a while by a false step.

It was this; and this only to the deep disgrace of the freest and happiest country on earth. A poor orphan girl, like many of her class in our hospitable slave world, had been a mere cast−off upon the community. She knew nothing of the world, was ignorant, could neither read nor write,—something quite common in the south, but seldom known in New England. Thus she became the associate of depraved negroes, and again, served Romescos as a victim. Not content with this, after becoming tired of her, he secured her in the slave−pen of one of his fellow traders. Here he kept her for several weeks, closely confined, feeding her with grits. Eventually "running" her to Vicksburg, he found an accomplice to sign a bill of sale, by which he sold her to a notorious planter, who carried her into the interior. The wretched girl had qualities which the planter saw might, with a little care, be made extremely valuable in the New Orleans market,—one was natural beauty. She was not suitable property for the agricultural department of either a cotton or sugar plantation, nor was she "the stripe" to increase prime stock; hence she must be prepared for the general market. When qualified according to what the planter knew would suit the fancy market, she was conveyed to New Orleans, a piece of property bright as the very brightest, very handsome, not very intelligent,—just suited to the wants of bidders.

Here, at the shambles in the crescent city, she remained guarded, and for several weeks was not allowed to go beyond the door−sill; after which a sale was effected of her with the keeper of a brothel, for the good price of thirteen hundred dollars. In this sink of iniquity she remained nearly two years. Fearing the ulterior consequences, she dared not assert her rights to freedom, she dared not say she was born free in a free country. Her disappearance from the village in which she had been reared caused some excitement; but it soon reduced itself to a very trifling affair. Indeed, white trash like this was considered little else than rubbish, not worth bringing up respectably. And while suspicion pointed to Romescos, as the person who could account for her mysterious disappearance, such was the fear of his revenge that no one dared be the accuser. Quietly matters rested, poor virtue was mean merchandise, had its value, could be bought and sold−could be turned to various uses, except enlisting the sympathies of those who study it as a market commodity. A few days passed and all was hushed; no one enquired about the poor orphan, Martha Johnson. In the hands of her creole owner, who held her as a price for licentious purposes, she associated with gentlemen of polite manners−of wealth and position. Even this, though profane, had advantages, which she employed for the best of purposes; she learned to read and to write,—to assimilate her feelings with those of a higher class. Society had degraded her, she had not degraded herself. One night, as the promiscuous company gathered into the drawing−room, she recognised a young man from her native village; the familiar face inspired her with joy, her heart leaped with gladness; he had befriended her poor mother−she knew he had kind feelings, and would be her friend once her story was told. The moments passed painfully; she watched him restlessly through the dance,—sat at his side. Still he did not recognise her,—toilet had changed her for another being; but she had courted self−respect rather than yielded to degradation. Again she made signs to attract his attention; she passed and repassed him, and failed. Have I thus changed, she thought to herself.

At length she succeeded in attracting his attention; she drew him aside, then to her chamber. In it she disclosed her touching narrative, unfolded her sorrows, appealed to him with tears in her eyes to procure her freedom and restore her to her rights. Her story enlisted the better feelings of a man, while her self−respect, the earnestness with which she pleaded her deliverance, and the heartlessness of the act, strongly rebuked the levity of those who had made her an orphan outcast in her own village. She was then in the theatre of vice, surrounded by its allurements, consigned to its degradation, a prey to libertinism−yet respecting herself. The object of his visit among the denizens was changed to a higher mission, a duty which he owed to his moral life,—to his own manliness. He promised his mediation to better her eventful and mysterious life, to be a friend to her; and nobly did he keep his promise. On the following day he took measures for her rescue, and though several attempts were made to wrest her from him, and the mendacity of slave−dealers summoned to effect it, he had the satisfaction of seeing her restored to her native village,—to freedom, to respectability.

We withhold the details of this too true transaction, lest we should be classed among those who are endeavouring to create undue excitement. The orphan girl we here refer to was married to a respectable mechanic, who afterwards removed to Cincinnati, and with his wife became much respected citizens.

Proceedings were after some delay commenced against Romescos, but,—we trust it was not through collusion with officials−he escaped the merited punishment that would have been inflicted upon him by a New England tribunal. Again he left the state, and during his absence it is supposed he was engaged in nefarious practices with

the notorious Murrel, who carried rapine and death into the unoffending villages of the far west. However, be this as it may, little was known of him for several years, except in some desperate encounter. The next step in his career of desperation known, was joining a band of guerillos led by one of the most intrepid captains that infested the borders of Mexico, during the internal warfare by which her Texan provinces struggled for independence. Freebooters, they espoused the Texan cause because it offered food for their rapacity, and through it they became formidable and desperate foes to the enemy. They were the terror of the ranchoes, the inhabitants fled at their approach; their pillage, rapine, and slaughtering, would stain the annals of barbarous Africa. They are buried, let us hope for the name of a great nation, that they may remain beneath the pale of oblivion.

In their incursions, as mounted riflemen, they besieged villages, slaughtered the inhabitants, plundered churches, and burned dwellings; they carried off captive females, drove herds of cattle to distant markets. Through the auspices of this band, as is now well known, many young females were carried off and sold into slavery, where they and their offspring yet remain. While pursuing this nefarious course of life, Romescos accumulated more than twenty thousand dollars; and yet,—though ferocity increased with the daring of his profession,—there was one impulse of his nature, deeply buried, directing his ambition. Amid the dangers of war, the tumult of conflict, the passion for daring−this impulse kept alive the associations of home,—it was love! In early life he had formed an attachment for a beautiful young lady of his native town; it had ripened with his years; the thoughts of her, and the hope of regaining her love if he gained wealth, so worked upon his mind that he resolved to abandon the life of a guerillo, and return home. After an absence of fourteen years he found the object of his early love,—that woman who had refused to requite his affection,—a widow, having buried her husband, a gentleman of position, some months previous.

Romescos had money,—the man was not considered; he is not considered where slavery spreads its vices to corrupt social life. He had been careful to keep his business a profound secret, and pressing his affections, soon found the object of his ambition keenly sensitive to his advances. Rumour recounted his character with mystery and suspicion; friends remonstrated, but in vain; they were united despite all opposition, all appeals. For a time he seemed a better man, the business he had followed harassed his mind, seeming to haunt him, and poison his progress. He purchased a plantation on the banks of the Santee; for once resolved to pursue an honest course, to be a respectable citizen, and enjoy the quiet of home.

A year passed: he might have enjoyed the felicity of domestic life, the affections of a beautiful bride; but the change was too sudden for his restless spirit. He was not made to enjoy the quiet of life, the task stood before him like a mountain without a pass, he could not wean himself from the vices of a marauder. He had abused the free offerings of a free country, had set law at defiance; he had dealt in human flesh, and the task of resistance was more than the moral element in his nature could effect. Violations of human laws were mere speculations to him; they had beguiled him, body and soul. He had no apology for violating personal feeling; what cared he for that small consideration, when the bodies of men, women, and children could be sacrificed for that gold which would give him position among the men of the south. If he carried off poor whites, and sold them into slavery, he saw no enormity in the performance; the law invested him with power he made absolute. Society was chargeable with all his wrongs, with all his crimes, all his enormities. He had repeatedly told it so, pointing for proof to that literal observance of the rule by which man is made mere merchandise. Society had continued in its pedantic folly, disregarding legal rights, imposing no restraints on the holder of human property, violating its spirit and pride by neglecting to enforce the great principles of justice whereby we are bound to protect the lives of those unjustly considered inferior beings. Thus ends a sketch of what Romescos gave of his own career.

We now find him associated with the desperadoes of slave−dealing, in the scene we have presented. After Romescos had related what he called the romance of his life,—intended, no doubt, to impress the party with his power and intrepidity, and enable him to set a higher value upon his services,—he lighted a pipe, threw his hat upon the floor, commenced pacing up and down the room, as if labouring under deep excitement. And while each one seemed watching him intently, a loud knocking was heard at the door,—then the baying of blood−hounds, the yelps of curs, mingling with the murmurs of those poor wretches confined in the cells beneath. Then followed the clanking of chains, cries, and wailings, startling and fearful.

Dan Bengal sprang to the door, as if conscious of its import. A voice demanded admittance; and as the door opened Bengal exclaimed, "Halloo!−here's Nath Nimrod: what's the tune of the adventure?"

A short, stout man entered, dressed in a coarse homespun hunting dress, a profuse black beard and moustache

nearly covering his face. "I is'nt so bad a feller a'ter all−is I?" he says, rushing forward into the centre of the room, followed by four huge hounds. They were noble animals, had more instinctive gentleness than their masters, displayed a knowledge of the importance of the prize they had just gained.

"Hurrah for Nath! hurrah! hurrah! hurrah, for Nath! You got him, Nath−did'nt ye?" resounded from several tongues, and was followed by a variety of expressions highly complimentary to his efficiency.

Romescos, however, remained silent, pacing the floor unconcerned, except in his own anxiety−as if nothing had occurred to disturb him. Advancing to the table, the new visitor, his face glowing with exultation, held forth, by the crispy hair, the blanched and bloody head of an unfortunate negro who had paid the penalty of the State's allowance for outlaws. "There: beat that, who can? Four hundred dollars made since breakfast;" he cries out at the top of his voice. They cast a measured look at the ghastly object, as if it were a precious ornament, much valued for the price it would bring, according to law. The demon expresses his joy, descants on his expertness and skill, holds up his prize again, turns it round, smiles upon it as his offering, then throws it into the fire place, carelessly, like a piece of fuel. The dogs spring upon it, as if the trophy was for their feast; but he repulses them; dogs are not so bad after all−the canine is often the better of the two−the morsel is too precious for canine dogs,—human dogs must devour it. "There is nothing like a free country, nothing; and good business, when it's well protected by law," says Nimrod, seating himself at the table, filling a glass, bowing to his companions, drinking to the health of his friends. He imagines himself the best fellow of the lot. Taking Graspum by the hand, he says, "there is a clear hundred for you, old patron!" pulls an Executive proclamation from his pocket, and points to where it sets forth the amount of reward for the outlaw−dead or alive. "I know'd whar the brute had his hole in the swamp," he continues: "and I summed up the resolution to bring him out. And then the gal o' Ginral Brinkle's, if I could pin her, would be a clear fifty more, provided I could catch her without damage, and twenty−five if the dogs havocked her shins. There was no trouble in getting the fifty, seeing how my dogs were trained to the point and call. Taste or no taste, they come square off at the word. To see the critters trace a nigger, you'd think they had human in them; they understands it so! But, I tell you what, it's one thing to hunt a gal nigger, and another to run down an outlaw what has had two or three years in the swamp. The catching him's not much, but when ye have to slide the head off, all the pious in yer natur comes right up to make yer feelings feel kind a' softish. However, the law protects ye, and the game being only a nigger, different rules and things govern one's feelings."

Bengal interrupts by laconically insinuating−raising his moody face, and winking at Graspum−that it was all moonshine to talk about trouble in that kind of business; "It's the very highest of exhilarating sport!" he concludes emphatically.

"Dan!" returns the other, with a fierce stare, as he seizes the bottle and is about to enjoy a glass of whisky uninvited; "let your liquor stop your mouth. I set the whole pack upon the trail at daylight, and in less than two hours they came upon him, bolted him, and put him to the river. The leader nabbed him about half way across, but the chap, instead of giving in, turned and fought like a hero. Twice I thought he would whip the whole pack, but the way they made the rags fly warn't nobody's business. Well, I just come up with him as he plunged into the stream, lifts old sure mark, as gives him about a dozen plugs; and then the old feller begged just so, you'd thought he was a Christian pleadin' forgiveness at the last moment. But, when I seizes him and gives him three or four levellers with the butt of the rifle, ye never saw a sarpent plunge, and struggle, and warp so. Says I, 'It's no use, old feller,—yer might as well give her up;' and the way his eyes popped, just as if he expected I war'nt goin to finish him. I tell ye, boys, it required some spunk about then, for the critter got his claws upon me with a death grip, and the dogs ripped him like an old corn stalk, and would'nt keep off. And then there was no fracturin his skull; and seeing how he was overpowering me, I just seizes him by the throat and pops his head off quicker than a Chinese executioner."

The author has given the language of the slave−hunter who related the case personally.

"Now, thar' war'nt so much in takin' the gal, cos jist when she seed the dogs comin', the critter took to tree and gin right up: but when I went to muzlin' on her, so she could'nt scream, then she gets saucy; and I promised to gin her bricks,—which, fellers, I reckon yer must take a hand in so the brute won't wake the neighbours; and I'll do'e it afore I sleeps," said Nimrod, getting up from the table and playfully touching Romescos upon the arm. "I see ye ain't brightened to−day—Graspum's share don't seem to suit yer, old feller; ah! ah!!" he continued.

"Just put another ten per cent. upon the out−lining, and running free 'uns, and I'll stand flint," said Romescos, seeming to be acted upon by a sudden change of feelings, as he turned to Graspum, with a look of anxiety.

"Very well," returned Graspum. "Yer see, there's that Marston affair to be brought to a point; and his affairs are just in such a fix that he don't know what's what, nor who's who. Ther'll have to be some tall swearing done in that case afore it's brought to the hammer. That cunning of yours, Romescos, will just come into play in this case. It'll be just the thing to do the crooked and get round the legal points." Thus Graspum, with the dignity and assurance of a gentleman, gave his opinion, drank with his companions, and withdrew for the night.

Romescos, Bengal, and Nimrod, soon after descended into the vaults below, followed by a negro bearing a lantern. Here they unbolted one of the cells, dragged forth a dejected−looking mulatto woman, her rags scarcely covering her nakedness. The poor wretch, a child born to degradation and torture, whose cries were heard in heaven, heaved a deep sigh, then gave vent to a flood of tears. They told how deep was her anguish, how she struggled against injustice, how sorrow was burning her very soul. The outpourings of her feelings might have aroused the sympathies of savage hearts; but the slave monsters were unmoved. Humbleness, despair, and even death, sat upon her very countenance; hope had fled her, left her a wreck for whom man had no pity. And though her prayers ascended to heaven, the God of mercy seemed to have abandoned her to her tormentors. She came forward trembling and reluctantly, her countenance changed; she gave a frowning look at her tormentors, wild and gloomy, shrank back into the cell, the folds of straight, black hair hanging about her shoulders.

"Come out here!" Nimrod commands in an angry tone; then, seizing her by the arm, dragged her forth, and jerked her prostrate on the ground. Here, like as many fiends in human form, the rest fell upon her, held her flat to the floor by the hands and feet, her face downwards, while Nimrod, with a raw hide, inflicted thirty lashes on her bare back. Her cries and groans, as she lay writhing, the flesh hanging in quivering shreds, and lifting with the lash,—her appeals for mercy, her prayers to heaven, her fainting moans as the agony of her torture stung into her very soul, would have touched a heart of stone. But, though her skin had not defiled her in the eyes of the righteous, there was none to take pity on her, nor to break the galling chains; no! the punishment was inflicted with the measured coolness of men engaged in an every−day vocation. It was simply the right which a democratic law gave men to become lawless, fierce in the conspiracy of wrong, and where the legal excitement of trafficking in the flesh and blood of one another sinks them unconsciously into demons.

CHAPTER VII. "BUCKRA−MAN VERY UNCERTAIN."

THE caption, a common saying among negroes at the south, had its origin in a consciousness, on the part of the negro, of the many liabilities to which his master's affairs are subject, and his own dependence on the ulterior consequences. It carries with it a deep significance, opens a field for reflection, comprehends the negro's knowledge of his own uncertain state, his being a piece of property the good or evil of which is effected by his master's caprices, the binding force of the law that makes him merchandise. Nevertheless, while the negro feels them in all their force, the master values them only in an abstract light. Ask the negro whose master is kind to him, if he would prefer his freedom and go north?−At first he will hesitate, dilate upon his master's goodness, his affection for him, the kindly feeling evinced for him by the family−they often look upon him with a patriarchal tenderness−and, finally, he will conclude by telling you he wishes master and missus would live for ever. He tells you, in the very simplicity of his nature, that "Eve' ting so unsartin! and mas'r don't know if he die when he gwine to." That when he is dying he does not realise it; and though his intention be good, death may blot out his desires, and he, the dependent, being only a chattel, must sink into the uncertain stream of slave−life. Marston's plantation might have been taken as an illustration of the truth of this saying. Long had it been considered one of eminent profit; his field slaves were well cared for; his favourite house servants had every reasonable indulgence granted them. And, too, Marston's mansion was the pleasant retreat of many a neighbour, whose visits were welcomed by the kindly attention he had taught his domestics to bestow. Marston's fault lay in his belonging to that class of planters who repose too much confidence in others.

The morning following Lorenzo's departure ushered forth bright and balmy. A quiet aspect reigned in and about the plantation, servants moved sluggishly about, the incidents of the preceding night oppressed Marston's mind; his feelings broke beyond his power of restraint. Like contagion, the effect seized each member of his household,—forcibly it spoke in word and action! Marston had bestowed much care upon Lorenzo and Franconia; he had indulged and idolised the latter, and given the former some good advice. But advice without example seldom produces lasting good; in truth, precept had the very worst effect upon Lorenzo,—it had proved his ruin! His singular and mysterious departure might for a time be excused,—even accounted for in some plausible manner, but suspicion was a stealing monster that would play upon the deeply tinctured surface, and soar above in disgrace. That the Rovero family were among the first of the State would not be received as a palliation; they had suffered reverses of fortune, and, with the addition of Lorenzo's profligacy, which had been secretly drawing upon their resources, were themselves well nigh in discredit. And now that this sudden and unexpected reverse had befallen Marston, he could do nothing for their relief. Involved, perplexed, and distrusted−with ever−slaying suspicion staring him in the face−he was a victim pursued by one who never failed to lay low his object. That man moved with unerring method, could look around him upon the destitution made by his avarice, without evincing a shadow of sympathy. Yes! he was in the grasp of a living Shylock, whose soul, worn out in the love of gold, had forgotten that there existed a distinction between right and wrong.

Surrounded by all these dark forebodings, Marston begins to reflect on his past life. He sees that mercy which overlooks the sins of man when repentance is pure; but his life is full of moral blemishes; he has sinned against the innocent, against the God of forgiveness. The inert of his nature is unfolding itself,—he has lived according to the tolerated vices of society−he has done no more than the law gave him a right to do! And yet, that very society, overlooking its own wrongs, would now strip him of its associations. He lives in a State where it is difficult to tell what society will approve or reprobate; where a rich man may do with impunity what would consign a poor man to the gallows.

If we examine the many rencontres that take place in the south, especially those proving fatal, we will find that the perpetrator, if he be a rich man, invariably receives an "honourable acquittal." Again, when the man of position shoots down his victim in the streets of a city, he is esteemed brave; but a singular reversion takes place if the rencontre be between poor men. It is then a diabolical act, a murder, which nothing short of the gallows can serve for punishment. The creatures whom he had made mere objects to serve his sensuality were before him; he

traced the gloomy history of their unfortunate sires; he knew that Ellen and Clotilda were born free. The cordon that had bound his feelings to the system of slavery relaxed. For the first time, he saw that which he could not recognise in his better nature−himself the medium of keeping human beings in slavery who were the rightful heirs of freedom. The blackness of the crime−its cruelty, its injustice−haunted him; they were at that very moment held by Graspum's caprice. He might doom the poor wretches to irretrievable slavery, to torture and death! Then his mind wandered to Annette and Nicholas; he saw them of his own flesh and blood; his natural affections bounded forth; how could he disown them? The creations of love and right were upon him, misfortune had unbound his sensations; his own offspring stood before him clothed in trouble thick and dangerous. His follies have entailed a life−rent of misery upon others; the fathomless depth of the future opens its yawning jaws to swallow up those upon whom the fondness of a father should have been bestowed for their moral and physical good.

As he sits contemplating this painful picture, Aunt Rachel enters the room to inquire if Lorenzo breakfasts with them. "Why! old mas'r, what ail ye dis mornin'? Ye don't seems nohow. Not a stripe like what ye was yesterday; somethin' gi 'h de wrong way, and mas'r done know what i' is," she mutters to herself, looking seriously at Marston.

"Nothing! old bustler; nothing that concerns you. Do not mention Lorenzo's name again; he has gone on a journey. Send my old faithful Daddy Bob to me." Rachel hastened to fulfil the command; soon brought the old servant to the door. His countenance lighted up with smiles as he stood at the doorway, bowing and scraping, working his red cap in his hand. There stood the old man, a picture of attachment.

"Come in, Bob, come in!" Marston says, motioning his hand, "I wish the world was as faithful as you are. You are worthy the indulgence I have bestowed upon you; let me hope there is something better in prospect for you. My life reproves me; and when I turn and review its crooked path−when I behold each inconsistency chiding me−I lament what I cannot recall." Taking the old man by the hand, the tears glistening in his eyes, he looks upon him as a father would his child.

"In a short time, Bob, you shall be free to go where you please, on the plantation or off it. But remember, Bob, you are old−you have grown grey in faithfulness,—the good southerner is the true friend of the negro! I mean he is the true friend of the negro, because he has associated with him from childhood, assimilated with his feelings, made his nature a study. He welcomes him without reserve, approaches him without that sensitiveness and prejudice which the northerner too often manifests towards him. You shall be free, Bob! you shall be free!−free to go where you please; but you must remain among southerners, southerners are your friends."

"Yes, mas'r, 'im all just so good, if t'warn't dat I so old. Free nigger, when 'e old, don't gwane to get along much. Old Bob tink on dat mighty much, he do dat! Lef Bob free win 'e young, den 'e get tru' de world like Buckra, only lef 'im de chance what Buckra hab. Freedom ain't wof much ven old Bob worn out, mas'r; and Buckra what sell nigger,—what make 'e trade on him, run 'im off sartin. He sell old nigger what got five dollar wof' a work in 'e old bones. Mas'r set 'um free, bad Buckra catch 'um, old Bob get used up afo' he know nofin," quaintly replied the old man, seeming to have an instinctive knowledge of the "nigger trade," but with so much attachment for his master that he could not be induced to accept his freedom.

"It's not the leaving me, Bob; you may be taken from me. You are worth but little, 'tis true, and yet you may be sold from me to a bad master. If the slave−dealers run you off, you can let me know, and I will prosecute them," returned Marston.

"Ah! mas'r; dat's just whar de blunt is−in de unsartainty! How I gwane to let mas'r know, when mas'r no larn nigger to read," he quickly responded. There is something in his simple remark that Marston has never before condescended to contemplate,—something the simple nature of the negro has just disclosed; it lies deeply rooted at the foundation of all the wrongs of slavery. Education would be valuable to the negro, especially in his old age; it would soften his impulses rather than impair his attachment, unless the master be a tyrant fearing the results of his own oppression. Marston, a good master, had deprived the old man of the means of protecting himself against the avarice of those who would snatch him from freedom, and while his flesh and blood contained dollars and cents, sell him into slavery. Freedom, under the best circumstances, could do him little good in his old age; and yet, a knowledge of the wrong rankled deep in Marston's feelings: he could relieve it only by giving Daddy Bob and Harry their freedom if they would accept it.

Relinquishing Daddy's hand, he commanded him to go and bring him Annette and Nicholas. "Bring them," he says, "without the knowledge of their mothers." Bob withdrew, hastened to the cabins in the yard to fulfil the

mission. Poor things, thought Marston; they are mine, how can I disown them? Ah, there's the point to conquer−I cannot! It is like the mad torrents of hell, stretched out before me to consume my very soul, to bid me defiance. Misfortune is truly a great purifier, a great regenerator of our moral being; but how can I make the wrong right?−how can I live to hope for something beyond the caprice of this alluring world? My frailties have stamped their future with shame.

Thus he mused as the children came scampering into the room. Annette, her flaxen curls dangling about her neck, looking as tidy and bright as the skill of Clotilda could make her, runs to Marston, throws herself on his knee, fondles about his bosom, kisses his hand again and again. She loves him,—she knows no other father. Nicholas, more shy, moves slowly behind a chair, his fingers in his mouth the while. Looking through its rounds wistfully, he shakes his head enviously, moves the chair backwards and forwards, and is too bashful to approach Annette's position.

Marston has taken Annette in his arms, he caresses her; she twirls her tiny fingers through his whiskers, as if to play with him in the toying recognition of a father. He is deeply immersed in thought, smooths her hair, walks to the glass with her in his arms, holds her before it as if to detect his own features in the countenance of the child. Resuming his seat, he sets her on one knee, calls Nicholas to him, takes him on the other, and fondles them with an air of kindness it had never before been their good fortune to receive at his hands. He looked upon them again, and again caressed them, parted their hair with his fingers. And as Annette would open her eyes and gaze in his, with an air of sweetest acknowledgment, his thoughts seemed contending with something fearful. He was in trouble; he saw the enemy brooding over the future; he heaved a sigh, a convulsive motion followed, a tear stealing down his cheek told the tale of his reflections.

"Now, Daddy;" he speaks, directing himself to old Bob, who stands at the door surprised at Marston's singular movements, "you are my confidant, what do you think the world−I mean the people about the district, about the city−would say if they knew these were mine? You know, Bob,—you must tell me straight out, do they look like me?−have they features like mine?" he inquires with rapid utterance.

"Mas'r, Bob don' like to say all he feels," meekly muttered the old man.

"There is the spot on which we lay the most unholy blot; and yet, it recoils upon us when we least think. Unfortunate wretches bear them unto us; yet we dare not make them our own; we blast their lives for selfish ends, yield them to others, shield ourselves by a misnomer called right! We sell the most interesting beings for a price,—beings that should be nearest and dearest to our hearts."

The old slave's eyes glistened with excitement; he looked on astonished, as if some extraordinary scene had surprised him. As his agitation subsided, he continued, "Mas'r, I bin watch 'im dis long time. Reckon how nobody wouldn't take 'em fo'h nobody else's−fo'h true! Dar ain't no spozin' bout 'em, 'e so right smart twarn't no use to guise 'em: da'h just like old Boss. Mas'r, nigger watch dem tings mighty close; more close den Buckra, cos' Buckra tink 'e all right when nigger tink 'e all wrong."

Marston is not quite content with this: he must needs put another question to the old man. "You are sure there can be no mistaking them for mine?" he rejoins, fixing his eyes upon the children with an almost death−like stare, as Daddy leads them out of the room. The door closes after them, he paces the room for a time, seats himself in his chair again, and is soon absorbed in contemplation. "I must do something for them−I must snatch them from the jaws of danger. They are full of interest−they are mine; there is not a drop of negro blood in their veins, and yet the world asks who are their mothers, what is their history? Ah! yes; in that history lies the canker that has eaten out the living springs of many lives. It is that which cuts deepest. Had I known myself, done what I might have done before it was too late, kindness would have its rewards; but I am fettered, and the more I move the worse for them. Custom has laid the foundation of wrong, the law protects it, and a free government tolerates a law that shields iniquities blackening earth." In this train of thought his mind wandered. He would send the children into a free state, there to be educated; that they may live in the enjoyment of those rights with which nature had blest them. The obstacles of the law again stared him in the face; the wrong by which they were first enslaved, now forgotten, had brought its climax.

Suddenly arousing from his reverie, he started to his feet, and walking across the floor, exclaimed in an audible voice, "I will surmount all difficulties,—I will recognise them as my children; I will send them where they may become ornaments of society, instead of living in shame and licentiousness. This is my resolve, and I will carry it out, or die!"

CHAPTER VIII. A CLOUD OF MISFORTUNE HANGS OVER THE PLANTATION.

THE document Marston signed for Lorenzo−to release him from the difficulties into which he had been drawn by Graspum−guaranteed the holder against all loss. This, in the absence of Lorenzo, and under such stranger circumstances, implied an amount which might be increased according to the will of the man into whose hands he had so unfortunately fallen.

Nearly twelve months had now elapsed since the disclosure of the crime. Maxwell, our young Englishman, had spent the time among the neighbouring plantations; and failing to enlist more than friendly considerations from Franconia, resolved to return to Bermuda and join his family. He had, however, taken a deep interest in Clotilda and Annette,—had gone to their apartment unobserved, and in secret interviews listened to Clotilda's tale of trouble. Its recital enlisted his sympathies; and being of an ardent and impressible temper, he determined to carry out a design for her relief. He realised her silent suffering,—saw how her degraded condition wrangled with her noble feelings,—how the true character of a woman loathed at being the slave of one who claimed her as his property. And this, too, without the hope of redeeming herself, except by some desperate effort. And, too, he saw but little difference between the blood of Franconia and the blood of Clotilda; the same outline of person was there,—her delicate countenance, finely moulded bust, smoothly converging shoulders. There was the same Grecian cast of face, the same soft, reflective eyes,—filling a smile with sweetness, and again with deep−felt sorrow. The same sensitive nature, ready to yield forth love and tenderness, or to press onward the more impassioned affections, was visible in both. And yet, what art had done for Franconia nature had replenished for Clotilda. But, the servile hand was upon her, she crouched beneath its grasp; it branded her life, and that of her child, with ignominy and death.

During these interviews he would watch her emotions as she looked upon her child; when she would clasp it to her bosom, weeping, until from the slightest emotion her feelings would become frantic with anguish.

"And you, my child, a mother's hope when all other pleasures are gone! Are you some day to be torn from me, and, like myself, sent to writhe under the coarse hand of a slave−dealer, to be stung with shame enforced while asking God's forgiveness? Sometimes I think it cannot be so; I think it must all be a dream. But it is so, and we might as well submit, say as little of the hardship as possible, and think it's all as they tell us−according to God's will," she would say, pressing the child closer and closer to her bosom, the agitation of her feelings rising into convulsions as the tears coursed down her cheeks. Then she would roll her soft eyes upwards, her countenance filling with despair. The preservation of her child was pictured in the depth of her imploring look. For a time her emotions would recede into quiet,—she would smile placidly upon Annette, forget the realities that had just swept her mind into such a train of trouble.

One night, as Maxwell entered her apartment, he found her kneeling at her bed−side, supplicating in prayer. The word, "Oh, God; not me, but my child−guide her through the perils that are before her, and receive her into heaven at last," fell upon his ear. He paused, gazed upon her as if some angel spirit had touched the tenderest chord of his feelings−listened unmoved. A lovely woman, an affectionate mother, the offspring of a noble race,—herself forced by relentless injustice to become an instrument of licentiousness−stood before him in all that can make woman an ornament to her sex. What to Ellen Juvarna seemed the happiness of her lot, was pain and remorse to Clotilda; and when she arose there was a nervousness, a shrinking in her manner, betokening apprehension. "It is not now; it is hereafter. And yet there is no glimmer of hope!" she whispers, as she seats herself in a chair, pulls the little curtain around the bed, and prepares to retire.

The scene so worked upon Maxwell's feelings that he could withstand the effect no longer; he approached her, held out his hand, greeted her with a smile: "Clotilda, I am your friend," he whispers, "come, sit down and tell me what troubles you!"

"If what I say be told in confidence?" she replied, as if questioning his advance.

"You may trust me with any secret; I am ready to serve you, if it be with my life!"

Clasping her arms round her child, again she wept in silence. The moment was propitious—the summer sun had just set beneath dark foliage in the west, its refulgent curtains now fading into mellow tints; night was closing rapidly over the scene, the serene moon shone softly through the arbour into the little window at her bedside. Again she took him by the hand, invited him to sit down at her side, and, looking imploringly in his face, continued,—"If you are a friend, you can be a friend in confidence, in purpose. I am a slave! yes, a slave; there is much in the word, more than most men are disposed to analyse. It may seem simple to you, but follow it to its degraded depths−follow it to where it sows the seeds of sorrow, and there you will find it spreading poison and death, uprooting all that is good in nature. Worse than that, my child is a slave too. It is that which makes the wrong more cruel, that mantles the polished vice, that holds us in that fearful grasp by which we dare not seek our rights.

"My mother, ah! yes, my mother"−Clotilda shakes her head in sorrow. "How strange that, by her misfortune, all, all, is misfortune for ever! from one generation to another, sinking each life down, down, down, into misery and woe. How oft she clasped my hand and whispered in my ear: 'If we could but have our rights.' And she, my mother,—as by that sacred name I called her−was fair; fairer than those who held her for a hideous purpose, made her existence loathsome to herself, who knew the right but forced the wrong. She once had rights, but was stripped of them; and once in slavery who can ask that right be done?"

"What rights have you beyond these?" he interrupted, suddenly. "There is mystery in what you have said, in what I have seen; something I want to solve. The same ardent devotion, tenderness, affection,—the same touching chasteness, that characterises Franconia, assimilates in you. You are a slave, a menial−she is courted and caressed by persons of rank and station. Heavens! here is the curse confounding the flesh and blood of those in high places, making slaves of their own kinsmen, crushing out the spirit of life, rearing up those broken flowers whose heads droop with shame. And you want your freedom?"

"For my child first," she replied, quickly: "I rest my hopes of her in the future."

Maxwell hesitated for a moment, as if contemplating some plan for her escape, ran his fingers through his hair again and again, then rested his forehead in his hand, as the perspiration stood in heavy drops upon it. "My child!" There was something inexpressibly touching in the words of a mother ready to sacrifice her own happiness for the freedom of her child. And yet an awful responsibility hung over him; should he attempt to gain their freedom, and fail in carrying out the project, notwithstanding he was in a free country, the act might cost him his life. But there was the mother, her pride beaming forth in every action, a wounded spirit stung with the knowledge of being a slave, the remorse of her suffering soul−the vicissitudes of that sin thus forced upon her. The temptation became irresistible.

"You are English!"−northerners and Englishmen know what liberty is.

Negroes at the South have a very high opinion of Northern cleverness in devising means of procuring their liberty. The Author here uses the language employed by a slave girl who frequently implored aid to devise some plan by which she would be enabled to make her escape. Northerners could do great things for us, if they would but know us as we are, study our feelings, cast aside selfish motives, and sustain our rights!" Clotilda now commenced giving Maxwell a history of her mother,—which, however, we must reserve for another chapter. "And my mother gave me this!" she said, drawing from her pocket a paper written over in Greek characters, but so defaced as to be almost unintelligible. "Some day you will find a friend who will secure your freedom through that," she would say. "But freedom−that which is such a boon to us−is so much feared by others that you must mark that friend cautiously, know him well, and be sure he will not betray the liberty you attempt to gain." And she handed him the defaced paper, telling him to put it in his pocket.

"And where is your mother?"

"There would be a store of balm in that, if I did but know. Her beauty doomed her to a creature life, which, when she had worn out, she was sold, as I may be, God knows how soon. Though far away from me, she is my mother still, in all that recollection can make her; her countenance seems like a wreath decorating our past associations. Shrink not when I tell it, for few shrink at such things now,—I saw her chained; I didn't think much of it then, for I was too young. And she took me in her arms and kissed me, the tears rolled down her cheeks; and she said−'Clotilda, Clotilda, farewell! There is a world beyond this, a God who knows our hearts, who records our sorrows;' and her image impressed me with feelings I cannot banish. To look back upon it seems like a rough pilgrimage; and then when I think of seeing her again my mind gets lost in hopeless expectations"—

"You saw her chained?" interrupted Maxwell.

"Yes, even chained with strong irons. It need not surprise you. Slavery is a crime; and they chain the innocent lest the wrong should break forth upon themselves." And she raised her hands to her face, shook her head, and laid Annette in the little bed at the foot of her own.

What is it that in chaining a woman, whether she be black as ebony or white as snow, degrades all the traits of the southerner's character, which he would have the world think noble? It is fear! The monster which the southerner sees by day, tolerates in his silence, protects as part and parcel of a legal trade, only clothes him with the disgrace that menials who make themselves mere fiends are guilty of, Maxwell thought to himself.

"I will set you free, if it cost my life!" he exclaimed.

"Hush, hush!" rejoined Clotilda: "remember those wretches on the plantation. They, through their ignorance, have learned to wield the tyranny of petty power; they look upon us with suspicious eyes. They know we are negroes (white negroes, who are despicable in their eyes), and feeling that we are more favoured, their envy is excited. They, with the hope of gaining favour, are first to disclose a secret. Save my child first, and then save me"—

"I will save you first; rest assured, I will save you;" he responded, shaking her hand, bidding her good night. On returning to the mansion he found Marston seated at the table in the drawing−room, in a meditative mood. Good night, my friend!" he accosted him.

"Ah, good night!" was the sudden response.

"You seem cast down?"

"No!−all's not as it seems with a man in trouble. How misfortune quickens our sense of right! O! how it unfolds political and moral wrongs! how it purges the understanding, and turns the good of our natures to thoughts of justice. But when the power to correct is beyond our reach we feel the wrong most painfully," Marston coldly replied.

"It never is too late to do good; my word for it, friend Marston, good is always worth its services. I am young and may serve you yet; rise above trouble, never let trifles trouble a man like you. The world seems wagging pleasantly for you; everybody on the plantation is happy; Lorenzo has gone into the world to distinguish himself; grief should never lay its scalpel in your feelings. Remember the motto−peace, pleasantry, and plenty; they are things which should always dispel the foreshadowing of unhappiness," says Maxwell, jocularly, taking a chair at Marston's request, and seating himself by the table.

Marston declares such consolation to be refreshing, but too easily conceived to effect his purpose. The ripest fruits of vice often produce the best moral reflections: he feels convinced of this truth; but here the consequences are entailed upon others. The degradation is sunk too deep for recovery by him,—his reflections are only a burden to him. The principle that moves him to atone is crushed by the very perplexity of the law that compels him to do wrong. "There's what goads me," he says: "it is the system, the forced condition making one man merchandise, and giving another power to continue him as such." He arises from the table, his face flushed with excitement, and in silence paces the room to and fro for several minutes. Every now and then he watches at the window,—looks out towards the river, and again at the pine−woods forming a belt in the background, as if he expected some one from that direction. The serene scene without, calm and beautiful, contrasting with the perplexity that surrounded him within, brought the reality of the change which must soon take place in his affairs more vividly to his mind.

"Your feelings have been stimulated and modified by education; they are keenly sensitive to right,—to justice between man and man. Those are the beautiful results of early instruction. New England education! It founds a principle for doing good; it needs no contingencies to rouse it to action. You can view slavery with the unprejudiced eye of a philosopher. Listen to what I am about to say: but a few months have passed since I thought myself a man of affluence, and now nothing but the inroads of penury are upon me. The cholera (that scourge of a southern plantation) is again sweeping the district: I cannot expect to escape it, and I am in the hands of a greater scourge than the cholera,—a slow death−broker. He will take from you that which the cholera would not deign to touch: he has no more conscience than a cotton−press," says Marston, reclining back in his chair, and calling the negro waiter.

The word conscience fell upon Maxwell's ear with strange effect. He had esteemed Marston according to his habits−not a good test when society is so remiss of its duties: he could not reconcile the touch of conscience in such a person, nor could he realise the impulse through which some sudden event was working a moral

regeneration in his mind. There was something he struggled to keep from notice. The season had been unpropitious, bad crops had resulted; the cholera made its appearance, swept off many of the best negroes, spread consternation, nearly suspended discipline and labour. One by one his negroes fell victims to its ravages, until it became imperatively necessary to remove the remainder to the pine−woods.

Families might be seen here and there making their little preparations to leave for the hills: the direful scourge to them was an evil spirit, sent as a visitation upon their bad deeds. This they sincerely believe, coupling it with all the superstition their ignorance gives rise to. A few miles from the mansion, among the pines, rude camps are spread out, fires burn to absorb the malaria, to war against mosquitoes, to cook the evening meal; while, up lonely paths, ragged and forlorn−looking negroes are quietly wending their way to take possession. The stranger might view this forest bivouac as a picture of humble life pleasantly domiciled; but it is one of those unfortunate scenes, fruitful of evil, which beset the planter when he is least able to contend against them. Such events develope the sin of an unrighteous institution, bring its supporters to the portals of poverty, consign harmless hundreds to the slave−marts.

In this instance, however, we must give Marston credit for all that was good in his intentions, and separate him from the system. Repentance, however produced, is valuable for its example, and if too late for present utility, seldom fails to have an ultimate influence. Thus it was with Marston; and now that all these inevitable disasters were upon him, he resolved to be a father to Annette and Nicholas,—those unfortunates whom law and custom had hitherto compelled him to disown.

Drawing his chair close to Maxwell, he lighted a cigar, and resumed the disclosure his feelings had apparently interrupted a few minutes before. "Now, my good friend, all these things are upon me; there is no escaping the issue. My people will soon be separated from me; my old, faithful servants, Bob and Harry, will regret me, and if they fall into the hands of a knave, will die thinking of the old plantation. As for Harry, I have made him a preacher,—his knowledge is wonderfully up on Scripture; he has demonstrated to me that niggers are more than mortal, or transitory things. My conscience was touched while listening to one of his sermons; and then, to think how I had leased him to preach upon a neighbouring plantation, just as a man would an ox to do a day's work! Planters paid me so much per sermon, as if the gospel were merchandise, and he a mere thing falsifying all my arguments against his knowledge of the Word of God. Well, it makes me feel as if I were half buried in my own degradation and blindness. And then, again, they are our property, and are bestowed upon us by a legal−"

"If that be wrong," interrupted Maxwell, "you have no excuse for continuing it."

"True! That's just what I was coming at. The evil in its broadest expanse is there. We look calmly on the external objects of the system without solving its internal grievances,—we build a right upon the ruins of ancient wrongs, and we swathe our thoughts with inconsistency that we may make the curse of a system invulnerable. It is not that we cannot do good under a bad system, but that we cannot ameliorate it, lest we weaken the foundation. And yet all this seems as nothing when I recall a sin of greater magnitude−a sin that is upon me−a hideous blot, goading my very soul, rising up against me like a mountain, over which I can see no pass. Again the impelling force of conscience incites me to make a desperate effort; but conscience rebukes me for not preparing the way in time. I could translate my feelings further, but, in doing so, the remedy seems still further from me−"

"Is it ever too late to try a remedy−to make an effort to surmount great impediments−to render justice to those who have suffered from such acts?" inquired Maxwell, interrupting Marston as he proceeded.

"If I could do it without sacrificing my honour, without exposing myself to the vengeance of the law. We are great sticklers for constitutional law, while we care little for constitutional justice. There is Clotilda; you see her, but you don't know her history: if it were told it would resound through the broad expanse of our land. Yes, it would disclose a wrong, perpetrated under the smiles of liberty, against which the vengeance of high Heaven would be invoked. I know the secret, and yet I dare not disclose it; the curse handed down from her forefathers has been perpetuated by me. She seems happy, and yet she is unhappy; the secret recesses of her soul are poisoned. And what more natural? for, by some unlucky incident, she has got an inkling of the foul means by which she was made a slave. To him who knows the right, the wrong is most painful; but I bought her of him whose trade it was to sell such flesh and blood! And yet that does not relieve me from the curse: there's the stain; it hangs upon me, it involves my inclinations, it gloats over my downfall−"

"You bought her!" again interrupts Maxwell.

"True," rejoins the other, quickly, "'tis a trade well protected by our democracy. Once bought, we cannot

relieve ourselves by giving them rights in conflict with the claims of creditors. Our will may be good, but the will without the means falls hopeless. My heart breaks under the knowledge that those children are mine. It is a sad revelation to make,—sad in the eyes of heaven and earth. My participation in wrong has proved sorrow to them: how can I look to the pains and struggles they must endure in life, when stung with the knowledge that I am the cause of it? I shall wither under the torture of my own conscience. And there is even an interest about them that makes my feelings bound joyfully when I recur them. Can it be aught but the fruit of natural affection? I think not; and yet I am compelled to disown them, and even to smother with falsehood the rancour that might find a place in Franconia's bosom. Clotilda loves Annette with a mother's fondness; but with all her fondness for her child she dare not love me, nor I the child."

Maxwell suggests that his not having bought the child would certainly give him the right to control his own flesh and blood: but he knows little of slave law, and less of its customs. He, however, was anxious to draw from Marston full particulars of the secret that would disclose Clotilda's history, over which the partial exposition had thrown the charm of mystery. Several times he was on the eve of proffering his services to relieve the burden working upon Marston's mind; but his sympathies were enlisted toward the two unfortunate women, for whom he was ready to render good service, to relieve them and their children. Again, he remembered how singularly sensitive Southerners were on matters concerning the peculiar institution, especially when approached by persons from abroad. Perhaps it was a plot laid by Marston to ascertain his feelings on the subject, or, under that peculiar jealousy of Southerners who live in this manner, he might have discovered his interview with Clotilda, and, in forming a plan to thwart his project, adopted this singular course for disarming apprehensions.

At this stage of the proceedings a whispering noise was heard, as if coming from another part of the room. They stopped at the moment, looked round with surprise, but not seeing anything, resumed the conversation.

"Of whom did you purchase?" inquired Maxwell, anxiously.

"One Silenus; a trader who trades in this quality of property only, and has become rich by the traffic. He is associated with Anthony Romescos, once a desperado on the Texan frontier. These two coveys would sell their mossmates without a scruple, and think it no harm so long as they turned a dime. They know every justice of the peace from Texas to Fort M'Henry. Romescos is turned the desperado again, shoots, kills, and otherwise commits fell deeds upon his neighbour's negroes; he even threatens them with death when they approach him for reparation. He snaps his fingers at law, lawyers, and judges: slave law is moonshine to those who have no rights in common law−"

"And he escapes? Then you institute laws, and substitute custom to make them null. It is a poor apology for a namesake. But do you assert that in the freest and happiest country−a country that boasts the observance of its statute laws−a man is privileged to shoot, maim, and torture a fellow−being, and that public opinion fails to bring him to justice?" ejaculated Maxwell.

"Yes," returns Marston, seriously; "it is no less shameful than true. Three of my negroes has he killed very good−naturedly, and yet I have no proof to convict him. Even were I to seek redress, it would be against that prejudice which makes the rights of the enslaved unpopular."

The trouble exists in making the man merchandise, reducing him to an abject being, without the protection of common law. Presently the tears began to flow down Marston's cheeks, as he unbuttoned his shirt−collar with an air of restlessness, approached a desk that stood in one corner of the room, and drew from it a somewhat defaced bill of sale. There was something connected with that bit of paper, which, apart from anything else, seemed to harass him most. "But a minute before you entered I looked upon that paper," he spoke, throwing it upon the table, "and thought how much trouble it had brought me, how through it I had left a curse upon innocent life. I paid fifteen hundred dollars for the souls and bodies of those two women, creatures of sense, delicacy, and tenderness. But I am not a bad man, after all. No, there are worse men than me in the world."

"Gather, gather, ye incubus of misfortune, bearing to me the light of heaven, with which to see my sins. May it come to turn my heart in the right way, to seek its retribution on the wrong!" Thus concluding, Marston covers his face in his hands, and for several minutes weeps like a child. Again rising from his seat, he throws the paper on a table near an open window, and himself upon a couch near by.

Maxwell attempts to quiet him by drawing his attention from the subject. There is little use, however,—it is a terrible conflict,—the conflict of conscience awakening to a sense of its errors; the fate of regrets when it is too late to make amends.

While this was going on, a brawny hand reached into the window, and quickly withdrew the paper from the table. Neither observed it.

And at the moment, Marston ejaculated, "I will! I will! let it cost what it may. I will do justice to Clotilda and her child,—to Ellen and her child; I will free them, send them into a free country to be educated." In his excitement he forgot the bill of sale.

"Like enough you will!" responds a gruff voice; and a loud rap at the hall−door followed. Dandy was summoned, opened the door, bowed Romescos into the room. He pretends to be under the influence of liquor, which he hopes will excuse his extraordinary familiarity at such a late hour. Touching the hilt of his knife, he swaggers into the presence of Marston, looks at him fixedly, impertinently demands something to drink. He cares not what it be, waits for no ceremony, tips the decanter, gulps his glass, and deliberately takes a seat.

The reader will perhaps detect the object of his presence; but, beyond that, there is something deep and desperate in the appearance of the man, rendering his familiarity exceedingly disagreeable. That he should present himself at such an untimely hour was strange, beyond Marston's comprehension. It was, indeed, most inopportune; but knowing him, he feared him. He could not treat him with indifference,—there was his connection with Graspum, his power over the poor servile whites; he must be courteous−so, summoning his suavity, he orders Dandy to wait upon him.

Romescos amuses himself with sundry rude expressions about the etiquette of gentlemen,—their rights and associations,—the glorious freedom of a glorious land. Not heeding Dandy's attention, he fills another glass copiously, twirls it upon the table, eyes Marston, and then Maxwell, playfully−drinks his beverage with the air of one quite at home.

"Marston, old feller," he says, winking at Maxwell, "things don't jibe so straight as they use't−do they? I wants a stave o' conversation on matters o' business with ye to−morrow. It's a smart little property arrangement; but I ain't in the right fix just now; I can't make the marks straight so we can understand two and two. Ye take, don't ye? Somethin' touching a genteel business with your fast young nephew, Lorenzo. Caution to the wise." Romescos, making several vain attempts, rises, laughing with a half−independent air, puts his slouch hat on his head, staggers to the door, makes passes at Dandy, who waits his egress, and bidding them good night, disappears.

CHAPTER IX. WHO IS SAFE AGAINST THE POWER?

THE cholera raging on Marston's plantation, had excited Graspum's fears. His pecuniary interests were above every other consideration−he knew no higher object than the accumulation of wealth; and to ascertain the precise nature and extent of the malady he had sent Romescos to reconnoitre.

Returning to the long−room at Graspum's slave−pen, we must introduce the reader to scenes which take place on the night following that upon which Romescos secured the bill of sale at Marston's mansion.

Around the table we have before described sit Graspum and some dozen of his clan. Conspicuous among them is Dan Bengal, and Nath Nimrod, whom we described as running into the room unceremoniously, holding by the hair the head of a negro, and exulting over it as a prize of much value. They are relating their adventures, speculating over the prospects of trade, comparing notes on the result of making free trash human property worth something! They all manifest the happiest of feelings, have a language of their own, converse freely; at times sprinkle their conversation with pointed oaths. They are conversant with the business affairs of every planter in the State, know his liabilities, the condition of his negroes, his hard cases, his bad cases, his runaways, and his prime property. Their dilations on the development of wenches, shades of colour, qualities of stock suited to the various markets−from Richmond to New Orleans−disclose a singular foresight into the article of poor human nature.

"There's nothing like pushing our kind of business, specially whin ye gits it where ye can push profitably," speaks Bengal, his fiery red eyes glaring over the table as he droops his head sluggishly, and, sipping his whiskey, lets it drip over his beard upon his bosom; "if 't warn't for Anthony's cunnin' we'd have a pesky deal of crooked law to stumble through afore we'd get them rich uns upset."

My reader must know that southern law and justice for the poor succumb to popular feeling in all slave atmospheres; and happy is the fellow who can work his way through slavedom without being dependent upon the one or brought under the influence of the other.

Graspum, in reply to Bengal, feels that gentlemen in the "nigger business" should respect themselves. He well knows there exists not the best feeling in the world between them and the more exclusive aristocracy, whose feelings must inevitably be modified to suit the democratic spirit of the age. He himself enjoys that most refined society, which he asserts to be strong proof of the manner in which democracy is working its way to distinction. Our business, he says, hath so many avenues that it has become positively necessary that some of them should be guarded by men of honour, dignity, and irreproachable conduct. Now, he has sent Anthony Romescos to do some watching on the sly, at Marston's plantation; but there is nothing dishonourable in that, inasmuch as the victim is safe in his claws. Contented with these considerations, Graspum puffs his cigar very composedly. From slave nature, slave−seeking adventures, and the intricacies of the human−property−market, they turn to the discussion of state rights, of freedom in its broadest and most practical sense. And, upon the principle of the greatest despot being foremost to discuss what really constitutes freedom, which, however, he always argues in an abstract sense, Nimrod was loudest and most lavish in his praises of a protective government—a government that would grant great good justice to the white man only. It matters little to Nimrod which is the greater nigger; he believes in the straight principles of right in the white man. It is not so much how justice is carried out when menial beings form a glorious merchandise; but it is the true essence of liberty, giving men power to keep society all straight, to practice liberty very liberally. "Ye see, now, Graspum," he quaintly remarks, as he takes up the candle to light his cigar, "whatever ye do is right, so long as the law gives a feller a right to do it. 'Tisn't a bit o' use to think how a man can be too nice in his feelings when a hundred or two's to be made on nigger property what's delicate, t'aint! A feller feels sore once in a while, a' cos his conscience is a little touchy now and then; but it won't do to give way to it−conscience don't bring cash. When ye launches out in the nigger−trading business ye must feel vengeance agin the brutes, and think how it's only trade; how it's perfectly legal−and how it's encouraged by the Governor's proclamations. Human natur's human natur'; and when ye can turn a penny at it, sink all the in'ard inclinations. Just let the shiners slide in, it don't matter a tenpence where ye got 'em. Trade's everything! you might as well talk

about patriotism among crowned heads,—about the chivalry of commerce: cash makes consequence, and them's what makes gentlemen, south."

They welcome the spirits, although it has already made them soulless. The negro listens to a dialogue of singular import to himself; his eyes glistened with interest, as one by one they sported over the ignorance enforced upon the weak. One by one they threw their slouch hats upon the floor, drew closer in conclave, forming a grotesque picture of fiendish faces. "Now, gentlemen," Graspum deigns to say, after a moment's pause, motioning to the decanter, "pass it along round when ye gets a turn about." He fills his glass and drinks, as if drink were a necessary accompaniment of the project before them. "This case of Marston's is a regular plumper; there's a spec to be made in that stock of stuff; and them bright bits of his own−they look like him−'ll make right smart fancy. Ther' developing just in the right sort of way to be valuable for market."

"There's movin' o' the shrewdest kind to be done there, Graspum! Where's the dockerment what 'll make 'um property, eh?" interrupted Nimrod, twisting the hair with which his face is covered into fantastic points.

"Oh, my good fellows, public opinion's the dockerment; with the bright side of public opinion! Public opinion whispers about Clotilda: it says she looks so much like that niece of Marston's, that you couldn't tell them apart. And they are like two pins, gentlemen; but then one's property and t'other's anything but property. One will bring something substantial in the market: I wouldn't say much about the other. But there's pride in the whole family, and where it's got into the niggers it's worth a few extra dollars. The Marstons and Roveros don't think much of we dealers when they don't want our money; but when they do we are cousins of the right stripe. However, these ere little aristocratic notions don't mount to much; they are bin generous blood−mixers, and now they may wince over it−"

Graspum is interrupted again. Bengal has been analysing his logic, and rises to dispute the logic of his arguments. He is ready to stake his political faith, and all his common sense−of which he never fails to boast−that mixing the blood of the two races destroys the purity of the nigger, spiles the gauge of the market, detracts from real plantation property, and will just upset the growin' of young niggers. He is sure he knows just as much about the thing as anybody else, has never missed his guess, although folks say he aint no way clever at selection; and, rubbing his eyes after adjusting the long black hair that hangs down over his shoulders, he folds his arms with an independent air, and waits the rejoinder.

The dingy room breathes thick of deleterious fumes; a gloom hangs over their meditations, deep and treacherous: it excites fear, not of the men, but of the horrors of their trade. A dim light hangs suspended from the ceiling: even the sickly shade contrasts strangely with their black purpose.

"Variety of shade, my dear Bengal, is none of our business. If you make a division you destroy the property and the principle. We don't represent the South: if we did, my stars! how the abolitionists would start up,—eh! Now, there's a right smart chance of big aristocrat folks in the district, and they think something of their niggers, and some are fools enough to think niggers have souls just as white as we. That's where the thing don't strike our morals alike. It's all right to let such folks represent us−that it is! It tells down north."

"I goes in for that! It puts a polished face on the brown side of things. That's the way I puts it on when I gets among the big 'uns on 'Change. I talks to one, shakes hands with another, touches my hat to the president of the bank; and then them what don't know thinks how I do a little in the taking a corner of notes line!" "In the same sly way that directors of banks do," interrupts a voice, sullenly and slow. It was long Joe Morphet, the constable's sponge, who did a little in the line of nigger trailing, and now and then acted as a contingent of Graspum. Joe had, silently and with great attention, listened to their consultations, expecting to get a hook on at some point where his services would play at a profit; but it all seemed beyond his comprehension−amounted to nothing.

"There's something in Joe, gentlemen! But our genteelest folks don't alway do the genteelest things, arter all. Right−right! Joe's right!" Graspum has suddenly comprehended Joe's logic, and brightens up with the possession of a new idea, that at first was inclined to get crosswise in his mind, which he has drilled in the minor details of human nature rather than the political dignity of the state. Joe's ideas are ranging over the necessity of keeping up a good outside for the state; Graspum thinks only of keeping up the dignity of himself. "Well, give in, fellers; Joe's right clever. He's got head enough to get into Congress, and if polished up wouldn't make the worst feller that ever was sent: he wouldn't, to my certain knowledge. Joe's clever! What great men do with impunity little men have no scruples in following; what the state tolerates, knaves may play upon to their own advantage. To keep up the dignity of a slave state, slave dealers must keep up dignity among themselves: the one cannot live

without the other. They must affect, and the state must put on, the dignity; and northerners what aint gentlemen must be taught to know that they aint gentlemen." This is the conclusion to which Graspum has arrived on the maturest reflection of a few minutes: it conforms with the opinion and dignity of slaveocracy−must be right, else the glorious Union, with the free−thinking north unfortunately attached, could never be preserved. It's the nut of a glorious compact which the south only must crack, and will crack. Graspum apologised for the thing having escaped his memory so long. He remembered that southerners left no stone unturned that could serve the policy of concentrating slave power; and he remembered that it was equally necessary to keep an eye to the feeling abroad. There were in America none but southern nobles,—no affable gentlemen who could do the grace of polite circles except themselves,—none who, through their bland manners, could do more to repel the awful descriptions given of southern society, nor who could not make strangers believe slaves were happy mortals, happily created to live in all the happiness of slave life. "There's nothing like putting our learned folks ahead−they're polished down for the purpose, you see−and letting them represent us when abroad; they puts a different sort of shine on things what our institution makes profitable. They don't always set good examples at home, but we can't control their tastes on small matters of that kind: and then, what a valuable offset it is, just to have the power of doing the free and easy gentleman, to be the brilliant companion, to put on the smooth when you go among nobility what don't understand the thing!" Graspum adds, with a cunning wink.

"Pooh! pooh! such talk don't jingle. You can't separate our aristocracy from mistress−keeping. It's a matter of romance with them,—a matter of romance, gentlemen, that's all. The south couldn't live without romance, she couldn't!" adds Nimrod, stretching back in his chair.

"And where did you get that broad idea from, Jakey? I kind o' likes that sort of philosophy," adds another.

"Philosophy! I reckon how there is deep and strong philosophy in that ar; but ye can't calc'late much on't when ye haint talents to bring it out. That point where the soul comes in is a puzzler on Yankees; but it takes our editors and parsons to put the arguments where the Yankees can't demolish them. Read the Richmond—, my grandmother of the day, if ye want to see the philosophy of niggers, and their souls. That editor is a philosopher; the world's got to learn his philosophy. Just take that preacher from New Jersey, what preaches in All Saints; if he don't prove niggers aint no souls I'm a Dutchman, and dead at that! He gives 'em broadside logic, gentlemen; and if he hadn't been raised north he wouldn't bin so up on niggers when he cum south," was the quick rejoinder of our knowing expounder, who, looking Graspum in the face, demanded to know if he was not correct. Graspum thinks it better to waste no more time in words, but to get at the particular piece of business for which they have been called together. He is a man of money,—a man of trade, ever willing to admit the philosophy of the man−market, but don't see the difference of honour between the aristocrat who sells his bits in the market, and the honourable dealer who gets but a commission for selling them. And there's something about the parson who, forgetting the sanctity of his calling, sanctifies everything pertaining to slavery. Conscience, he admits, is a wonderful thing fixed somewhere about the heart, and, in spite of all he can do, will trouble it once in a while. Marston−poor Marston!−he declares to be foolishly troubled with it, and it makes him commit grievous errors. And then, there's no understandin' it, because Marston has a funny way of keeping it under such a knotty−looking exterior. Graspum declares he had nothing to do with the breaking out of the cholera, is very sorry for it,—only wants his own, just like any other honest man. He kind o' likes Marston, admits he is a sort of good fellow in his way; mighty careless though, wouldn't cheat anybody if he knew it, and never gave half a minute's thinking about how uncertain the world was. But the cholera−a dire disease among niggers−has broke out in all the fury of its ravages; and it makes him think of his sick niggers and paying his debts. "You see, gentlemen−we are all gentlemen here," Graspum continues,—"a man must pay the penalty of his folly once in a while. It's the fate of great men as well as smaller ones; all are liable to it. That isn't the thing, though; it don't do to be chicken−hearted afore niggers, nor when yer dealing in niggers, nor in any kind o' business what ye want to make coin at. Marston 'll stick on that point, he will; see if he don't. His feelins' are troubling him: he knows I've got the assignment; and if he don't put them ar' white 'uns of his in the schedule, I'll snap him up for fraud,—I will−"

The conversation is here interrupted by a loud rap at the door, which is opened by the negro, who stands with his finger on the latch. Romescos, in his slovenly garb, presents himself with an air of self−assurance that marks the result of his enterprise. He is a prominent feature in all Graspum's great operations; he is desperate in serving his interests. Drawing a handkerchief from his pocket−it is printed with the stars and stripes of freedom−he calls it a New England rag, disdainfully denounces that area of unbelievers in slaveocracy, wipes his blistered face with

it, advances to the table−every eye intently watching him−and pauses for breath.

"What success, Anthony? Tell us quickly," Graspum demands, extending his hand nervously. "Anthony never fails! It's a fool who fails in our business," was the reply, delivered with great unconcern, and responded to with unanimous applause. A warrior returned from victory was Anthony,—a victory of villainy recorded in heaven, where the rewards will, at some day, be measured out with a just but awful retribution.

The bosom of his shirt lays broadly open: one by one they shake his hand, as he hastily unties the chequered cloth about his neck, pours out his drink of whiskey, seats himself in a chair, and deliberately places his feet upon the table. "Ther's nothin' like making a triangle of oneself when ye wants to feel so ye can blow comfortable," he says. "I done nothin' shorter than put all straight at Marston's last night. It was science, ye see, gents; and I done it up strictly according to science. A feller what aint cunnin', and don't know the nice work o' the law, can't do nothin' in the way o' science. It's just as you said"−addressing his remarks to Graspum,— "Marston's slackin' out his conscience because he sees how things are goin' down hill with him. If that old hoss cholera don't clar off the nigger property, I'm no prophet. It'll carry 'em into glory; and glory, I reckon, isn't what you calls good pay, eh, Graspum? I overheard his intentions: he sees the black page before him; it troubles the chicken part of his heart. Feels mighty meek and gentle all at once; and, it's no lie, he begins to see sin in what he has done; and to make repentance good he's goin' to shove off that nabob stock of his, so the creditors can't lay paws upon it. Ye got to spring; Marston 'll get ahead of ye if he don't, old feller. This child 'll show him how he can't cum some o' them things while Squire Hobble and I'm on hand." Thus quaintly he speaks, pulling the bill of sale from a side−pocket, throwing it upon the table with an air of satisfaction amounting to exultation. "Take that ar; put it where ye can put yer finger on't when the 'mergency comes." And he smiles to see how gratefully and anxiously Graspum receives it, reviews it, re−reviews it,—how it excites the joy of his nature. He has no soul beyond the love of gold, and the system of his bloody trade. It was that fatal instrument, great in the atmosphere of ungrateful law, bending some of nature's noblest beneath its seal of crimes. "It's from Silenus to Marston; rather old, but just the thing! Ah, you're a valuable fellow, Anthony." Mr. Graspum manifests his approbation by certain smiles, grimaces, and shakes of the hand, while word by word he reads it, as if eagerly relishing its worth. "It's a little thing for a great purpose; it'll tell a tale in its time;" and he puts the precious scrip safely in his pocket, and rubbing his hands together, declares "that deserves a bumper!" They fill up at Graspum's request, drink with social cheers, followed by a song from Nimrod, who pitches his tune to the words, "Come, landlord, fill the flowing bowl."

Nimrod finishes his song: Romescos takes the floor to tell a story about the old judge what hung the nigger a'cos he didn't want to spend his patience listening to the testimony, and adjourned the court to go and take a drink at Sal Stiles's grocery. His description of the court, its high jurisdiction, the dignity of the squire what sits as judge, how he drinks the three jurymen−freeholders−what are going to try a nigger, how they goes out and takes three drinks when the case gets about half way through, how the nigger winks and blinks when he sees the jury drunk, and hears the judge say there's only two things he likes to hang,—niggers and schoolmasters. But as it's no harm to kill schoolmasters−speaking in a southern sense−so Romescos thinks the squire who got the jury inebriated afore he sent the "nigger" to be hung doesn't mean the least harm when he evinces an abhorrence to the whole clan of schoolmaster trash. He turns to the old story of doing everything by system; ends by describing his method of drinking a whole jury. He has surprised Marston, got him on the hip, where he can feather him or sciver him, and where things must be done sly. Public opinion, he whispers, may set folks moving, and then they'll all be down upon him like hawks after chickens. In his mind, the feller what pulls first comes off first best−if the law hounds are not too soon let loose! If they are, there will be a long drag, a small cage for the flock, and very few birds with feathers on. Romescos cares for nobody but the judge: he tells us how the judge and he are right good cronies, and how it's telling a good many dollars at the end of the year to keep on the best of terms with him, always taking him to drink when they meet. The judge is a wonderfully clever fellow, in Romescos' opinion; ranks among first−class drinkers; can do most anything, from hanging a nigger to clearing the fellow that killed the schoolmaster, and said he'd clear a dozen in two two's, if they'd kill off ever so many of the rubbish. It is well to make his favour a point of interest. The company are become tired of this sort of cantation; they have heard enough of high functionaries, know quite enough of judges:—such things are in their line of business. Romescos must needs turn the conversation. "Well, taking it how I can entertain ye to most anything, I'll give ye a story on the secrets of how I used to run off Ingin remnants of the old tribes. 'Taint but a few years ago, ye know, when ther was a lot of Ingin and white, mixed stuff−some called it beautiful−down in Beaufort district. It was

temptin' though, I reckon, and made a feller feel just as if he was runnin' it off to sell, every time it come in his way. Ye see, most on't was gal property, and that kind, ollers keeps the whole district in a hubbub; everybody's offended, and there's so much delicacy about the ladies what come in contact with it. Yes, gentlemen! the ladies−I means the aristocracy's ladies−hate these copper−coloured Ingins as they would female devils. It didn't do to offend the delicacy of our ladies, ye see; so something must be done, but it was all for charity's sake. Squire Hornblower and me fixes a plan a'tween us: it was just the plan to do good for the town−we must always be kind, ye know, and try to do good−and save the dear good ladies a great deal of unnecessary pain.

"Now, the squire had law larnin', and I had cunnin'; and both put together made the thing work to a point. The scheme worked so nicely that we put twelve out of fifteen of 'em right into pocket−money in less than three years−"

"Hold a second, Romescos; how did you play the game so adroitly, when they were all members of families living in the town? You're a remarkable fellow," Graspum interposes, stretching his arms, and twisting his sturdy figure over the side of his chair.

"That's what I was coming at. Ye see, whenever ye makes white trash what ain't slaved a nuisance, you makes it mightily unpopular; and when folks is unpopular the nuisance is easily removed, especially when ye can get pay for removing it. The law will be as tame as a mouse−nobody 'll say nothin'? Ingin and white rubbish is just alike−one's worth as little as t'other. Both's only fit to sell, sir!−worthless for any other purpose. Ye see, gentlemen, I'm something of a philosopher, and has strong faith in the doctrine of our popular governor, who believes it better to sell all poor whites into slavery. 'Tain't a free country where ye don't have the right to sell folks what don't provide for number one. I likes to hear our big folks talk so"−Anthony's face brightens−"'cause it gives a feller a chance for a free speculation in them lank, lean rascals; and, too, it would stop their rifle−shooting and corn−stealing−"

"You never try your hand at such hits−do you, Nathe?" Bengal interrupts, his fore−finger poised on his nose.

"Now, Dan," Anthony quaintly replies, "none o' yer pointed insinuations. 'Twouldn't be much harm if the varmin would only keep its mouth shut along the road. But when the critturs ar' got schoolmaster gumption it's mighty apt to get a feller into a tarnation snarl. Schoolmaster gumption makes d−d bad niggers; and there's why I say it's best to hang schoolmasters. It's dangerous, 'cos it larns the critturs to writin' a scrawl now and then; and, unless ye knows just how much talent he's got, and can whitewash him yaller, it's plaguy ticklish. When the brutes have larnin', and can write a little, they won't stay sold when ye sell 'em−that is, I mean, white riff−raff stuff; they ain't a bit like niggers and Ingins. And there's just as much difference a'tween the human natur of a white nigger and a poverty−bloated white as there is a'twixt philosophy and water−melons."

"You're drawing a long bow, Anthony," interrupts Graspum, with a suggestion that it were better to come to the point; and concludes by saying: "We don't care sevenpence about the worthless whites all over the State. They can't read nor write−except a few on 'em−and everybody knows it wouldn't do to give them learning−that wouldn't do! We want the way you cleared that nuisance out of Beaufort district so quick−that's what we want to hear."

"Well, ye'h sees, it took some keen play, some sly play, some dignity, and some talent; but the best thing of the whole was the squire's honour. He and me, ye see, joined partners—that is, he gets places for 'em away out o' town—you understand—places where I keeps a couple of the very best nags that ever stepped turf. And then he puts on the soft sauder, an' is so friendly to the critturs—gets 'em to come out with him to where he will make 'um nice house servants, and such things. He is good at planin', as all justices is, and would time it to arrive at midnight. I, havin' got a start, has all ready to meet him; so when he gives me the papers, I makes a bolt at full speed, and has 'um nowhere afore they knows it. And then, when they sees who it is, it don't do to make a fuss about it—don't! And then, they're so handsome, it ain't no trouble finding a market for 'em down Memphis way. It only takes forty−eight hours—the way things is done up by steam—from the time I clears the line until Timothy Portman signs the bond−that's five per cent. for him−and Ned Sturm does the swearin', and they're sold for a slap−up price—sent to where there's no muttering about it. That's one way we does it; and then, there's another. But, all in all, there's a right smart lot of other ways that will work their way into a talented mind. And when a feller gets the hang on it, and knows lawyer gumption, he can do it up smooth. You must strap 'em down, chain 'em, look vengeance at 'em; and now and then, when the varmin will squeal, spite of all the thrashin' ye can give 'em, box 'em up like rats, and put yer horses like Jehu until ye cl'ar the State. The more ye scars 'em the

better−make 'em as whist as mice, and ye can run 'em through the rail−road, and sell 'um just as easy.

"There was another way I used to do the thing−it was a sort of an honourable way; but it used to take the talents of a senator to do it up square, so the dignity didn't suffer. Then the gals got shy of squire, 'cos them he got places for never cum back; and I know'd how 'twas best to leave two or three for a nest−egg. It was the way to do, in case some green should raise a fuss. But connected with these Ingin gals was one of the likleest yaller fellers that ever shined on a stand. Thar' was about twelve hundred dollars in him, I saw it just as straight, and felt it just as safe in my pocket; and then it made a feller's eyes glisten afore it was got out of him. I tell you what, boys, it's rather hard when ye comes to think on't." Anthony pauses for a moment, sharpens his eloquence with another drop of whiskey, and resumes his discourse. "The feller shined all outside, but he hadn't head talents−though he was as cunnin' as a fox−and every time the squire tried an experiment to get him out o'town, the nigger would dodge like a wounded raccoon. 'Twarn't a bit of use for the squire−so he just gin it up. Then I trys a hand, ye see, comes the soft soap over him, in a Sam Slick kind of a way. I'se a private gentleman, and gets the fellers round to call me a sort of an aristocrat. Doing this 'ere makes me a nabob in the town−another time I'm from New York, and has monstrous letters of introduction to the squire. Then I goes among the niggers and comes it over their stupid; tells 'em how I'm an abolitionist in a kind of secret way−gets their confidence. And then I larns a right smart deal of sayings from the Bible−a nigger's curious on Christianity, ye see−and it makes him think ye belong to that school, sartin! All the deviltry in his black natur' 'll cum out then; and he'll do just what ye tells him. So, ye see, I just draws the pious over him, and then−like all niggers−I gets him to jine in what he calculates to be a nice little bit of roguery−running off."

Graspum becomes interested in the fine qualities of the prospective property, and must needs ask if he is bright and trim.

"Bright! I reckon he warn't nothin' else in a money sense−brighter nor most niggers, but mighty Inginy. Had the fierce of one and the cunnin' of t'other. Tom Pridgeon and me has an understandin' about the thing; and Tom's such a ripper for tradin' in nigger property−he is about the only devil niggers can imagine; and they delight to play tricks on Tom. Well, the nigger and me's good friends, right to the point; a good trick is to be played off on Tom, who buys the nigger in confidence; the nigger is to run off when he gets to Savannah, and Tom is to be indicted for running off 'free niggers.' I'se a great Christian, and joins heart and hand with the darkey; we takes our walks together, reads together, prays together. And then 'tain't long afore I becomes just the best white man in his estimation. Knowing when Tom makes up his gang, I proposes a walk in the grove to the nigger. 'Thank ye, sir,' says he, in an Ingin kind of way, and out we goes, sits down, talks pious, sings hymns, and waits to see the rascally nigger−trader come along. Presently Tom makes his appearance, with a right smart lot of extra prime property. The nigger and me marches down the road just like master and servant, and stops just when we meets Tom. You'd laughed to see Tom and me do the stranger, 'Well, mister,' says I, 'how's trade in your line?−there's mighty good prices for cotton just now; an' I 'spose 't keeps the market stiff up in your line!'"

'Well, no,' says Tom: 'a feller can turn a good penny in the way o' fancy articles, just now; but 'tain't the time for prime plantation−stock. Planters are all buying, and breeders down Virginia way won't give a feller a chance to make a shaving. It drives a feller hard up, ye see, and forces more business in running the free 'uns.'

'Why, stranger! what on 'arth do you mean by that 'ar;−wouldn't ye get straightened if you'd git catched at that business?'

'Oh, nothing, nothing! I forgot what I was saying,' says Tom, just as if he was scared at what he had let slip.

'I say, trader, ye got the brightest assortment of property thar' I seen for many a day: you don't call them gals slaves, do you? Down where I cum from, our folks wouldn't know 'em from white folks.' I tell you, boys, he had some bits that would o' made yer heart cum straight up.

'But I say, mister, I kind 'a like yer horse property−somehow he's full blood,' says I.

'Yes,' says Tom; 'he's one o' the best critturs to drive niggers with that ye ever did see; and he's beat the best horse on the Columbia course, twice.'

'Well, now; seein' how I likes the animal, about how much do ye'h set him at?' says I.

'Well! can't part with the nag nohow; seems as if he knowed a nigger, and understands the business right up.'

'But, you see, I'se got a bit of nigger property here what ye'h don't pick up every day for the Memphis trade,' says I, looking at the feller, who played his part right up to the hilt.

'Well, I don't mind strikin' a trade,' says Tom: 'but you see my nag's worth a little risin' a thousand dollars.'

'I don't doubt that, stranger,' says I: 'but ye'h sees this 'ar piece of property o' mine is worth more 'an twelve hundred. You don't come across such a looking chap every day. There's a spec. in him, in any market down south,' says I; and I puts my hands on the nigger and makes him show out, just as if Tom and me was striking for a trade. So Tom examines him, as if he was green in nigger business, and he and me strangers just come from t'other side of moon shadows.

'Well, now,' says Tom, 'it's mighty likely property, and seeing it's you, jist name a trade.'

'Put down the nag and two hundred dollars, and I'll sign the bill of sale, for a swap.' And Tom plants down the dimes, and takes the nigger. When Tom gets him to Savannah, he plunks him into jail, and keeps him locked up in a cell until he is ready to start south. I promises the nigger half of the spiles; but I slips an X

Ten dollars. into his hand, and promises him the rest when he gets back−when he does! And ye see how Tom just tryced him up to the cross and put thirty−nine to his bare skin when he talked about being free, in Savannah; and gagged him when he got his Ingin up. Warn't that doing the thing up slick, fellers?" exclaimed Romescos, chuckling over the sport.

"It warn't nothing else. That's what I calls catching a nigger in his own trap," said one. "That's sarvin' him right; I go for sellin' all niggers and Ingins," said another. "Free niggers have no souls, and are impediments to personal rights in a free country," said a third.

"Ye'h see, there's such an infernal lot of loose corners about our business, that it takes a feller what has got a big head to do all the things smooth, in a legal way; and it's so profitable all round that it kind o' tempts a feller, once in a while, to do things he don't feel just right in; but then a glass of old monongahela brings ye'h all straight in yer feelins again, a'ter a few minutes," said Romescos.

"It's an amusing business; a man's got to have nerve and maxim, if he wants to make a fortune at it. But−now, gentlemen, we'll take another round," said Graspum, stopping short. "Anthony, tell us how you work it when you want to run a free nigger down Maryland way."

"There ain't no trouble about that," replied Romescos, quickly. "You see," he continued, squinting his eye, and holding his glass between his face and the light. "Shut out all hope first, and then prime legal gentlemen along the road, and yer sartin to make safe business. I has chaps what keeps their eye on all the free bits, and makes good fellers with 'em; niggers think they'r the right stripe friends; and then they gives 'em jobs once in a while, and tobacco, and whiskey. So when I gets all fixed for a run, some on 'm gets the nigger into a sly spot, and then we pounces upon him like a hawk on a chicken−gags him, and screws him up in the chains, head and feet,—boxes him up, too, and drives him like lightning until I meets Tilman at the cross−roads; and then I just has a document

"A forged bill of sale, all ready, which I gives to Till, and he puts his nags in−a pair what can take the road from anything about−and the way he drives, just to make the nigger forget where he's going, and think he's riding in a balloon on his way to glory. Just afore Til. gets to the boat, ye see, he takes the headchains off−so the delicate−hearted passengers won't let their feelins get kind−a out o' sorts. Once in a while the nigger makes a blubber about being free, to the captain,—and if he's fool enough t' take any notice on't then there's a fuss; but that's just the easiest thing to get over, if ye only know the squire, and how to manage him. You must know the pintes of the law, and ye must do the clean thing in the 'tin' way with the squire; and then ye can cut 'em right off by makin' t'other pintes make 'em mean nothing. Once in a while t'll do to make the nigger a criminal, and then there's no trouble in't, 'cos ye can ollers git the swearin' done cheap. Old Captain Smith used to get himself into a scrape a heap o' times by listenin' to free nigger stories, till he gets sick and would kick every nigger what came to him about being free. He takes the law in his hands with a nigger o' mine once, and hands him over to a city policeman as soon as we lands. He didn't understand the thing, ye see, and I jist puts an Ten dollars into the pole's hand, what he takes the hint at. 'Now, ye'll take good care on the feller," says I, giving him a wink. "And he just keeps broad off from the old hard−faced mayor, and runs up to the squire's, who commits him on his own committimus. Then I gets Bob Blanker to stand 'all right' with the squire, who's got all the say in the matter, when it's done so. I cuts like lightenin' on to far down Mississippi, and there gets Sam Slang, just one o' the keenest fellers in that line, about. Sam's a hotel−keeper all at once, and I gets him up afore the Mississippi squire; and as Sam don't think much about the swearin' and the squire ain't particular, so he makes a five: we proves straight off how the crittur's Sam's runaway, gets the dockerment and sends to Bob Blanker, who puts a blinder on the squire's eye, and gets an order to the old jailor, who must give him up, when he sees the squire's order. You see, it's larnin' the secret, that's the thing, and the difference between common law and nigger law; and the way to work the

matter so the squire will have it all in his own fingers, and don't let the old judge get a pick. Squire makes it square, hands the nigger over to Bob, Bob puts fifty cuts on his hide, makes him as clever as a kitten, and ships him off down south afore he has time to wink. Then, ye sees, I goes back as independent as a senator from Arkansas, and sues Captain Smith for damages in detainin' the property, and I makes him pay a right round sum, what larns him never to try that agin."

Thus Romescos concludes the details of his nefarious trade, amid cheers and bravos. The party are in ecstasies, evincing a singular merriment at the issue. There is nothing like liberty—liberty to do what you please, to turn freedom into barbarity! They gloat over the privileges of a free country; and, as Romescos recounts each proceeding,—tracing it into the lowest depths of human villainy, they sing songs to right, justice, freedom−they praise the bounties of a great country. How different is the picture below! Beneath this plotting conclave, devising schemes to defraud human nature of its rights, to bring poverty and disgrace upon happy families−all in accordance with the law−are chained in narrow cells poor mortals, hoping for an end to their dreary existence, pining under the weight of pinions dashing their very souls into endless despair. A tale of freedom is being told above, but their chains of death clank in solemn music as the midnight revelry sports with the very agony of their sorrows. Oh! who has made their lives a wanton jest?−can it be the will of heaven, or is it the birthright of a downtrodden race? They look for to−morrow, hope reverberates one happy thought, it may bring some tidings of joy; but again they sink, as that endless gloom rises before them. Hope fades from their feelings, from the bleeding heart for which compassion is dead. The tyrant's heart is of stone; what cares he for their supplications, their cries, their pleadings to heaven; such things have no dollars for him!

Arranging the preliminaries necessary for proceeding with Marston's affairs, they agreed to the plans, received orders from Graspum in reference to their proceedings on the following day, and retired to their homes, singing praises to great good laws, and the freedom of a free country.

CHAPTER X. ANOTHER SHADE OF THE PICTURE.

WHILE the proceedings we have detailed in the foregoing chapter were progressing at Graspum's slave−pen, a different phase of the system was being discussed by several persons who had assembled at the house of Deacon Rosebrook. Rumour had been busy spreading its many−sided tales about Marston−his difficulties, his connection with Graspum, his sudden downfall. All agreed that Marston was a noble−minded fellow, generous to a fault−generous in his worst errors; and, like many other southerners, who meant well, though personally kind to his slaves, never set a good example in his own person. Religion was indispensably necessary to preserve submission; and, with a view to that end, he had made the Church a means of producing it.

Now, if the southerner resorted to the Church in the purity of Christian motives, he would merit that praise which many are so willing to bestow. Or, if Christianity were embraced by the southerner with heartfelt purity and faith, it would undoubtedly have a beneficial influence, elevate the character of the slave, promote kindly feelings between him and his master, and ultimately prove profitable to both. But where Christianity, used by irreligious persons, whose very acts destroy the vitality of the means, is made the medium of enforcing superstition, and of debasing the mind of the person it degrades into submission, its application becomes nothing less than criminal. It is criminal because it brings true religion into contempt, perverts Christianity−makes it a mockery, and gives to the degraded whites of the South a plea for discarding its precepts. Religion−were it not used as a mechanical agency−would elevate the degraded white population of the South; they would, through its influence, become valuable citizens.

These remarks have been forced upon us by observation. Frequently have we lamented its application, and grieved that its holy mission were made to serve the vilest purposes in a land of liberty, of Christian love. Religion a means of degrading the masses−a subservient agent! It is so, nevertheless; and men use it whose only desire it is to make it serve a property interest−the interest of making men, women, and children, more valuable in the market. God ordained it for a higher purpose,—man applies it for his benefit in the man−market. Hence, where the means for exercising the mind upon the right is forbidden−where ignorance becomes the necessary part of the maintenance of a system, and religion is applied to that end, it becomes farcical; and while it must combine all the imperfections of the performer, necessarily tends to confine the ignorance of those it seeks to degrade, within the narrowest boundary. There are different ways of destroying the rights of different classes; and as many different ways, after they are destroyed, of wiping out the knowledge of their ever having had rights. But, we regret to say, that most resorted to by the South, in the face of civilisation, is the Holy Scriptures, which are made the medium of blotting out all knowledge of the rights a people once possessed. The wrong−doer thus fears the result of natural laws; if they be allowed to produce results through the cultivation of a slave's mind, such may prove fatal to his immediate interests. And to maintain a system which is based on force, the southern minister of the gospel is doubly culpable in the sight of heaven; for while he stimulates ignorance by degrading the man, he mystifies the Word of God, that he may remain for ever and ever degraded.

What a deplorable process of stealing−nay, gently taking away the knowledge which an all−wise Providence has given to man as his inheritance; how it reduces his natural immunities to sensual misery! And, too, it forbids all legitimate influences that could possibly give the menial a link to elevation, to the formation of a society of his own. We would fain shrink from such a system of debasing mankind−even more, from the hideous crimes of those who would make Scripture the means to such an end. And yet, the Church defender of slavery−the Christian little one−his neck−cloth as white as the crimes he defends are black−must distinguish his arguments; and that the world may not suspect his devotion, his honesty, his serious intention, he points us to the many blessings of the plantation−service.

Heavenly divinity! Let us have faith in the little ones sent to teach it; they tell us slavery enforces Christianity! The management of ignorance under the direction of ministers of the gospel is certainly becoming well−defined; while statesmen more energetically legalise it. The one devises, the other carries out a law to make man ignorant of everything but labour. But while the statesman moulds the theory, the preacher manufactures Scripture texts,

that the menial may believe God has ordained him the pliable victim.

Under the apparent necessity of the slave world, Marston had regularly paid Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy for preaching to his property on Sundays; and to the requisite end the good Elder felt himself in duty bound to inculcate humility in all things that would promote obedience to a master's will. Of course, one sermon was quite sufficient; and this the credulous property had listened to for more than three years. The effect was entirely satisfactory, the result being that the honest property were really impressed with a belief, that to evince Christian fortitude under suffering and punishment was the best means of cleansing themselves of the sins they were born to. This formality was misnamed Christianity—it was! And through the force of this one sermon the Elder became indolent; and indolence led him to its natural yoke−fellow−intemperance. His indulgent mood, such as we have described him enjoying in a previous chapter, became too frequent, leading to serious annoyances. They had been especially serious for Marston, whom they placed in an awkward situation before his property, and he resolved to tolerate them no longer. Probably this resolution was hastened by the sudden discovery of Harry's singular knowledge of Scripture; be that as it may, the only difficulty in the way was to know if Harry could be so trained, that he would preach the "right stripe" doctrine. This, however, was soon settled, and Marston not only suspended his engagement with the Elder, but entered into a contract with the neighbouring planters, by the terms of which Harry will fill their pulpit, and preach extempore—the Elder has brought written sermons into contempt with Harry—at a stipulated price per Sunday. In this new avocation−this leap from the plantation to the pulpit, Harry, as a piece of property, became extremely valuable; while, through the charm of his new black coat, he rose a great man in the estimation of the common property. Here was a valuable incentive of submission, a lesson for all bad niggers, a chance for them to improve under the peculiar institution. It proved to niggerdom what a good nigger could be if he only fear God and obey his master in all things.

Here was proof that a nigger could be something more than a nigger, in spite of southern philosophy. The Elder−good, pious man that he was−found himself out of pocket and out of preaching. Thrown upon the resources of his ingenuity, he had, in order to save the dictates of his conscience, while taking advantage of the many opportunities of making money afforded by the peculiar institution, entered upon another branch of business, having for its object the advancement of humanity. He resolved to go forth purchasing the sick and the dying; to reclaim sinking humanity and make it marketable.

But, before describing the vicissitudes through which Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy passes in his new mission of humanity, we must introduce the reader to the precincts of a neat little villa, situated at the outskirts of the city of C—. It is a small cottage surrounded with verandas and trellis−work, over which are creeping numerous woodbines and multafloras, spreading their fragrant blossoms, giving it an air of sequestered beauty. An arbour of grapevines extends from a little portico at the front to a wicker fence that separates the embankment of a well−arranged garden, in which are pots of rare plants, beds and walks decorated with flowers, presenting great care and taste. A few paces in the rear of the cottage are several "negro cabins" nicely white−washed without, and an air of cheerfulness and comfort reigning within. The house− servants are trimly dressed; they look and act as if their thoughts and affections were with "mas'r and missus." Their white aprons and clean bright frocks−some bombazine, and some gingham−give them an appearance of exactness, which, whether it be voluntary or force of discipline, bears evidence of attention in the slave, and encouragement on the part of the master. This is the Villa of Deacon Rosebrook; they call him deacon, by courtesy; in the same sense that Georgia majors and South Carolina generals are honoured with those far−famed titles which so distinguish them when abroad. Perhaps we should be doing the deacon no more than justice if we were to admit that he had preached in very respectable spheres; but, feeling that he was wanting in the purity of divine love−that he could not do justice to his conscience while setting forth teachings he did not follow, he laid the profession aside for the more genial associations of plantation life. Indeed, he was what many called a very easy backslider; and at times was recognised by the somewhat singular soubriquet of Deacon Pious−proof. But he was kind to his slaves, and had projected a system singularly at variance with that of his neighbours−a system of mildness, amelioration, freedom.

His plantation, a small one, some few miles from the Villa, presented the same neatness and comfort, the same cheerfulness among the negroes, and the same kindly feeling between master and slave, which characterised the Villa.

We enter a neatly−furnished parlour, where the deacon and a friend are seated on a sofa; various pictures are

suspended from the wall,—everything betokens New England neatness. The old−fashioned dog−irons and fender are polished to exquisite brightness, a Brussels carpet spreads the floor, a bright surbase encircles the room; upon the flossy hearth−rug lies crouched the little canine pet, which Aunt Dolly has washed to snowy whiteness. Aunt Dolly enters the room with a low curtsy, gently raises the poodle, then lays him down as carefully as if he were an heir to the estate. Master is happy, "missus" is happy, and Aunt Dolly is happy; and the large bookcase, filled with well−selected volumes, adds to the air of contentment everywhere apparent. In a niche stands a large pier−table, upon which are sundry volumes with gilt edges, nets of cross−work, porcelain ornaments, and card−cases inlaid with mosaic. Antique tables with massive carved feet, in imitation of lions' paws, chairs of curious patterns, reclines and ottomans of softest material, and covered with satin damask, are arranged round the room in harmony and good taste.

"Now, Mr. Scranton," the deacon says to his friend, who is a tall, prim, sedate−looking man, apparently about forty, "I pity Marston; I pity him because he is a noble−hearted fellow. But, after all, this whispering about the city may be only mother Rumour distributing her false tales. Let us hope it is all rumour and scandal. Come, tell me−what do you think of our negroes?"

"Nigger character has not changed a bit in my mind, since I came south. Inferior race of mortals, sir!−without principles, and fit only for service and submission. A southern man knows their composition, but it takes a northern to study the philosophy−it does," replies Mr. Scranton, running his left hand over his forehead, and then his right over the crown of his head, as if to cover a bald spot with the scanty remnant of hair that projected from the sides.

The deacon smiles at the quaint reply. He knows Mr. Scranton's northern tenacity, and begs to differ with him. "You are ultra, a little ultra, in all things, Mr. Scranton. I fear it is that, carried out in morals as well as politics, that is fast reducing our system to degradation and tyranny. You northern gentlemen have a sort of pedantic solicitude for our rights, but you underrate our feelings upon the slavery question. I'm one among the few southerners who hold what are considered strange views: we are subjected to ridicule for our views; but it is only by those who see nothing but servitude in the negro,—nothing but dollars and cents in the institution of slavery."

Mr. Scranton is struck with astonishment, interrupts the argument by insisting upon the great superiority of the gentlemen whites, and the Bible philosophy which he can bring to sustain his argument.

"Stop one moment, my philosophic friend," the deacon interposes, earnestly. "Upon that you northerners who come out here to sustain the cause of slavery for the south, all make fools of yourselves. This continual reasoning upon Bible philosophy has lost its life, funeral dirges have been played over it, the instruments are worn out. And yet, the subject of the philosophy lives,—he belies it with his physical vigour and moral action. We doubt the sincerity of northerners; we have reasons for so doing; they know little of the negro, and care less. Instead of assisting southerners who are inclined to do justice to the wretch−to be his friend−to improve his condition−to protect him against a tyrant's wrong, you bring us into contempt by your proclaiming virtue over the vice we acknowledge belongs to the institution. We know its defects−we fear them; but, in the name of heaven, do not defend them at the cost of virtue, truth, honesty. Do not debase us by proclaiming its glories over our heads;−do not take advantage of us by attempting to make wrong right." The deacon's feelings have become earnest; his face glows with animation.

Mr. Scranton seems discomfited. "That's just like all you southerners: you never appreciate anything we do for you. What is the good of our love, if you always doubt it?"

"Such love!" says the deacon, with a sarcastic curl on his lip. "It's cotton−bag love, as full of self as a pressed bale−"

"But, deacon; you're getting up on the question."

"Up as high as northern sincerity is low. Nothing personal," is the cool rejoinder.

Mr. Scranton inquires very seriously−wishing it particularly to be understood that he is not a fighting−man−if Deacon Rosebrook considers all northerners white−washed, ready to deceive through the dim shadows of self. The deacon's frank and manly opinion of northern editors and preachers disturbs Scranton's serious philosophy. "Cotton−bag love!" there's something in it, and contempt at the bottom, he declares within himself. And he gives a serious look, as much as to say−"go on."

"I do! He who maketh right, what those most interested in know to be wrong, cherishes a bad motive. When a philosopher teaches doctrines that become doubtful in their ultraness, the weakness carries the insincerity,—the

effort becomes stagnant. Never sell yourself to any class of evils for popularity's sake. If you attempt it you mistake the end, and sell yourself to the obscurity of a political trickster, flatttered by a few, believed by none."

"Deacon! a little more moderate. Give us credit for the good we do. Don't get excited, don't. These are ticklish times, and we northerners are quick to observe−"

"Yes, when it will turn a penny on a nigger or a bale of cotton."

"Allow me; one minute if you please!" returned Scranton, with a nasal twang peculiar to his class, as he began to work himself up into a declamatory attitude. "You southerners don't understand what a force them northern abolitionists are bringing against you; and you know how slow you are to do things, and to let your property all go to waste while you might make a good speculation on it. There's just the difference of things: we study political economy so as to apply it to trade and such like; you let things go to waste, just thinking over it. And, you see, it's our nature to be restless and searching out the best avenues for developing trade. Why, deacon, your political philosophy would die out if the New Englander didn't edit your papers and keep your nigger principles straight."

"Nigger principles straight! Ah, indeed! Only another evidence of that cotton bag love that has caused the banns of matrimony to be published between tyrants who disgrace us and northern speculators. The book−publisher−poor servile tool−fears to publish Mrs. Johnson's book, lest it should contain something to offend Mrs. Colonel Sportington, at the south. Mr. Stevens, the grocer, dare not put his vote into the ballot−box for somebody, because he fears one of his customers at the south will hear of it. Parson Munson dare not speak what he thinks in a New England village, because Mrs. Bruce and Deacon Donaldson have yearly interests in slaves at the south; and old Mattock, the boot−maker, thinks it aint right for niggers to be in church with white folks, and declares, if they do go, they should sit away back in one corner, up stairs. He thinks about the combination that brings wealth, old age, and the grave, into one vortex,—feels little misgiving upon humanity, but loves the union, and wants nothing said about niggers. We understand what it all means, Mr. Scranton; and we can credit it for what it's worth, without making any account for its sincerity and independence. I am one among the few who go for educating the negroes, and in that education to cultivate affections between slave and master, to make encouragement perform the part of discipline, and inspire energy through proper rewards."

"What!−educate a nigger! These are pretty principles for a southerner to maintain! Why, sir, if such doctrines were advocated in the body politic they would be incendiary to southern institutions. Just educate the niggers, and I wouldn't be an editor in the south two days. You'd see me tramping, bag and baggage, for the north, much as I dislike it! It would never do to educate such a miserable set of wretches as they are. You may depend what I say is true, sir. Their condition is perfectly hopeless at the north, and the more you try to teach them, the greater nuisance they become."

"Now, my good northern friend, not so fast, if you please; I can see the evil of all this, and so can you, if you will but study the negro's character a little deeper. The menial man who has passed through generations of oppression, and whose life and soul are blotted from the right of manhood, is sensitive of the power that crushes him. He has been robbed of the means of elevating himself by those who now accuse him of the crime of degradation: and, wherever the chance is afforded him of elevation, as that increases so does a tenacious knowledge of his rights; yet, he feels the prejudice that cuts and slights him in his progress, that charges him with the impudence of a negro, that calls his attempts to be a man mere pompous foolery."

"And it is so! To see a nigger setting himself up among white folks−it's perfectly ridiculous!"

"Mark me, Mr. Scranton: there's where you northerners mistake yourselves. The negro seldom desires to mix with whites, and I hold it better they should keep together; but that two races cannot live together without the one enslaving the other is a fallacy popular only with those who will not see the future, and obstinately refuse to review the past. You must lessen your delicate sensibilities; and when you make them less painful to the man of colour at the north, believe me, the south will respond to the feeling. Experience has changed my feelings,—experience has been my teacher. I have based my new system upon experience; and its working justifies me in all I have said. Let us set about extracting the poison from our institutions, instead of losing ourselves in contemplating an abstract theory for its government."

"Remember, deacon, men are not all born to see alike. There are rights and privileges belonging to the southerner: he holds the trade in men right, and he would see the Union sundered to atoms before he would permit the intervention of the federal government on that subject," Mr. Scranton seriously remarks, placing his two thumbs in the armpits of his vest, and assuming an air of confidence, as if to say, "I shall outsouthern the

southerner yet, I shall."

"That's just the point upon which all the villainy of our institution rests: the simple word man!−man a progressive being; man a chattel,—a thing upon which the sordid appetite of every wretch may feed. Why cannot Africa give up men? She has been the victim of Christendom−her flesh and blood have served its traffic, have enriched its coffers, and even built its churches; but like a ferocious wolf that preys upon the fold in spite of watchers, she yet steals Afric's bleeding victims, and frowns upon them because they are not white, nor live as white men live."

"Mercy on me!" says Mr. Scranton, with a sigh, "you can't ameliorate the system as it stands: that's out of the question. Begin to loosen the props, and the whole fabric will tumble down. And then, niggers won't be encouraged to work at a price for their labour; and how are you going to get along in this climate, and with such an enormous population of vagabonds?"

"Remember, Mr. Scranton," ejaculated the deacon, "there's where you mistake the man in the negro; and through these arguments, set forth in your journal, we suffer. You must have contracted them by association with bad slave−owners. Mark ye! the negro has been sunk to the depths where we yet curse him; and is it right that we should keep him cursed?−to say nothing of the semi−barbarous position in which it finds our poor whites. He feels that his curse is for life−time; his hopes vibrate with its knowledge, and through it he falls from that holy inspiration that could make him a man, enjoying manhood's rights. Would not our energy yield itself a sacrifice to the same sacrificer? Had we been loaded with chains of tyranny, what would have been our condition? Would not that passion which has led the Saxon on to conquest, and spread his energy through the western world, have yielded when he saw the last shadow of hope die out, and realised that his degradation was for life−time? Would not the yearnings of such a consummation have recoiled to blast every action of the being who found himself a chattel? And yet this very chattel, thus yoked in death, toils on in doubts and fears, in humbleness and submission, with unrequited fortitude and affection. And still all is doubted that he does, even crushed in the prejudice against his colour!"

"Well, deacon, you perfectly startle me, to hear a southerner talk that way at the south. If you keep on, you'll soon have an abolition society without sending north for it."

"That's just what I want. I want our southerners to look upon the matter properly, and to take such steps as will set us right in the eyes of the world. Humanity is progressing with rapid strides−slavery cannot exist before it! It must fall; and we should prepare to meet it, and not be so ungrateful, at least, that we cannot reflect upon its worth, and give merit to whom merit is due." Thus were presented the north and south; the former loses her interests in humanity by seeking to serve the political ends of the latter.

CHAPTER XI. MRS. ROSEBROOK'S PROJECT.

AT this juncture of the conversation, a sprightly, well−dressed servant opens the parlour−door, announces missus! The deacon's good lady enters. She is a perfect pattern of neatness,—a finely−developed woman of more than ordinary height, with blonde features, and a countenance as full of cheerfulness as a bright May morning. She bows gracefully; her soft eyes kindle with intelligence as she approaches Mr. Scranton, who rises with the coldness of an iceberg.

"Be seated, Mr. Scranton," she says, with a voice so full of gentleness,—"be seated." Her form is well−rounded, her features exquisite. Mr. Scranton views her seriously, as if he found something of great interest in that marble forehead, those fine features moulding a countenance full of soul, love, and sweetness. Her dress is of plain black brocade, made high at the neck, where it is secured with a small diamond pin, the front opening and disclosing a lace stomacher set with undressed pearls. Rufflets and diamond bracelets, of chaste workmanship, clasp her wrists; while her light auburn hair, neatly laid in plain folds, and gathered into a plait on the back of her head, where it is delicately secured with gold and silver cord, forms a soft contrast. There is chasteness and simplicity combined to represent character, sense, and refinement. She is the mother of the plantation: old negroes call her mother, young ones clamour with joy when she visits their abodes: her very soul is in their wants; they look to her for guidance. Their happiness is her pleasure, and by sharing the good fortune that has followed them she has fostered the energy of their negroes, formed them into families, encouraged their morality, impressed them with the necessity of preserving family relations. Against the stern mandates of the law, she has taught them to read the Bible, reading and explaining it to them herself. Indeed, she has risen above the law: she has taught the more tractable ones to write; she has supplied the younger with little story−books, attractive and containing good moral lessons. She rejoices over her system: it is honest, kind, generous,—it will serve the future, and is not unprofitable at present. It is different from that pursued by those who would, through the instrumentality of bad laws, enforce ignorance. Nay, to her there is something abhorrent in using the Word of God as an excuse for the existence of slavery. Her system is practicable, enlightening first, and then enforcing that which gives encouragement to the inert faculties of our nature. Punishments were scarcely known upon her plantation; the lash never used. Old and young were made to feel themselves part and parcel of a family compact, to know they had an interest in the crop, to gather hopes for the future, to make home on the old plantation pleasant. There was something refreshing in the pride and protection evinced in the solicitation of this gentle creature for her negroes. In early life she had listened to their fables, had mixed with them as children, had enjoyed their hours of play, had studied their sympathies, and entered with delight into the very soul of their jargon merriment. She felt their wants, and knew their grievances; she had come forward to be their protector, their mother! "Why, Mr. Scranton," she exclaims, laughingly, in reply to that gentleman's remarks, as she interrupted the conversation between him and the deacon, "we would sooner suffer than sell one of our boys or girls−even if the worst came to the worst. I know the value of family ties; I know how to manage negroes. I would just as soon think of selling our Matilda, I would! If some of you good northern folks could only see how comfortable my negroes are!−"

"Oh, yes!" interrupts the deacon, "she takes it all out of my hands; I'm going to give her the reins altogether one of these days. She has got a nice way of touching a negro's feelings so that anything can be done with him: it tells largely at times." Mr. Scranton's face becomes more serious; he doesn't seem to understand this new "nigger philosophy." "Poor creatures!" the deacon continues, "how wonderful is the power of encouragement;−how much may be done if proper means are applied−"

"The trouble is in the means," Mr. Scranton interposes, scratching his head, as if ideas were scarce, and valuable for the distance they had to be transported.

Our good lady smiles. "I cannot help smiling, Mr. Scranton." She speaks softly. "There are two things I want done−done quickly: I want southern philosophers to consider, and I want southern ladies to act−to put on energy−to take less care of themselves and more of the poor negro!" She lays her hand gently upon Mr. Scranton's arm, her soft blue eyes staring him in the face. "When they do this," she continues, "all will be well. We can soon

show the north how much can be done without their assistance. I don't believe in women's rights meetings,—not I; but I hold there should be some combination of southern ladies, to take the moral elevation of the slave into consideration,—to set about the work in good earnest, to see what can be done. It's a monster work; but monster evils can be removed if females will give their hands and hearts to the task. This separating families to serve the interests of traders in human beings must be stopped: females know the pains it inflicts on suffering wretches; they are best suited to stop that heinous offence in the sight of God and man. They must rise to the work; they must devise means to stay the waste of fortune now progressing through dissipation; and, above all other things, they must rise up and drive these frightful slave−dealers from their doors."

Mr. Scranton admits there is something in all this, but suggests that it were better to let the future take care of itself; there's no knowing what the future may do; and to let those who come in it enjoy our labours "aint just the policy." He contends−willing to admit how much the ladies could do if they would−it would not be consistent with the times to put forth such experiments, especially when there is so much opposition. "It wouldn't do!" he whispers.

The deacon here interrupts Mr. Scranton, by stepping to the door and ordering one of the servants to prepare refreshments.

"'It must do! It won't do!' keeps us where we are, and where we are always complaining that we never have done. You know I speak frankly, Mr. Scranton−women may say what they please;−and let me tell you, that when you do your duty it will do. Hard times never were harder than when everybody thought them hard. We must infuse principle into our poor people; we must make them earnest in agricultural pursuits; we must elevate the character of labour; we must encourage the mechanic, and give tone to his pursuits; and, more than all, we must arrest the spread of conventional nonsense, and develope our natural resources by establishing a system of paid labour, and removing the odium which attaches itself to those who pursue such avocations as the slave may be engaged in. My word for it, Mr. Scranton, there's where the trouble lies. Nature has been lavish in her good gifts to the south; but we must lend Nature a helping hand,—we must be the women of the south for the south's good; and we must break down those social barriers clogging our progress. Nature wants good government to go along with her, to be her handfellow in regeneration; but good government must give Nature her rights. This done, slavery will cease to spread its loathsome diseases through the body politic, virtue will be protected and receive its rewards, and the buds of prosperity will be nourished with energy and ripen into greatness."

Mr. Scranton suggests that the nigger question was forced upon him, and thinks it better to change the conversation. Mr. Scranton was once in Congress, thinks a deal of his Congressional experience, and declares, with great seriousness, that the nigger question will come to something one of these days. "Ah! bless me, madam," he says, adjusting his arms, "you talk−very−like−a−statesman. Southerners better leave all this regenerating of slaves to you. But let me say, whatever you may see in perspective, it's mighty dangerous when you move such principles to practice. Mark me! you'll have to pull down the iron walls of the south, make planters of different minds, drive self out of mankind, and overthrow the northern speculator's cotton−bag love. You've got a great work before you, my dear madam,—a work that'll want an extended lease of your life−time. Remember how hard it is to convince man of the wrong of anything that's profitable. A paid system, even emancipation, would have been a small affair in 1824 or 1827. Old niggers and prime fellows were then of little value; now it is different. You may see the obstacle to your project in the Nashville Convention or Georgia platform−"

"Nashville Convention, indeed!" exclaims Mrs. Rosebrook, her face infused with animation, and a curl of disdain on her lip. "Such things! Mere happy illustrations of the folly of our political affairs. The one was an exotic do−nothing got up by Mister Wanting−to−say−something, who soon gets ashamed of his mission; the other was a mixture of political log−rolling, got up by those who wanted to tell the Union not to mind the Nashville Convention. What a pity they did not tell the Union to be patient with us! We must have no more Nashville Conventions; we must change Georgia platforms for individual enterprise,—southern conventions for moral regeneration. Give us these changes, and we shall show you what can be done without the aid of the north." Several servants in tidy dresses, their white aprons looking so clean, come bustling into the room and invite missus and her guest into an airy ante−room, where a table is bountifully spread with cake, fruit, fine old Madeira, and lemonade. Mr. Scranton bows and asks "the pleasure;" Mrs. Rosebrook acknowledgingly takes his arm, while the negroes bow and scrape as they enter the room. Mr. Scranton stands a few moments gazing at the set−out. "I

hope Mr. Scranton will make himself quite at home," the good lady interposes. Everything was so exquisitely arranged, so set off with fresh−plucked flowers, as if some magic hand had just touched the whole.

"Now!" continued Mrs. Rosebrook, motioning her head as she points to the table: "you'll admit my negroes can do something? Poor helpless wretches, we say continually: perhaps they are worse when bad owners can make the world look upon them through northern prejudice. They are just like children; nobody gives them credit for being anything else; and yet they can do much for our good. It would trouble some persons to arrange a table so neatly; my boys did it all, you see!" And she exults over the efficiency of her negroes, who stand at her side acknowledging the compliment with broad grins. The deacon helps Mr. Scranton, who commences stowing away the sweetmeats with great gusto. "It is truly surprising what charming nigger property you have got. They don't seem a bit like niggers" he concludes deliberately taking a mouthful. Mrs. Rosebrook, pleased at the honest remark, reminds him that the deacon carries out her views most charmingly, that she studies negro character, and knows that by stimulating it with little things she promotes good. She studies character while the deacon studies politics. At the same time, she rather ironically reminds Mr. Scranton that the deacon is not guilty of reading any long−winded articles on "state rights and secession." "Not he!" she says, laughingly; "you don't catch him with such cast−iron material in his head. They call him pious−proof now and then, but he's progress all over."

Mr. Scranton, attentive to his appetite, draws a serious face, gives a side glance, begs a negro to supply his plate anew, and reckons he may soon make a new discovery in southern political economy. But he fears Mrs. Rosebrook's plan will make a mongrel, the specific nature of which it would be difficult to define in philosophy. Perhaps it will not be acceptable to the north as a thinking people, nor will it please the generosity of southern ladies.

"There is where the trouble lies!" exclaimed the deacon, who had until then yielded up the discussion to his good lady. "They look upon our system with distrust, as if it were something they could not understand."

"I move we don't say another word about it, but take our part quietly," says Mrs. Rosebrook, insinuating that Mr. Scranton had better be left to take his refreshment comfortably; that he is a little misanthropic; that he must be cheered up. "Come, my boys"−directing her conversation to the negroes−"see that Mr. Scranton is cared for. And you must summon Daddy; tell him to get the carriage ready, to put on his best blue coat,—that we are going to take Mr. Scranton over the plantation, to show him how things can prosper when we ladies take a hand in the management." The negro leaves to execute the order: Mr. Scranton remains mute, now and then sipping his wine. He imagines himself in a small paradise, but "hadn't the least idea how it was made such a place by niggers." Why, they are just the smartest things in the shape of property that could be started up. Regular dandy niggers, dressed up to "shine so," they set him thinking there was something in his politics not just straight. And then, there was so much intelligence, so much politeness about the critters! Why, if it had not been for the doctrines he had so long held, he would have felt bashful at his want of ease and suavity,—things seldom taught in the New England village where our pro−slavery advocate was born and educated.

Presently servants are seen outside, running here and there, their eyes glistening with anxiety, as if preparing for a May−day festival. Old Dolly, the cook, shining with the importance of her profession, stands her greasy portions in the kitchen door, scolds away at old Dad, whose face smiles with good−nature as he fusses over the carriage, wipes it, rubs it, and brushes it, every now and then stopping to see if it will reflect his full black face. Little woolly−headed urchins are toddling round old Maum Dolly, pulling the folds of her frock, teasing for cakes and fritters. One, more expert in mischief, has perched himself in an aperture over the door, substituting himself for the old black hat with which it is usually filled. Here, his face like a full moon in a cloud, he twists his moving fingers into the ingeniously−tied knot of Dolly's bandana, which he cunningly draws from her head. Ben and Loblolly, two minor sprats of the race, are seated in the centre of the yard, contending for the leaves of a picture−book, which, to appease their characteristic inquisitiveness, they have dissected. Daddy has the horses ready and the carriage waiting; and Uncle Bradshaw, the coachman, and C‘sar, the likely fellow, wait at the door with as much satisfaction expressed in their faces as if it were all for them. Missus is not to be outdone in expertness: a few minutes ago she was "snaring" Mr. Scranton with his own philosophy; now she is ready to take her seat.

"Missus! I wants t' go down yander wid ye, I doe," says Daddy, approaching her with hand extended, and working his black face up into a broad grin as he detects Mr. Scranton's awkwardness in getting into the carriage.

"Certainly, Daddy, certainly: you shall go. Daddy knows how to get alongside of Aunt Rachel when he gets

down on the plantation. He knows where to get a good cup of coffee and a waff." And she pats the old negro on the head as he clambers up on the box. "No, him aint dat. Daddy want t' go wid missus−ya'h, ya! dat him, tis. Missus want somebody down da'h what spry, so'e take care on 'em round de old plantation. Takes my missus to know what nigger is," says Daddy, taking off his cap, and bowing missus into the carriage.

"Not one word for mas'r, eh, Daddy?" rejoins the deacon, looking playfully at Daddy. "Why, Boss, you aint nofin whin missus about," returns Daddy, tauntingly, as he buttons his grey coat, and tells Bradshaw to "go ahead!" Away they go, galloping over the plain, through the swamp, for the plantation,—that model experiment doubted by so many. Major Sprag, the politician, and Judge Snow, the statesman, had declared publicly it never would do any good. With them it was not practical,—it gave negroes too much liberty; and they declared the system must be kept within the narrowest sphere of law, or it would be destroyed for ever.

Onward the carriage bounded, and long before it reached the plantation gate was espied by the negroes, who came sallying forth from their white cabins, crying out at the top of their voices−"Missus comin'! Missus comin! Da'h missus−dat she! I know'd missus wa' comin' t' day!" and the music of their voices re−echoed through the arbour of oaks that lined the road. Their tongues seemed to have taken new impulse for the occasion. The dogs, at full run, came barking to the gate; old daddies and mammas, with faces "all over smiles," followed in the train. And they were dressed so tidily, looked so cheerful, and gave such expressions of their exuberant feelings, that Mr. Scranton seemed quite at a loss how to account for it. He had never before witnessed such a mingling of fondness for owners,—the welcome sounds of "God bless good missus!" They were at variance with the misanthropic ideas he had imbibed at the north. And then there was a regular retinue of the "small−fry property" bringing up the rear, with curious faces, and making the jargon more confounding with the music of their voices. They toddled, screamed, and shouted, clustered around the gate, and before Daddy had time to dismount, had it wide open, and were contending for the palm of shaking missus by the hand "fust."

The carriage drives to the plantation house, followed by the train of moving darkness, flocking around it like as many devotees before an object of superstitious worship. Mas'r is only a secondary consideration, Missus is the angel of their thoughts; her kindness and perseverance in their behalf has softened their feelings—stimulated their energy. How touching is the fondness and tenderness of these degraded mortals! They love their benefactor. And, too, there is a lesson in it worthy the statesman's consideration,—it shows a knowledge of right, and a deep sense of gratitude for kindness bestowed. Mrs. Rosebrook alights from the carriage, receives their warm congratulations, and, turning to Mr. Scranton, touches him on the arm, and remarks:—"Now, here they are. Poor old bodies,"—taking them by the hand in rotation−just like as many children. "What do you think of them, Mr. Scranton? do you not find a softening sympathy creeping upon you? I forgot, though, your political responsibility! Ah! that is the point with statesmen. You feel a touch of conscience once in a while, but cannot speak for fear of the consequences." And she laughs heartily at Mr. Scranton, who draws his face into a very serious length. "Pest the niggers!" he says, as they gather at his feet, asking all sorts of importune questions.

"My good lady is a regular reformer, you see, Mr. Scranton," rejoins the deacon, as he follows that gentleman into the hall.

Mr. Scranton remarks, in reply, that such does not become caste, and two pompous−looking servants set upon him brushing the dirt from his clothes with great earnestness. The negroes understand Mr. Scranton at a glance; he is an amiable stoic!

Mrs. Rosebrook disappears for a few minutes, and returns minus her bonnet and mantle. She delights to have the old and the young around her,—to study their characters, to hear their stories, their grievances, and to relieve their wants. "These little black imps," she says, patting them on the head as they toddle around her, "They're just as full of interest as their shiny black skins are full of mischief;" and one after another, with hand extended, they seek a recognition; and she takes them in her arms, fondling them with the affection of a nurse.

"Here's Toby, too; the little cunning rascal! He is as sleek as a mole, a young coon," she ejaculates, stooping down and playfully working her fingers over Toby's crispy hair, as he sits upon the grass in front of the house, feasting on a huge sweet potato, with which he has so bedaubed his face that it looks like a mask with the terrific portrayed in the rolling of two immense white eyes. "And here is Nichol Garvio!" and she turns to another, pats him on the head, and shakes his hand. "We mean to make a great man of him, you see,—he has head enough to make a Congress man; who knows but that he'll get there when he grows up?"

"Congress, happily, is beyond niggers," replies Mr. Scranton, approving the lady: "Congress is pure yet!"

Turning round, she recommends Mr. Scranton to put his northern prejudices in his pocket, where they will be safe when required for the purposes of the south. "A nigger 's a nigger all over the world," rejoins Mr. Scranton, significantly shrugging his shoulders and casting a doubtful glance at the young type.

"True! true!" she returns, giving Mr. Scranton a look of pity. "God give us sight to see! We praise our forefathers−honest praise!−but we forget what they did. They brought them here, poor wretches; decoyed them, deceived them,—and now we wish them back at the very time it would be impossible to live without them. How happy is the mind that believes a 'nigger' must be a nigger for ever and ever; and that we must do all in our power to keep him from being anything else!" And her soft blue eyes glowed with sympathy; it was the soul of a noble woman intent on doing good. She had stepped from the darkness of a political error into the airy height of light and love.

Daddy and Bradshaw had taken care of the horses; the deacon greeted his negroes as one by one they came to welcome him; and for each he had a kind word, a joke, a shake of the hand, or an enquiry about some missing member of a family. The scene presented an interesting picture−the interest, policy, and good faith between master and slave. No sooner were the horses cared for, than Daddy and Bradshaw started for the "cabins," to say welcome to the old folks, "a heap a' how de" to the gals, and tell de boys, down yander, in de tater patch, dat Missus come. They must have their touching congratulations, interchange the news of the city for the gossip of the plantation, and drink the cup of tea Mamma makes for the occasion. Soon the plantation is all agog; and the homely, but neat cabins, swarm with negroes of all ages, bustling here and there, and making preparations for the evening supper, which Aunt Peggy, the cook, has been instructed to prepare in her very best style.

The deacon joins his good lady, and, with Mr. Scranton, they prepare to walk over and view the plantation. They are followed by a retinue of old and young property, giving vent to their thoughts in expressions of gratitude to Missus and Mas'r. A broad expanse of rural beauty stretches towards the west, soft and enchanting. The sun is sinking into the curtains of a refulgent cloud; its crimson light casts a mellow shade over the broad landscape; the evening breeze is wafting coolly over the foliage, a welcome relief to the scorching heat of mid−day; the balmy atmosphere breathes sweetness over the whole. To the north stands a clump of fine old oaks, high above the distant "bottom," reflecting in all their richness the warm tints of the setting sun. The leaves rustle as they pass along; long lines of cotton plants, with their healthy blossoms, brighten in the evening shade; the corn bends under its fruit; the potato field looks fresh and luxuriant, and negroes are gathering from the slip−beds supplies of market gardening. There is but one appearance among the workers−cheerfulness! They welcome Mas'r as he passes along; and again busily employ themselves, hoeing, weeding, and working at the roots of vines in search of destructive insects.

"My overseers are all black, every one! I would'nt have a white one; they are mostly tyrants," says the deacon, looking at his fields, exultingly. "And my overseers plan out the very best mode of planting. They get through a heap of work, with a little kindness and a little management. Those two things do a deal, Sir! Five years ago, I projected this new system of managing negroes−or, rather my lady planned it,—she is a great manager, you see,—and I adopted it. You see how it has worked, Mr. Scranton." The deacon takes Mr. Scranton by the arm, pointing over the broad expanse of cultivated land, bending under the harvest. I make all my negroes marry when they have arrived at a specific age; I assure them I never will sell one unless he or she commits a heinous crime; and I never have. There is a great deal in keeping faith with a negro; he is of mankind, and moved by natural laws mentally and physically, and feels deeply the want of what we rarely regard of much consequence−confidence in his master's word. Wife encourages their moral energy; I encourage their physical by filling their bellies with as much corn and bacon as they can eat; and then I give them five cents per day (the heads of families) to get those little necessaries which are so essential to their comfort and encouragement. I call it our paid−labour system; and I give them tasks, too, and when they have finished them I allow a small stipend for extra work. It's a small mite for a great end; and it's such an encouragement with them that I get about thirty per cent. more work done. And then I allow them to read just as much as they please−what do I care about law? I don't want to live where learning to read is dangerous to the State, I don't. Their learning to read never can destroy their affections for me and wife; and kindness to them will make them less dangerous in case of insurrection. It's not the education we've got to fear; our fears increase with the knowledge of our oppression. They know these things−they feel them; and if by educating them one can cultivate their confidence, had we not better do it with a view to contingencies? Now, as the result of our system, we have promised to give all our negroes their freedom at the expiration of ten years, and

send such as wish to go, to Liberia; but, I hold that they can do as much for us at home, work for us if properly encouraged, and be good free citizens, obedient to the laws of the State, serving the general good of a great country."

"Yes!" the good lady interposes; "I want to see those things carried out; they will yet work for the regeneration of their own race. Heaven will some day reward the hand that drags the cursed mantle from off poor Africa; and Africa herself will breathe a prayer to Heaven in grateful acknowledgment of the act that frees her from the stain of being the world's bonded warehouse for human flesh and blood."

The deacon interrupts,—suggests "that it were better to move practically; and that small streams may yet direct how a mountain may be removed. Our Union is a great monument of what a Republic may be,—a happy combination of life, freshness, and greatness, upon which the Old World looks with distrust. The people have founded its happiness−its greatness! God alone knows its destiny; crowned heads would not weep over its downfall! It were better each citizen felt his heart beating to the words−It is my country; cursed be the hand raised to sever its members!" The lady tells Mr. Scranton that their produce has increased every year; that last year they planted one hundred and twenty acres with cotton, ninety with corn, forty with sweet potatoes, as many more with slips and roots; and three acres of water−melons for the boys, which they may eat or sell. She assures him that by encouraging the pay system they get a double profit, besides preparing the way for something that must come.

"Come!" Mr. Scranton interrupts: "let the south be true to herself, and there's no fear of that. But I confess, deacon, there is something good as well as curious about your way of treating niggers." And Mr. Scranton shakes his head, as if the practicability yet remained the great obstacle in his mind. "Your niggers ain't every body's," he concludes.

"Try it, try it!" Mrs. Rosebrook rejoins: "Go home and propound something that will relieve us from fear−something that will prepare us for any crisis that may occur!"

It was six o'clock, the plantation bell struck, and the cry sounded "All hands quit work, and repair to supper!" Scarcely had the echoes resounded over the woods when the labourers were seen scampering for their cabins, in great glee. They jumped, danced, jostled one another, and sang the cheering melodies, "Sally put da' hoe cake down!" and "Down in Old Tennessee."

Reaching their cabins they gathered into a conclave around Daddy and Bradshaw, making the very air resound with their merry jargon. Such a happy meeting−such social congratulations, pouring forth of the heart's affections, warm and true,—it had never been before Mr. Scranton's fortune to witness. Indeed, when he listened to the ready flashes of dialogue accompanying their animation, and saw the strange contortions of their fresh, shining faces, he began to "reckon" there was something about niggers that might, by a process not yet discovered, be turned into something.

Old "Mammies" strive for the honour of having Daddy and Bradshaw sup at their cabins, taunting each other on the spareness of their meal. Fires are soon lit, the stew−pans brought into requisition, and the smoke, curling upward among a myriad of mosquitoes, is dispersing them like a band of unwelcome intruders; while the corn−mills rattle and rumble, making the din and clatter more confounding. Daddy and Bradshaw being "aristocratic darkies from the city"−caste being tenaciously kept up among negroes−were, of course, recipients of the choicest delicacies the plantation afforded, not excepting fresh eggs poached, and possum. Bradshaw is particularly fond of ghost stories; and as old Maum Nancy deals largely in this article, as well as being the best believer in spectres on the plantation, he concludes to sup with her, in her hospitable cabin, when she will relate all that she has seen since she last saw him. Maum Nancy is as black as a crow, has a rich store of tales on hand; she will please the old man, more particularly when she tells him about the very bad ghost seen about the mansion for more than "three weeks of nights." He has got two sarpents' heads; Maum Nancy declares the statement true, for uncle Enoch "seen him,"−he is a grey ghost−and might a' knocked him over with his wattle, only he darn't lest he should reek his vengeance at some unexpected moment. And then he was the very worst kind of a ghost, for he stole all the chickens, not even leaving the feathers. They said he had a tail like the thing Mas'r Sluck whipped his "niggers" with. Bradshaw sups of Maum Nancy's best, listening to her stories with great concern. The story of the ghost with two heads startles him; his black picture, frame fills with excitement; he has never before heard that ghosts were guilty of predatory crimes. So enchained and excited is he with her story, that the party at the house having finished supper, have made preparations to leave for the city. A finger touches him on the shoulder; he startles, recognises Daddy, who is in search of him, and suddenly becomes conscious that his absence has caused

great anxiety. Daddy has found him quietly eating Maum Nancy's cakes, while intently listening to the story about the ghost "what" steals all her chickens. He is quite unconcerned about Mas'r, Missus−anything but the ghost! He catches his cap, gives Nancy's hand a warm shake, says God bless 'em, hastens for the mansion, finds the carriage waiting at the door, for Mas'r and Missus, who take their seats as he arrives. Bradshaw mounts the box again, and away it rolls down the oak avenue. The happy party leave for home; the plantation people are turned out en masse to say good bye to Missus, and "hope Mas'r get safe home." Their greetings sound forth as the carriage disappears in the distance; fainter and fainter the good wish falls upon their ears. They are well on the road; Mr. Scranton, who sits at the side of the good lady, on the back seat, has not deigned to say a word: the evening grows dark, and his mind seems correspondingly gloomy. "I tell you, I feel so pleased, so overjoyed, and so happy when I visit the plantation, to see those poor creatures so happy and so full of fondness! It's worth all the riches to know that one is loved by the poor. Did you ever see such happiness, Mr. Scranton?" Mrs. Rosebrook enquires, coolly.

"It requires a great deal of thinking, a great deal of caution, a great deal of political foresight, before answering such questions. You'll pardon me, my dear madam, I know you will; I always speak square on questions, you know. It's hard to reconcile oneself to niggers being free."

"Ah! yes−it's very amiable to think; but how much more praiseworthy to act! If we southern ladies set ourselves about it we can do a great deal; we can save the poor creatures being sold, like cows and calves, in this free country. We must save ourselves from the moral degradation that is upon us. What a pity Marston's friends did not make an effort to change his course! If they had he would not now be in the hands of that Graspum. We are surrounded by a world of temptation; and yet our planters yield to them; they think everything a certainty, forgetting that the moment they fall into Graspum's hands they are gone."

Mr. Scranton acknowledges he likes the look of things on the plantation, but suggests that it will be considered an innovation,—an innovation too dangerous to be considered. Innovations are dangerous with him,—unpopular, cannot amount to much practical good. He gives these insinuations merely as happy expressions of his own profound opinion. The carriage approaches the villa, which, seen from the distance, seems sleeping in the calm of night. Mr. Scranton is like those among us who are always fearing, but never make an effort to remove the cause; they, too, are doggedly attached to political inconsistency, and, though at times led to see the evil, never can be made to acknowledge the wrong. They reach the garden gate; Mr. Scranton begs to be excused from entering the Villa,—takes a formal leave of his friend, and wends his way home, thinking. "There's something in it!" he says to himself, as he passes the old bridge that separates the city from the suburb. "It's not so much for the present as it is for the hereafter. Nobody thinks of repairing this old bridge, and yet it has been decaying under our eyes for years. Some day it will suddenly fall,—a dozen people will be precipitated into the water below, some killed; the city will then resound with lamentations; every body knows it must take place one of these days, everybody is to blame, but no special criminal can be found. There's something in the comparison!" he says, looking over the old railing into the water. And then his thoughts wandered to the plantation. There the germs of an enlightened policy were growing up; the purity of a noble woman's heart was spreading blessings among a downcast race, cultivating their minds, raising them up to do good for themselves, to reward the efforts of the benefactor. Her motto was:—Let us through simple means seek the elevation of a class of beings whose degradation has distracted the political wisdom of our happy country, from its conquest to the present day. "There's something in it," again mutters Mr. Scranton, as he enters his room, lights his taper, and with his elbow resting on the table, his head supported in his hand, sits musing over the subject.

CHAPTER XII. ELDER PEMBERTON PRAISEWORTHY CHANGES HIS BUSINESS.

LET us beg the reader's indulgence for a few moments, while we say that Mr. Scranton belonged to that large class of servile flatterers who too often come from the New England States−men, who, having no direct interest in slaves, make no scruple of sacrificing their independence that they may appear true to the south and slavery. Such men not unfrequently do the political vampirism of the south without receiving its thanks, but look for the respect of political factions for being loudest supporters of inconsistency. They never receive the thanks of the southerner; frequently and deservedly do they sink into contempt!

A few days after the visit to the plantation we have described in the foregoing chapter, Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy, divested of his pastoral occupation, and seriously anxious to keep up his friendly associations with those who had taken a part in furthering the cause of humanity, calls on his old acquaintance, Mrs. Rosebrook. He has always found a welcome under her hospitable roof,—a good meal, over which he could discourse the benefits he bestowed, through his spiritual mission, upon a fallen race; never leaving without kindly asking permission to offer up a prayer, in which he invoked the mercy of the Supreme Ruler over all things. In this instance he seems somewhat downcast, forlorn; he has changed his business; his brown, lean face, small peering eyes, and low forehead, with bristly black hair standing erect, give his features a careworn air. He apologises for the unceremonious call, and says he always forgets etiquette in his fervour to do good; to serve his fellow−creatures, to be a Christian among the living, and serve the dying and the dead−if such have wants—is his motto. And that his motives may not be misconstrued he has come to report the peculiar phases of the business he found it actually necessary to turn his hand to. That he will gain a complete mastery over the devil he has not the fraction of a doubt; and as he has always—deeming him less harmless than many citizens of the south—had strong prejudices against that gentleman, he now has strong expectations of carrying his point against him. Elder Praiseworthy once heard a great statesman—who said singular things as well in as out of Congress—say that he did'nt believe the devil was a bad fellow after all; and that with a little more schooling he might make a very useful gentleman to prevent duelling—in a word, that there was no knowing how we'd get along at the south without such an all−important personage. He has had several spells of deep thinking on this point, which, though he cannot exactly agree with it, he holds firmly to the belief that, so far as it affects duelling, the devil should be one of the principals, and he, being specially ordained, the great antagonist to demolish him with his chosen weapon—humanity.

"They tell me you have gone back into the world," says Mrs. Rosebrook, as the waiter hands Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy a chair. "It's only the duty of love, of Christian goodness, he humbly replies, and takes his seat as Mrs. Rosebrook says−"pray be seated!"

"I'm somewhat fatigued; but it's the fatigue of loving to do good," he says, rubbing his hands very piously, and giving a look of great ministerial seriousness at the good lady. We will omit several minor portions of the Elder's cautious introduction of his humane occupation, commencing where he sets forth the kind reasons for such a virtuous policy. "You honestly think you are serving the Lord, do you?" enquires the lady, as she takes her seat.

The Elder evinces surprise at such a question. Hath he moved among Christians so many years, ministering to spiritual wants, and yet the purity of his motives be questioned? "Good madam! we must have faith to believe. All that is meant well should be accepted in the greatness of the intention. You will observe, I am neither a lawyer nor a politician; I would'nt be for the world! We must always be doing something for the good of others; and we must not forget, whilst we are doing it, to serve the Allwise one; and while we are effecting the good of one we are serving the designs of the other." Thus emphatically spoke the Elder, fingering a book that lay on the table. "I buy sick people, I save the dying, and I instruct them in the ways of the Lord as soon as they are cured, and−" And here the Elder suddenly stops.

"Add, Mr. Praiseworthy, that when you have cured them, and instructed them in the way of the Lord, you sell them!" interrupts the lady, watching the sudden changes that pass over his craven features.

"I always get them good masters; I never fail in that. Nor do I stand upon the profit−it's the humanity I takes into the balance." He conceives good under the motley garb of his new mission.

"Humanity−strange humanity, with self coiled beneath. Why, Mr. Praiseworthy!" the lady starts from her seat, and speaks with emphasis, "do you tell me that you have become a resurrection man, standing at the platform of death, interposing with it for a speculation?"

"It's no uncommon business, Madam; hundreds follow it; some have got rich at it."

"Got rich at it!" Mrs. Rosebrook interrupts, as a sagacious looking cat bounds on the table, much to the discomfiture of the Elder, who jumps up in a great fright,—"What irresistible natures we have; may heaven save us from the cravings of avarice!"

The Elder very methodically puts the interrupting cat upon the floor, and resumes his seat. "Why, bless us, good madam, we must have something to keep our consciences clear; there's nothing like living a straightforward life."

"What a horrible inconsistency! Buying the sick and the dying. May the dead not come in for a portion of your singular generosity? If you can speculate in the dying why exclude the dead? the principle would serve the same faith in Christianity. The heart that can purchase the dying must be full of sad coldness, dragging the woes and pains of mortality down to a tortuous death. Save us from the feelings of speculation,—call them Christian, if you will,—that makes man look upon a dying mortal, valuing but the dollars and cents that are passing away with his life," she interrupts, giving vent to her pent−up feelings.

Mr. Praiseworthy suggests that the good lady does not comprehend the virtue lying beneath his motives; that it takes a philosophical mind to analyse the good that can be done to human nature, especially poor black human nature. And he asserts, with great sincerity, that saving the lives of those about to die miserable deaths is a wonderful thing for the cause of humanity. Buying them saves their hopeless lives; and if that isn't praiseworthy nothing can be, and when the act is good the motive should not be questioned.

"Do you save their lives for a Christian purpose, or is it lucre you seek, Mr. Praiseworthy?" she enquires, giving the Elder a significant look, and waiting for a reply.

The Elder rises sedately, and walks across the room, considering his reply. "The question's so kind of round about," he mutters, as she continues:—

"Sick when you purchase, your Christianity consists in the art of healing; but you sell them, and consequently save their lives for a profit. There is no cholera in our plantation, thank God! you cannot speculate on our sick. You outshine the London street Jews; they deal in old clothes, you deal in human oddities, tottering infirmity, sick negroes." Mrs. Rosebrook suggests that such a business in a great and happy country should be consigned to its grave−digger and executioner, or made to pay a killing income tax.

The humane Elder views his clothes; they have become somewhat threadbare since he entered upon his new profession. He, as may be supposed, feels the force of the lady's remarks, and yet cannot bring his mind to believe himself actuated by anything but a love to do good. Kindness, he contends, was always the most inherent thing in his nature: it is an insult to insinuate anything degrading connected with his calling. And, too, there is another consolation which soars above all,—it is legal, and there is a respectability connected with all legal callings.

"To be upright is my motto, madam," the Elder says, drawing his hand modestly over his mouth, and again adjusting the tie of his white neck−cloth. "I'm trying to save them, and a penny with them. You see−the Lord forgive him!−my dear madam, Marston didn't do the clean thing with me; and, the worst of all was, he made a preacher of that nigger of his. The principle is a very bad one for nigger property to contend for; and when their masters permit it, our profession is upset; for, whenever a nigger becomes a preacher, he's sure to be a profitable investment for his owner. There is where it injures us; and we have no redress, because the nigger preacher is his master's property, and his master can make him preach, or do what he pleases with him," says Mr. Praiseworthy, becoming extremely serious.

"Ah! yes,—self pinches the principles; I see where it is, Elder," says the lady. "But you were indiscreet, given to taking at times; and the boy Harry, proving himself quite as good at preaching, destroyed your practice. I wish every negro knew as much of the Bible as that boy Harry. There would be no fear of insurrections; it would be the greatest blessing that ever befell the South. It would make some of your Christians blush,—perhaps ashamed."

"Ashamed! ashamed! a thing little used the way times are," he mutters, fretting his fingers through his bristly hair, until it stands erect like quills on a porcupine's back. This done, he measuredly adjusts his glasses on the tip

of his nose, giving his tawny visage an appearance at once strange and indicative of all the peculiarities of his peculiar character. "It wasn't that," he says, "Marston did'nt get dissatisfied with my spiritual conditions; it was the saving made by the negro's preaching. But, to my new business, which so touches your sensitive feelings. If you will honour me, my dear madam, with a visit at my hospital, I am certain your impressions will change, and you will do justice to my motives."

"Indeed!" interrupts the lady, quickly, "nothing would give me more gratification,—I esteem any person engaged in a laudable pursuit; but if philanthropy be expressed through the frailties of speculation,—especially where it is carried out in the buying and selling of afflicted men and women,—I am willing to admit the age of progress to have got ahead of me. However, Elder, I suppose you go upon the principle of what is not lost to sin being gained to the Lord: and if your sick property die pious, the knowledge of it is a sufficient recompense for the loss." Thus saying, she readily accepted the Elder's kind invitation, and, ordering a basket of prepared nourishment, which, together with the carriage, was soon ready, she accompanied him to his infirmary. They drove through narrow lanes and streets lined with small dilapidated cottages, and reached a wooden tenement near the suburb of the city of C—. It was surrounded by a lattice fence, the approach being through a gate, on which was inscribed, "Mr. Praiseworthy's Infirmary;" and immediately below this, in small letters, was the significant notice, "Planters having the cholera and other prevailing diseases upon their plantations will please take notice that I am prepared to pay the highest price for the infirm and other negroes attacked with the disease. Offers will be made for the most doubtful cases!"

"Elder Praiseworthy!" ejaculates the lady, starting back, and stopping to read the strange sign. "'Offers will be made for the most doubtful cases!'" she mutters, turning towards him with a look of melancholy. "What thoughts, feelings, sentiments! That means, that unto death you have a pecuniary interest in their bodies; and, for a price, you will interpose between their owners and death. The mind so grotesque as to conceive such a purpose should be restrained, lest it trifle with life unconsciously."

"You see," interrupts Mr. Praiseworthy, looking more serious than ever, "It's the life saved to the nigger; he's grateful for it; and if they ain't pious just then, it gives them time to consider, to prepare themselves. My little per centage is small−it's a mean commission; and if it were not for the satisfaction of knowing how much good I do, it wouldn't begin to pay a professional gentleman." As the Elder concludes his remarks, melancholy sounds are breaking forth in frightful discord. From strange murmurings it rises into loud wailings and implorings. "Take me, good Lord, to a world of peace!" sounds in her ears, as they approach through a garden and enter a door that opens into a long room, a store−house of human infirmity, where moans, cries, and groans are made a medium of traffic. The room, about thirty feet long and twenty wide, is rough−boarded, contains three tiers of narrow berths, one above the other, encircling its walls. Here and there on the floor are cots, which Mr. Praiseworthy informs us are for those whose cases he would not give much for. Black nurses are busily attending the sick property; some are carrying bowls of gruel, others rubbing limbs and quieting the cries of the frantic, and again supplying water to quench thirst. On a round table that stands in the centre of the room is a large medicine−chest, disclosing papers, pills, powders, phials, and plasters, strewn about in great disorder. A bedlam of ghastly faces presents itself,—dark, haggard, and frantic with the pains of the malady preying upon the victims. One poor wretch springs from his couch, crying, "Oh, death! death! come soon!" and his features glare with terror. Again he utters a wild shriek, and bounds round the room, looking madly at one and another, as if chased by some furious animal. The figure of a female, whose elongated body seems ready to sink under its disease, sits on a little box in the corner, humming a dolorous air, and looking with glassy eyes pensively around the room at those stretched in their berths. For a few seconds she is quiet; then, contorting her face into a deep scowl, she gives vent to the most violent bursts of passion,—holds her long black hair above her head, assumes a tragic attitude, threatens to distort it from the scalp. "That one's lost her mind−she's fitty; but I think the devil has something to do with her fits. And, though you wouldn't think it, she's just as harmless as can be," Mr. Praiseworthy coolly remarks, looking at Mrs. Rosebrook, hoping she will say something encouraging in reply. The lady only replies by asking him if he purchased her from her owner?

Mr. Praiseworthy responds in the affirmative, adding that she doesn't seem to like it much. He, however, has strong hopes of curing her mind, getting it "in fix" again, and making a good penny on her. "She's a'most white, and, unfortunately, took a liking to a young man down town. Marston owned her then, and, being a friend of hers, wouldn't allow it, and it took away her senses; he thought her malady incurable, and sold her to me for a little or

nothing," he continues, with great complacency.

This poor broken flower of misfortune holds down her head as the lady approaches, gives a look of melancholy expressive of shame and remorse. "She's sensitive for a nigger, and the only one that has said anything about being put among men," Mr. Praiseworthy remarks, advancing a few steps, and then going from berth to berth, descanting on the prospects of his sick, explaining their various diseases, their improvements, and his doubts of the dying. The lady watches all his movements, as if more intently interested in Mr. Praiseworthy's strange character. "And here's one," he says, "I fear I shall lose; and if I do, there's fifty dollars gone, slap!" and he points to an emaciated yellow man, whose body is literally a crust of sores, and whose painful implorings for water and nourishment are deep and touching.

"Poor wretch!" Mr. Praiseworthy exclaims, "I wish I'd never bought him−it's pained my feelings so; but I did it to save his life when he was most dead with the rheumatics, and was drawn up as crooked as branch cord−wood. And then, after I had got the cinques out of him− after nearly getting him straight for a 'prime fellow' (good care did the thing), he took the water on the chest, and is grown out like that." He points coolly to the sufferer's breast, which is fearfully distended with disease; saying that, "as if that wasn't enough, he took the lepors, and it's a squeak if they don't end him." He pities the "crittur," but has done all he can for him, which he would have done if he hadn't expected a copper for selling him when cured. "So you see, madam," he reiterates, "it isn't all profit. I paid a good price for the poor skeleton, have had all ny trouble, and shall have no gain−except the recompense of feeling. There was a time when I might have shared one hundred and fifty dollars by him, but I felt humane towards him; didn't want him to slide until he was a No. 1." Thus the Elder sets forth his own goodness of heart.

"Pray, what do you pay a head for them, Mr. Praiseworthy?" enquires the lady, smoothing her hand over the feverish head of the poor victim, as the carnatic of her cheek changed to pallid languor. Pursuing her object with calmness, she determined not to display her emotions until fully satisfied how far the Elder would go.

"That, madam, depends on cases; cripples are not worth much. But, now and then, we get a legless fellow what's sound in body, can get round sprightly, and such like; and, seeing how we can make him answer a sight of purposes, he'll bring something," he sedately replies, with muscles unmoved. "Cases what doctors give up as 'done gone,' we gets for ten and twenty dollars; cases not hanging under other diseases, we give from thirty to fifty−and so on! Remember, however, you must deduct thirty per cent. for death. At times, where you would make two or three hundred dollars by curing one, and saving his life, you lose three, sometimes half−a−dozen head." The Elder consoles his feelings with the fact that it is not all profit, looks highly gratified, puts a large cut of tobacco in his mouth, thanks God that the common school−bill didn't pass in the legislature, and that his business is more humane than people generally admit.

"How many have you in all?"

"The number of head, I suppose? Well, there's about thirty sick, and ten well ones what I sent to market last week. Did−n−'t−make−a−good market, though," he drawls out.

"You are alone in the business?"

"Well, no; I've a partner−Jones; there's a good many phases in the business, you see, and one can't get along. Jones was a nigger−broker, and Jones and me went into partnership to do the thing smooth up, on joint account. I does the curing, and he does the selling, and we both turns a dollar or two−"

"Oh, horrors!" interrupts the lady, looking at Mr. Praiseworthy sarcastically. "Murder will out, men's sentiments will betray them, selfishness will get above them all; ornament them as you will, their ornaments will drop,—naked self will uncover herself and be the deceiver."

"Not at all!" the Elder exclaims, in his confidence. "The Lord's will is in everything; without it we could not battle with the devil; we relieve suffering humanity, and the end justifies the means."

"You should have left out the means: it is only the end you aim at."

"That's like accusing Deacon Seabury of impious motives, because he shaves notes at an illegal interest. It's worse−because what the law makes legal the church should not make sinful." This is Praiseworthy's philosophy, which he proclaims while forgetting the existence of a law of conscience having higher claims than the technicalities of statutes. We must look to that to modify our selfishness, to strengthen our love for human laws when founded in justice.

"And who is this poor girl?" enquires Mrs. Rosebrook, stepping softly forward, and taking her by the hand.

"Marston's once; some Indian in her, they say. She's right fair looks when she's herself. Marston's in trouble now, and the cholera has made sad havoc of his niggers," Mr. Praiseworthy replies, placing a chair, and motioning his hand for the lady to be seated. The lady seats herself beside the girl,—takes her hand.

"Yes, missus; God bless good missus. Ye don't know me now," mutters the poor girl, raising her wild glassy eyes, as she parts the long black hair from her forehead: "you don't know me; I'm changed so!"

"My child, who has made you this wretch?" says the good lady, pressing her tawny hand.

My child!" she exclaims, with emphasis: "My child Nicholas,—my child! Missus, save Nicholas; he is my child. Oh! do save him!" and, as if terrified, she grasps tighter the lady's hand, while her emotions swell into a frantic outburst of grief. "Nicholas, my child!" she shrieks.

"She will come to, soon: it's only one of her strange fits of aberration. Sometimes I fling cold water over her; and, if it's very cold, she soon comes to," Mr. Praiseworthy remarks, as he stands unmoved, probably contemplating the goodness of a forgiving God. What magic simplicity lies concealed in his nature; and yet it is his trade, sanctioned by the law of a generous state. Let us bless the land that has given us power to discover the depths to which human nature can reduce itself, and what man can make himself when human flesh and blood become mere things of traffic.

"That gal's name is Ellen. I wish I knew all that has turned up at Marston's," remarks the Elder.

"Ellen!" ejaculates the lady, looking at her more intently, placing her left hand under her chin. "Not Ellen Juvarna?"

"Yes, good missus−the lady has distributed her nourishment among the sick−that's my name," she says, raising her eyes with a look of melancholy that tells the tale of her troubles. Again her feelings subside into quiet; she seems in meditation. "I knowed you once, good missus, but you don't know me now, I'm changed so!" she whispers, the good lady holding her hand, as a tear courses down her cheek−"I'm changed so!" she whispers, shaking her head.

CHAPTER XII. A FATHER TRIES TO BE A FATHER.

WE have conducted the reader through scenes perhaps unnecessary to our narration, nevertheless associated with and appertaining to the object of our work. And, in this sense, the reader cannot fail to draw from them lessons developing the corrupting influences of a body politic that gives one man power to sell another. They go to prove how soon a man may forget himself,—how soon he may become a demon in the practice of abominations, how soon he can reconcile himself to things that outrage the most sacred ties of our social being. And, too, consoling himself with the usages of society, making it right, gives himself up to the most barbarous practices.

When we left Marston in a former chapter, he had become sensible of the wrong he so long assisted to inflict upon innocent and defenceless persons; and, stung with remorse made painful by the weight of misfortune, had avowed his object of saving his children. Yet, strange as it may seem, so inured were his feelings to those arbitrary customs which slave−owners are educated to view as privileges guaranteed in the rights of a peculiar institution−the rights of property in the being slave−that, although conscious of his duty toward the children, no sooner had the mother of Nicholas been attacked with cholera, than he sold her to the Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy, in whose infirmary we have just left her. The Elder, since his discharge from parochial life,—from ministering the gospel, has transferred his mission to that of being the partner in a firm, the ostensible business of which is purchasing the sick, the living, and the dying.

Do not blush, reader; you know not how elastic dealing in human kind makes man's feelings. Gold is the beacon−light of avarice; for it man will climb over a catacomb of the dead. In this instance the very man−Marston−who, touched by misfortune, began to cherish a father's natural feelings, could see nothing but property in the mother, though he knew that mother to be born free. Perhaps it was not without some compunction of feelings−perhaps it was done to soften the separation at that moment so necessary to the preservation of the children. But we must leave this phase of the picture, and turn to another.

Graspum had diligently watched Marston's affairs, and through the cunning and perseverance of Romescos, carefully noted every movement on the plantation. Each death from cholera was reported,—the change in Marston's feelings observed and provided against,—every stage of the crop carefully watched. Graspum, however, had secured himself in the real estate, and gave little heed to the epidemic that was carrying off the negro property. Finally, to pass over several stages in the decline of Marston's affairs, the ravages of the disease continued until but forty−three negroes, old and young, were left on the old homestead. The culminating point had arrived. He was in the grasp of Graspum, and nothing could save him from utter ruin. It had lately been proved that the Rovero family, instead of being rich, were extremely poor, their plantation having long been under a mortgage, the holder of which was threatening foreclosure.

With Marston, an amount of promiscuous debts had accumulated so far beyond his expectation that he was without means of discharging them. His affairs became more and more confused, while the amount of his liabilities remained a perfect obscurity to the community. Rumour began to disseminate his troubles, suspicion summoned her charges, and town−talk left little unadded; while those of his creditors who had been least suspicious of his wealth and honour became the most importunate applicants for their claims. At length, driven by the pressure of the times, he calls Clotilda to him, and tells her that he is resolved to send Annette and Nicholas into the city, where they will remain in the care of a coloured woman, until an opportunity offers of sending them to the north. He is fond of Clotilda,—tells her of the excitement concerning his business affairs, and impresses her with the necessity of preserving calmness; it is requisite to the evasion of any ulterior consequence that may be brought upon him. Every−thing hangs upon a thread−a political thread, a lawful thread−a thread that holds the fate of thirty, forty, or fifty human beings−that separates them from that verge of uncertainty upon which a straw may turn the weal or woe of their lives. "When I get them comfortably cared for, Clotilda, I will send for you. Nicholas's mother has gone, but you shall be a mother to them both," he says, looking upon her seriously, as if contemplating the trouble before him in the attempt to rescue his children.

"You will not send Annette away without me?" she inquires, quickly, falling on her knees at his side, and reiterating, "Don't send Annette away without me,—don't, mas'r!"

"The separation will only be for a few days. Annette shall be educated−I care not for the laws of our free land against it−and together you shall go where your parentage will not shame you,—where you may ornament society," he replies, as Clotilda's face lights up with satisfaction. With such an assurance−she does not comprehend the tenour of his troubles−her freedom seems at hand: it excites her to joy. Marston retires and she takes his seat, writes a note to Maxwell, who is then in the city, relating what has transpired, and concluding with a request that he will call and see her.

A few days passed, and the two children were sent into the city and placed in the charge of a free woman, with instructions to keep them secreted for several weeks. This movement being discovered by Romescos, was the first signal for an onset of creditors. Graspum, always first to secure himself, in this instance compelled Marston to succumb to his demands by threatening to disclose the crime Lorenzo had committed. Forcing him to fulfil the obligation in the bond, he took formal possession of the plantation. This increased the suspicion of fraud; there was a mystery somewhere,—nobody could solve it. Marston, even his former friends declared, was a swindler. He could not be honestly indebted in so large an amount to Graspum; nor could he be so connected with such persons without something being wrong somewhere. Friends began to insinuate that they had been misled; and not a few among those who had enjoyed his hospitality were first inclined to scandalise his integrity. Graspum had foreseen all this, and, with Romescos, who had purloined the bill of sale, was prepared to do any amount of swearing. Marston is a victim of circumstances; his proud spirit prompts him to preserve from disgrace the name of his family, and thus he the more easily yielded to the demands of the betrayer. Hence, Graspum, secure in his ill−gotten booty, leaves his victim to struggle with those who come after him.

A few weeks pass over, and the equity of Graspum's claim is questioned: his character for honour being doubted, gives rise to much comment. The whole thing is denounced−proclaimed a concerted movement to defraud the rightful creditors. And yet, knowing the supremacy of money over law in a slave state, Graspum's power, the revenge his followers inflict, and their desperate character, not one dare come forward to test the validity of the debt. They know and fear the fierce penalty: they are forced to fall back,—to seize his person, his property, his personal effects.

In this dilemma, Marston repairs to the city, attempts to make an arrangement with his creditors, singularly fails; he can effect nothing. Wherever he goes his salutation meets a cold, measured response; whisper marks him a swindler. The knife stabs deep into the already festered wound. Misfortune bears heavily upon a sensitive mind; but accusation of wrong, when struggling under trials, stabs deepest into the heart, and bears its victim suffering to the very depths of despair.

To add to this combination of misfortunes, on his return to the plantation he found it deserted,—a sheriff's keeper guarding his personal effects, his few remaining negroes seized upon and marched into the city for the satisfaction of his debts. Clotilda has been seized upon, manacled, driven to the city, committed to prison. Another creditor has found out the hiding−place of the children; directs the sheriff, who seizes upon them, like property of their kind, and drags them to prison. Oh, that prison walls were made for torturing the innocent!

Marston is left poor upon the world; Ellen Juvarna is in the hands of a resurrectionist; Nicholas−a bright boy he has grown−is within the dark confines of a prison cell, along with Clotilda and Annette. Melancholy broods over the plantation now. The act of justice,—the right which Marston saw through wrong, and which he had intended to carry out,—is now beyond his power. Stripped of those comforts he had enjoyed, his offspring carried off as trophies of avarice,—perhaps for sale to some ruffian who would set a price upon their beauty,—he sits down, sick at heart, and weeps a child's tears. The mansion, so long the scene of pleasure and hospitality, is like a deserted barrack;−still, gloomy, cold, in the absence of familiar faces. No servant comes to call him master,—Dandy and Enoch are gone; and those familiar words, so significant of affection between master and slave, "Glad to see ye home, mas'r," no longer sounded in his ears. Even his overseer has become alarmed, and like the rest levied for arrears of wages.

There is nothing for Marston but to give up all,—to leave the home of his childhood, his manhood, his happier days. He is suddenly reminded that there is virtue in fortitude; and, as he gazes round the room, the relics of happier days redouble his conviction of the evil he has brought upon himself by straying from the paths of rectitude. Indeed, so sudden was his fall from distinction, that the scene around him seemed like a dream, from

which he had just awoke to question its precipitancy. "A sheriff is here now, and I am a mere being of sufferance," he says, casting a moody glance around the room, as if contemplating the dark prospect before him. A few moments' pause, and he rises, walks to the window, looks out upon the serene scene spread out before the mansion. There is the river, on which he has spent so many pleasant hours, calmly winding its way through deep green foliage mellowed by the moonlight. Its beauties only remind him of the past. He walks away,—struggles to forget, to look above his trials. He goes to the old side−board that has so long given forth its cheer; that, too, is locked! "Locked to me!" he says, attempting to open its doors. A sheriff's lock hangs upon them. Accustomed to every indulgence, each check indicated a doubt of his honour, wounding his feelings. The smaller the restraint the deeper did it pierce his heart. While in this desponding mood, vainly endeavouring to gain resolution to carry him through, a gentle rap is heard at the door. Who can it be at this hour? he questions to himself. No servant is near him; servants have all been led into captivity for the satisfaction of debts. He approaches the door and opens it himself, looking cautiously into the corridor. There, crouched in a niche, alternately presenting fear and joy,—fear lest he be seen by the enemy, and joy to see his master,—is a dark figure with the familiar face of Daddy Bob,—Bob of the old plantation. The old, faithful servant puts out his wrinkled hand nervously, saying, "Oh, good mas'r!" He has looked up to Marston with the same love that an affectionate child does to a kind parent; he has enjoyed mas'r's warm welcome, nurtured his confidence, had his say in directing the affairs of the plantation, and watched the frailties that threatened it.

"Why, Daddy Bob! Can it be you?" Marston says, modulating his voice, as a change comes over his feelings.

"Dis is me, mas'r; it is me," again says the old man. He is wet with the night dew, but his heart is warm and affectionate. Marston seizes his hand as if to return the old man's gratitude, and leads him into the room, smiling. "Sit down, Bob, sit down!" he says, handing him a chair. The old servant stands at the chair hesitatingly, doubting his position. "Fear nothing, Bob; sit down. You are my best friend," Marston continues. Bob takes a seat, lays his cap quietly upon the floor, smiles to see old mas'r, but don't feel just right because there's something wrong: he draws the laps of his jacket together, covers the remnant of a shirt. "Mas'r, what be da' gwine to do wid de old plantation? Tings, Bob reckon, b'nt gwine straight," he speaks, looking at Marston shyly. The old slave knew his master's heart, and had waited for him to unfold its beatings; but the kind heart of the master yielded to the burden that was upon it, and never more so than when moved by the strong attachment evinced by the old man. There was mutual sympathy pourtrayed in the tenderest emotions. The one was full of grief, and, if touched by the word of a friend, would overflow; the other was susceptible of kindness, knew something had befallen his master, and was ready to present the best proofs of his attachment.

"And how did you get here, my old faithful?" inquires Marston, drawing nearer to him.

"Well, mas'r, ye see, t'ant just so wid nigger what don' know how tings is! But, Bob up t' dese tings. I sees Buckra, what look as if he hab no rights on dis plantation, grab'n up all de folks. And Lor,' mas'r, old Bob could'nt leave mas'r no how. An, den, when da' begins to chain de folks up−da' chain up old Rachel, mas'r!−Old Bob feel so de plantation war'nt no−whare; and him time t'be gwine. Da'h an't gwine t' cotch old Bob, and carry 'm way from mas'r, so I jist cum possum ober dem−stows away yander, down close in de old corn crib,—"

"And you eluded the sheriff to take care of me, did you, Daddy?" interrupts Marston, and again takes the old man's hand.

"Oh, mas'r, Bob ain't white, but 'is feeling get so fo' h mas'r, he can't speak 'em," the old slave replies, pearls glistening in his eyes. "My feelings feel so, I can't speak 'em!" And with a brother's fondness he shakes his master's hand.

We must beg the reader's indulgence here for the purpose of making a few remarks upon the negro's power of observation. From the many strange disquisitions that have been put forward on the mental qualities of the man of colour−more particularly the African−few can be selected which have not had for their object his disqualification. His power of observation has been much undervalued; but it has been chiefly by those who judge him by a superficial scale, or from a selfish motive. In the position of mere property, he is, of necessity, compelled to yield all claims to mental elevation. And yet, forced to degradation, there are few negroes on the plantation, or in the spheres of labour, who do not note the rise and fall of their master's fortunes, study the nature and prospects of the crop, make enquiries about the market, concoct the best economy in managing lands, and consult among themselves as to what would promote the interests of the whole. So far is this carried out, that in many districts a rivalry for the largest amount of crop on a given space is carried on among the slaves, who not unfrequently

"chafe" each other upon the superior wealth and talent of their masters. It is a well−known fact, that John C. Calhoun's slaves, in addition to being extremely fond of him, were proud and boastful of his talent.

Daddy Bob is an exemplification. The faithful old slave had become sensible of something wrong on the plantation: he saw the sheriff seizing upon the families, secreted himself in the corn crib, and fled to the woods when they were out of sight. Here, sheltered by the myrtle, he remained until midnight, intently watching the mansion for signs of old mas'r. Suddenly a light glimmers from the window; the old slave's feelings bound with joy; he feels it an invitation for him to return, and, leaving his hiding−place, approaches the house stealthily, and descries his master at the window. Confidence returns, his joy is complete, his hopes have not misled him. Hungry and wet, he has found his way back to master, whose face at the window gladdens his heart,—carries him beyond the bounds of caution. Hence the cordial greeting between the old slave and his indulgent master. We hear the oft−expressed words−"Master! I love ye, I do!" Marston gets a candle, lights the old man to a bed in the attic, bids him good night, and retires.

CHAPTER XIV. IN WHICH THE EXTREMES ARE PRESENTED.

WHILE the gloomy prospect we have just presented hovered over Marston's plantation, proceedings of no minor importance, and having reference to this particular case, are going on in and about the city. Maxwell, moved by Clotilda's implorings, had promised to gain her freedom for her; but he knew the penalty, feared the result of a failure, and had hesitated to make the attempt. The consequences were upon him, he saw the want of prompt action, and regretted that the time for carrying his resolution into effect had passed. The result harassed him; he saw this daughter of misfortune, on her bended knees, breathing a prayer to Omnipotence for the deliverance of her child; he remembered her appeal to him, imploring him to deliver her from the grasp of slavery, from that licentiousness which the female slave is compelled to bear. He saw her confiding in him as a deliverer,—the sight haunted him unto madness! Her child! her child! Yes, that offspring in which her hopes were centered! For it she pleaded and pleaded; for it she offered to sacrifice her own happiness; for it she invoked the all−protecting hand. That child, doomed to a life of chattel misery; to serve the lusts of modern barbarism in a country where freedom and civilization sound praises from ocean to ocean; to be obscured in the darkness and cruelty of an institution in which justice is scoffed, where distress has no listeners, and the trap−keepers of men's souls scorn to make honest recompense while human flesh and blood are weighed in the scale of dollars and cents! He trembles before the sad picture; remonstrances and entreaties from him will be in vain; nor can he seize them and carry them off. His life might be forfeited in the attempt, even were they without prison walls. No! it is almost hopeless. In the narrow confines of a securely grated cell, where thoughts and anxieties waste the soul in disappointment, and where hopes only come and go to spread time with grief, he could only see her and her child as they suffered. The spectacle had no charm; and those who carried them into captivity for the satisfaction of paltry debts could not be made to divest themselves of the self in nature. Cries and sobs were nothing,—such were poor stock for "niggers" to have; pains and anxieties were at a discount, chivalry proclaimed its rule, and nothing was thought well of that lessened the market value of body and soul. Among great, generous, hospitable, and chivalrous men, such things could only be weighed in the common scale of trade.

Again, Maxwell remembered that Marston had unfolded his troubles to him, and being a mere stranger the confidence warranted mutual reciprocity. If it were merely an act dictated by the impulse of his feelings at that moment, the secret was now laid broadly open. He was father of the children, and, sensible of their critical situation, the sting was goading him to their rescue. The question was−would he interpose and declare them as such? Ah, he forgot it was not the father's assertion,—it was the law. The crime of being property was inherited from the mother. Acknowledging them his children would neither satisfy law nor the creditors. What honourable−we except the modernly chivalrous−man would see his children jostled by the ruffian trader? What man, with feelings less sensitive than iron, would see his child sold to the man−vender for purposes so impious that heaven and earth frowned upon them? And yet the scene was no uncommon one; slavery affords the medium, and men, laying their hearts aside, make it serve their pockets. Those whom it would insult to call less than gentlemen have covered their scruples with the law, while consigning their own offspring to the hand of an auctioneer. Man property is subvervient material,—woman is even more; for where her virtue forms its tissues, and can be sold, the issue is indeed deplorable. Again, where vice is made a pleasure, and the offspring of it become a burden on our hands, slavery affords the most convenient medium of getting rid of the incumbrance. They sell it, perhaps profitably, and console themselves with the happy recollection of what a great thing it is to live in a free country, where one may get rid of such things profitably. It may save our shame in the eyes of man, but God sees all,—records the wrong!

Thus Maxwell contemplated the prospects before him. At length he resolved to visit Marston upon his plantation, impress him with the necessity of asserting their freedom, in order to save them from being sold with the effects of the estate.

He visits Marston's mansion,—finds the picture sadly changed; his generous friend, who has entertained him so hospitably, sits in a little ante−chamber, pensively, as if something of importance has absorbed his attention.

No well−dressed servants welcome him with their smiles and grimaces; no Franconia greets him with her vivacity, her pleasing conversation, her frankness and fondness for the old servants. No table is decked out with the viands of the season−Marston's viands have turned into troubles,—loneliness reigns throughout. It is night, and nothing but the dull sound of the keeper's tread breaks the silence. His (Maxwell's) mission is a delicate one. It may be construed as intrusive, he thinks. But its importance outweighs the doubt, and, though he approaches with caution, is received with that embrace of friendship which a gentleman can claim as his own when he feels the justice of the mission of him who approaches, even though its tenor be painful. Maxwell hesitated for a few moments, looked silently upon the scene. Trouble had already left its prints of sadness upon Marston's countenance; the past, full of happy associations, floated in his mind; the future—ah! that was—. Happily, at that moment, he had been contemplating the means by which he could save Clotilda and the children. He rises, approaches Maxwell, hands him a chair, listens to his proposal. "If I can assist you, we will save them," concludes Maxwell.

"That," he replies, doubtingly, "my good friend, has engaged my thoughts by night and day—has made me most uneasy. Misfortune likes sympathy; your words are as soothing as praiseworthy. I will defend my children if every creditor call me swindler. I will destroy the infernal bill of sale,—I will crush the hell−born paper that gives life to deeds so bloody,—I will free them from the shame!" Thus, his feelings excited to the uttermost, he rises from his seat, approaches a cupboard, draws forth the small trunk we have before described, unlocks it. "That fatal document is here, I put it here, I will destroy it now; I will save them through its destruction. There shall be no evidence of Clotilda's mother being a slave, oh no!" he mutters rapidly, running his fingers over packages, papers, and documents. Again he glances vacantly over the whole file, examining paper after paper, carefully. He looks in vain. It is not there; there is no document so fatal. Sharper men have taken better care of it. "It is not here!" he whispers, his countenance becoming pallid and death−like. "Not here!"−and they will swear to suit their purposes. Oaths are only worth what they bring in the market, among slave dealers. But, who can have taken it?" he continues, looking wildly at Maxwell. Consternation is pictured on his countenance; he feels there is intrigue at work, and that the want of that paper will prove fatal to his resolution. A man in trouble always confides in others, sometimes those whom he would scarce have trusted before. He throws the paper aside, takes a seat at Maxwell's side, grasps him by the hand, saying, "My friend! save them! save them! save them! Use what stratagem you please; make it the experiment of your life. Consummate it, and a penitent's prayer will bless you! I see the impending catastrophe−"

"We may do without it; be quiet. Let your feelings calm. I have consulted Franconia on the same subject. Woman can do much if she will; and she has promised me she will. My knowledge of her womanly nature tells me she will be true to Clotilda!" Maxwell speaks assuringly, and his words seem as balm to a wounded spirit.

The bill of sale was among the things intended for a more profitable use. Marston has satisfied Graspum's claim; but he knew that slavery deadened the sensibilities of men. Yet, could it have so deadened Graspum's feeling that he would have been found in a plot against him? No! he could not believe it. He would not look for foul play from that quarter. It might have been mislaid−if lost, all the better. A second thought, and he begins to quiet himself with the belief that it had become extinct; that, there not being evidence to prove them property, his word would be sufficient to procure their release. Somewhat relieved of the force of parental anxiety−we can call it by no other name−the troubled planter, with his troubles inherited, promises Maxwell, who has postponed his departure that he may aid in saving Clotilda and her child, that he will proceed direct to the sheriff's office, give notice of their freedom to that functionary, and forbid the sale. Upon this resolution they part for the night, and on the following morning, Marston, sick at heart, leaves for the city, hoping to make arrangements with his attorney, who will serve notice of freedom with all the expense and legality of form.

The reader will excuse us for passing over many things of minor importance which take place during the progress of arrangements between Marston and the attorney, Mr. Dyson—commonly called Thomas Dyson, Esq., wonderfully clever in the practice of slave law—and proceeding to where we find the notice formally served. The document forbids the sale of certain persons, physically and mentally described, according to the nicest rules of law and tenour of trade; and is, with the dignity of legal proceedings, served on the honourable sheriff. We give a portion of it, for those who are not informed on such curious matters: it runs thus:—'"The girl Clotilda−aged 27 years; her child Annette−aged 7 years, and a remarkable boy, Nicholas, 6 years old, all negroes, levied upon at the suit of—, to satisfy a fi fa issued from the—, and set forth to be the property of Hugh Marston of—, '" as set forth

in the writ of attachment. Thus runs the curious law, based on privilege, not principle.

The document served on the sheriff, Marston resolved to remain a few days in the city and watch its effect. The sheriff, who is seldom supposed to evince sympathy in his duties, conforms with the ordinary routine of law in nigger cases; and, in his turn, gives notice to the plaintiff, who is required to enter security for the purpose of testing the point of freedom. Freedom here is a slender commodity; it can be sworn away for a small compensation. Mr. Anthony Romescos has peculiar talent that way, and his services are always in the market. The point, however, has not resolved itself into that peculiar position where it must be either a matter of compromise, or a question for the court and jury to decide.

If Marston, now sensible of his position as father of the children, will yield them a sacrifice to the man trader, it is in his power; the creditors will make it their profit. Who, then, can solve the perplexity for him? The custom of society, pointing the finger of shame, denies him the right to acknowledge them his children. Society has established the licentious wrong,—the law protects it, custom enforces it. He can only proceed by declaring the mother to be a free woman, and leaving the producing proof to convict her of being slave property to the plaintiff. In doing this, his judgment wars with his softer feelings. Custom—though it has nothing to give him−is goading him with its advice; it tells him to abandon the unfashionable, unpolite scheme. Natural laws have given birth to natural feelings—natural affections are stronger than bad laws. They burn with our nature,—they warm the gentle, inspire the noble, and awake the daring that lies unmoved until it be called into action for the rescue of those for whom our affections have taken life.

Things had arrived at that particular point where law−lovers−we mean lawyers−look on with happy consciences and pleasing expectations; that is, they had arrived at that certain hinge of slave law the turn of which sends men, women, and children, into the vortex of slavery, where their hopes are for ever crushed. One day Marston had strong hopes of saving them; but his hopes vanished on the next. The fair creature, by him made a wretch, seemed before him, on her bended knees, clasping his hand while imploring him to save her child. The very thought would have doubly nerved him to action; and yet, what mattered such action against the force of slavery injustice? All his exertions, all his pleadings, all his protestations, in a land where liberty boasts its greatness, would sink to nothing under the power he had placed in their possession for his overthrow.

With this fatal scene before him, this indecision, he walked the streets, resolving and re−resolving, weighing and re−weighing the consequences, hoping without a chance for hope. He would be a father as he has been a kind master; but the law says, no! no! Society forbids right, the law crushes justice,—the justice of heaven! Marston is like one driven from his home, from the scene of his happy childhood, upon which he can now only look back to make the present more painful. He has fallen from the full flow of pleasure and wealth to the low ebb of poverty clothed in suspicion; he is homeless, and fast becoming friendless. A few days after, as he takes his morning walk, he is pointed to the painful fact, made known through certain legal documents, posted at certain corners of streets, that his "negro property" is advertised for sale by the sheriff. He fears his legal notice has done little legal good, except to the legal gentlemen who receive the costs. He retires to a saloon, finds the morning paper, commences glancing over its legal columns. The waiter is surprised to see him at that hour, is ignorant of the war of trouble that is waging within him, knows him only as a great man, a rice planter of wealth in negroes, treats him with becoming civility, and enquires, with a polite bow, what he will be served with. He wants nothing that will supply the physical man. He has supped on trouble,—the following, painful as it is, will serve him for breakfast; it meets his eye as he traces down the column:—"SHERIFF'S SALE.

"According to former notice, will be sold on the first Tuesday in September next, between the usual hours of sale, before the Court House door, in this city, the following property−to wit!

"Three yoke of prime oxen, and four carts.

"Seven horses; two of celebrated breed.

"Twenty−two mules, together with sundry other effects as per previous schedule, which will be produced at the sale, when the property will be pointed out. The said being levied on as the property of Hugh Marston, of—District, and sold to satisfy a fi fa issued from the Superior Court, W. W. C—.

"Also the following gang of negroes, many of whom have been accustomed to the cultivation of cotton and rice. Said negroes are very prime and orderly, having been well trained and fed, in addition to enjoying the benefit of Christian teaching through a Sunday−school worship on the plantation.

"Dandy, and Enock (yellow), prime house servants.

"Choate, and Cato, aged 29 and 32, coachman and blacksmith.

"Harry, a prime fellow of remarkable sagacity, said to be very pious, and has been very valuable as a preacher.

"Seventeen prime field hands, ranging from 17 to 63 years old, together with sundry children, set forth in the schedule.

"Peggy, aged 23 years, an excellent cook, house servant−can do almost any work, is faithful and strictly honest.

"Rachel, one of the very best wenches in the County; has had charge of the Manor for several years, is very motherly and well disposed, and fully capable of taking charge of a plantation."

The description of the negro property continues until it reaches the last and most touching point, which Marston reads with tears coursing down his cheeks. But, it is only trade, and it is refreshing to see how much talent the auctionee−himself a distinguished politician,—exhibits in displaying his bill. It is that which has worked itself so deep into Marston's feelings.

"Clotilda, a white negro, and her child Annette; together with Nicholas—a bright boy," remarkably intelligent−six years old. "These last," adds the list, "have been well brought up, with great care, and are extremely promising and pleasant when speaking. The woman has superior looks, is sometimes called beautiful, has finely developed features, and is considered to be the handsomest bright woman in the county."

We acknowledge the italics to be ours. The list, displaying great competency in the trade of human beings, concludes with warranting them sound and healthy, informing all those in want of such property of the wonderful opportunity of purchasing, and offering to guarantee its qualities. The above being "levied on to satisfy three fi fas,"

Poor Clotilda! her beauty has betrayed her: her mother was made a slave, and she has inherited the sin which the enlightened of the western world say shall be handed down from generation to generation until time itself has an end. She is within the damp walls of a narrow cell; the cold stones give forth their moisture to chill her bleeding heart; the rust of oppression cuts into her very soul. The warm sunlight of heaven, once so cheering, has now turned black and cold to her. She sits in that cold confine, filled with sorrow, hope, and expectation, awaiting her doom, like a culprit who measures the chances of escape between him and the gallows. She thinks of Marston. "He was a kind friend to me−he was a good master," she says, little thinking that at that very moment he sits in the saloon reading that southern death−warrant which dooms so many to a life of woe. In it fathers were not mentioned−Marston's feelings were spared that pain; mothers' tears, too, were omitted, lest the sensitiveness of the fashionable world should be touched. Pained, and sick at heart−stung by remorse at finding himself without power to relieve Clotilda−he rises from his seat, and makes arrangement to return to his plantation.

CHAPTER XV. A SCENE OF MANY LIGHTS.

WE must leave Marston wending his way for the old plantation, and pass to another phase of this complicated affair. In doing this, we must leave the reader to draw from his own imagination much that must have transpired previous to the present incidents.

The Rovero family−old and distinguished−had struggled against the misfortunes brought upon them by their son Lorenzo. Deeply involved, they had allowed their difficulties to go on till they had found themselves living by the favour of courtesy and indulgence. Lorenzo and Franconia were only children; and since the departure of the former the latter had been the idol of their indulgence. She was, as we have before said, delicate, sensitive, endowed with generous impulses, and admired for her gentleness, grace, and vivacity. To these she added firmness, and, when once resolved upon any object, could not be moved from her purpose. Nor was she−as is the popular fallacy of the South−susceptible to the influence of wealth. Her love and tenderness soared above it; she prized wealth less than moral worth. But she could not appease the pride of her parents with her feelings. They, labouring under the influence of their reduced fortunes, had favoured and insisted upon the advances of the very wealthy Colonel M'Carstrow, a rice−planter, who had a few years before inherited a large estate. The colonel is a sturdy specimen of the Southern gentleman, which combines a singular mixture of qualities, some of which are represented by a love of good living, good drinking, good horse−racing, good gambling, and fast company. He lives on the fat of the land, because the fat of the land was made for him to enjoy. He has no particular objection to anybody in the world, providing they believe in slavery, and live according to his notions of a gentleman. His soul's delight is faro, which he would not exchange for all the religion in the world; he has strong doubts about the good of religion, which, he says, should be boxed up with modern morality.

Laying these things aside, however, he is anything but what would have been properly selected as a partner for Franconia; and, while she is only eighteen, he has turned the corner of his forty−third year. In a word, his manners are unmodelled, his feelings coarse, his associations of the worst kind; nor is he adapted to make the happiness of domestic life lasting. He is one of those persons so often met with, whose affections−if they may be supposed to have any−are held in a sort of compromise between an incitement to love, and their natural inclination to revel in voluptuous pleasures. The two being antagonistic at times, the latter is sure to be the stronger, and not unfrequently carries its victim into dissolute extremes. Riches, however, will always weigh heavy in the scale; their possession sways,—the charm of gold is precious and powerful. And, too, the colonel had another attraction−very much esteemed among slave−dealers and owners—he had a military title, though no one knew how he came by it.

Franconia must be the affianced bride of the supposed wealthy Colonel M'Carstrow; so say her parents, who feel they are being crushed out by misfortune. It is their desire; and, however repulsive it may be to Franconia's feelings, she must accept the man: she must forget his years, his habits, his associations, for the wealth he can bring to the relief of the family.

To add ,clat to the event, it is arranged that the nuptial ceremony shall take place in the spacious old mansion of General P—, in the city. General P—is a distant relation of the Rovero family. His mansion is one of those noble old edifices, met here and there in the South—especially in South Carolina−which strongly mark the grandeur of their ancient occupants. It is a massive pile of marble, of mixed style of Grecian and Doric architecture, with three stories divided by projecting trellised arbours, and ornamented with fluted columns surmounted with ingeniously−worked and sculptured capitals, set off with grotesque figures. The front is ornamented with tablets of bas−relief, variegated and chaste. These are bordered with scroll−work, chases of flowers, graces, and historical designs. Around the lower story, palisades and curvatures project here and there between the divisions, forming bowers shaded by vines and sweet−scented blossoms. These are diffusing their fragrance through the spacious halls and corridors beneath. The stately old pile wears a romantic appearance; but it has grown brown with decay, and stands in dumb testimony of that taste and feeling which prevailed among its British founders. The garden in which it stands, once rich with the choicest flowers of every clime, now presents

an area overgrown with rank weeds, decaying hedges, dilapidated walks, and sickly shrubbery. The hand that once nurtured this pretty scene of buds and blossoms with so much care has passed away. Dull inertness now hangs its lifeless festoons over the whole, from the vaulted hall to the iron railing enclosing the whole.

The day for consummating the nuptial ceremony has arrived; many years have passed since the old mansion witnessed such a scene. The gay, wealthy, and intelligent of the little fashionable world will be here. The spell of loneliness in which the old walls have so long slept will be broken. Sparkling jewels, bland smiles, the rich decorations of former years, are to again enhance the scene. Exhausted nature is to shake off its monotony, to be enlivened with the happiness of a seemingly happy assemblage. A lovely bride is to be showered with smiles, congratulations, tokens of love. Southern gallantry will doff its cares, put on its smiling face. Whatever may smoulder beneath, pleasure and gaiety will adorn the surface.

Franconia sits in her spacious chamber. She is arrayed in flowing n,glig,; a pensive smile invades her countenance; she supports her head on her left hand, the jewels on her tiny fingers sparkling though her hair. Everything round her bears evidence of comfort and luxury; the gentle breeze, as it sweeps through the window to fan her blushing cheek, is impregnated with sweetest odours. She contemplates the meeting of him who is to be the partner of her life; can she reconcile it? Nay, there is something forcing itself against her will. Her bridesmaids,—young, gay, and accomplished,—gather around her. The fierce conflict raging in her bosom discloses itself; the attempt to cheer her up, under the impression that it arises from want of vigour to buoy up her sensitive system, fails. Again she seems labouring under excitement.

"Franconia!" exclaims one, taking her by the hand, "is not the time approaching?"

"Time always approaches," she speaks: her mind has been wandering, picturing the gloomy spectacle that presents itself in Clotilda's cell. She moves her right hand slowly across her brow, casts an enquiring glance around the room, then at those beside her, and changes her position in the chair. "The time to have your toilet prepared−the servants await you," is the reply. Franconia gathers strength, sits erect in her chair, seems to have just resolved upon something. A servant hastens into her presence bearing a delicately−enveloped note. She breaks the seal, reads it and re−reads it, holds it carelessly in her hand for a minute, then puts it in her bosom. There is something important in the contents, something she must keep secret. It is from Maxwell. Her friend evinced some surprise, while waiting a reply as she read the letter.

"No! not yet," she says, rising from her chair and sallying across the room. "That which is forced upon me−ah! I cannot love him. To me there is no loving wealth. Money may shelter; but it never moves hearts to love truly. How I have struggled against it!" Again she resumes her chair, weeps. Her tears gush from the parent fountain−woman's heart. "My noble uncle in trouble, my dear brother gone; yes! to where, and for what, I dare not think; and yet it has preyed upon me through the struggle of pride against love. My father may soon follow; but I am to be consigned to the arms of one whom it would be folly to say I respect."

Her friend, Miss Alice Latel, reminds her that it were well not to let such melancholy wanderings trouble her. She suggests that the colonel, being rich, will fill the place of father as well as husband; that she will be surrounded by the pleasures which wealth only can bring, and in this world what more can be desired?

"Such fathers seldom make affectionate husbands; nor do I want the father without the husband; his wealth would not make me respect him." Franconia becomes excited, giving rapid utterance to her language. "Can I suppress my melancholy−can I enjoy such pleasure, and my dear Clotilda in a prison, looking through those galling gratings? Can I be happy when the anguish of despair pierces deep into her heart? No! oh, no! Never, while I think of her, can I summon resolution to put on a bridal robe. Nay! I will not put them on without her. I will not dissemble joy while she sinks in her prison solitude!"

"Can you mean that−at this hour?" enquires Miss Alice, looking upon her with anxiety pictured in her face. One gives the other a look of surprise. Miss Alice must needs call older counsel.

"Yes!" replies Franconia, more calm; "even at this hour! It is never too late to serve our sisters. Could I smile−could I seem happy, and so many things to contemplate? We cannot disguise them now; we cannot smother scandal with a silken mantle. Clotilda must be with me. Negro as she is by law, she is no less dear to me. Nor can I yield to those feelings so prominent in southern breasts,—I cannot disclaim her rights, leave her the mere chattel subject of brute force, and then ask forgiveness of heaven!" This declaration, made in a positive tone, at once disclosed her resolution. We need not tell the reader with what surprise it took the household; nor, when she as suddenly went into a violent paroxysm of hysterics, the alarm it spread.

The quiet of the mansion has changed for uproar and confusion. Servants are running here and there, getting in each other's way, blocking the passages, and making the confusion more intense. Colonel M'Carstrow is sent for, reaches the mansion in great consternation, expects to find Franconia a corpse, for the negro messenger told him such a crooked story, and seemed so frightened, that he can't make anything straight of it−except that there is something very alarming.

She has been carried to one of the ante−chambers, reclines on a couch of softest tapestry, a physician at one side, and Alice, bathing her temples with aromatic liquid, on the other. She presents a ravishing picture of delicacy, modesty, and simplicity,—of all that is calmly beautiful in woman. "I can scarcely account for it; but, she's coming to," says the man of medicine, looking on mechanically. Her white bosom swells gently, like a newly−waked zephyr playing among virgin leaves; while her eyes, like melancholy stars, glimmer with the lustre of her soul. "Ah me!" she sighs, raising her hand over her head and resting it upon the cushion, as her auburn hair floats, calm and beautiful, down her pearly shoulder.

The colonel touches her hand; and, as if it had been too rudely, she draws it to her side, then places it upon her bosom. Again raising her eyes till they meet his, she blushes. It is the blush of innocence, that brightens beneath the spirit of calm resolution. She extends her hand again, slowly, and accepts his. "You will gratify me−will you not?" she mutters, attempting to gain a recumbent position. They raise her as she intimates a desire; she seems herself again.

"Whatever your wish may be, you have but to intimate it," replies the colonel, kissing her hand.

"Then, I want Clotilda. Go, bring her to me; she only can wait on me; and I am fond of her. With her I shall be well soon; she will dress me. Uncle will be happy, and we shall all be happy."

"But," the colonel interrupts, suddenly, "where is she to be found?"

"In the prison. You'll find her there!" There is little time to lose,—a carriage is ordered, the colonel drives to the prison, and there finds the object of Franconia's trouble. She, the two children at her side, sits in a cell seven by five feet; the strong grasp of slave power fears itself, its tyranny glares forth in the emaciated appearance of its female victim. The cell is lighted through a small aperture in the door, which hangs with heavy bolts and bars, as if torturing the innocent served the power of injustice. The prison−keeper led the way through a narrow passage between stone walls. His tap on the door startles her; she moves from her position, where she had been seated on a coarse blanket. It is all they (the hospitable southern world, with its generous laws) can afford her; she makes it a bed for three. A people less boastful of hospitality may give her more. She holds a prayer−book in her hand, and motions to the children as they crouch at her feet.

"Come, girl! somebody's here to see you," says the keeper, looking in at the aperture, as the sickly stench escapes from the dark cavern−like place.

Nervously, the poor victim approaches, lays her trembling hand on the grating, gives a doubting glance at the stranger, seems surprised, anxious to know the purport of his mission.

"Am I wanted?" she enquires eagerly, as if fearing some rude dealer has come−perhaps to examine her person, that he may be the better able to judge of her market value.

Notwithstanding the coldness of M'Carstrow's nature, his feelings are moved by the womanly appearance of the wench, as he calls her, when addressing the warden. There is something in the means by which so fair a creature is reduced to merchandise he cannot altogether reconcile. Were it not for what habit and education can do, it would be repulsive to nature in its crudest state. But it is according to law, that inhuman law which is tolerated in a free country.

"I want you to go with me, and you will see your young missis," says M'Carstrow, shrugging his shoulders. He is half inclined to let his better feelings give way to sympathy. But custom and commerce forbid it; they carry off the spoil, just as the sagacious pumpkin philosopher of England admits slavery a great evil, while delivering an essay for the purpose of ridiculing emancipation.

M'Carstrow soon changes his feelings,—addresses himself to business. "Are you in here for sale?" he enquires, attempting to whistle an air, and preserve an unaffected appearance.

The question touches a tender chord of her feelings; her bosom swells with emotions of grief; he has wounded that sensitive chord upon which the knowledge of her degradation hangs. She draws a handkerchief from her pocket, wipes the tear that glistens in her eye, clasps Annette in her arms−while Nicholas, frightened, hangs by the skirts of her dress,—buries her face in her bosom, retires a few steps, and again seats herself on the blanket.

"The question is pending. If I'm right about it−and I believe I'm generally so on such cases−it comes on before the next session, fall term," says the gaoler, turning to M'Carstrow with a look of wonderful importance. The gaoler, who, with his keys, lets loose the anxieties of men, continues his learned remarks. "Notice has been served how she's free. But that kind o' twisting things to make slave property free never amounts to much, especially when a man gets where they say Marston is! Anthony Romescos has been quizzing about, and it don't take much to make such things property when he's round." The man of keys again looks very wise, runs his hand deep into the pocket of his coat, and says something about this being a great country.

"How much do you reckon her worth, my friend?" enquires M'Carstrow, exchanging a significant glance.

"Well, now you've got me. It's a point of judgment, you see. The article's rather questionable−been spoiled. There's a doubt about such property when you put it up, except a gentleman wants it; and then, I reckon, it'll bring a smart price. There's this to be considered, I reckon, though they haven't set a price on her yet, she's excellent good looking; and the young un's a perfect cherry. It'll bring a big heap one of these days."

"We won't mind that, just now, gaoler," M'Carstrow says, very complacently; "you'll let me have her tonight, and I'll return her safe in the morning."

"No, no," interposes Clotilda, mistaking M'Carstrow's object. She crouches down on the blanket, as if shrinking from a deadly assault: "let me remain, even in my cell." She draws the children to her side.

"Don't mistake me, my girl: I am a friend. I want you for Franconia Rovero. She is fond of you, you know."

"Franconia!" she exclaims with joy, starting to her feet at the sound of the name. "I do know her, dear Franconia! I know her, I love her, she loves me−I wish she was my mother. But she is to be the angel of my freedom−" Here she suddenly stopped, as if she had betrayed something.

"We must lose no time," M'Carstrow says, informing her that Franconia is that night to be his bride, and cannot be happy without seeing her.

"Bride! and cannot prepare without me," mutters the woman, seeming to doubt the reality of his statement. A thought flashes in her mind: "Franconia has not forgotten me; I will go and be Franconia's friend." And with a child−like simplicity she takes Annette by the hand, as if they were inseparable. "Can't Nicholas go, too?" she inquires.

"You must leave the child," is the cool reply. M'Carstrow attempts to draw the heavy bolt that fastens the door.

"Not so fast, if you please," the warden speaks. "I cannot permit her to leave without an order from the sheriff." He puts his hand against the door.

"She will surely be returned in the morning; I'm good for a hundred such pieces of property."

"Can't help that," interrupts the gaoler, coolly.

"But, there's my honour!"

"An article gaolers better not deal in. It may be very good commodity in some kinds of business−don't pay in ours; and then, when this kind of property is in question, it won't do to show a favour beyond the rule."

M'Carstrow is in a sad dilemma. He must relieve himself through a problem of law, which, at this late hour, brings matters to a singular point. He believes Franconia suffers from a nervous affection, as the doctors call it, and has fixed her mind upon the only object of relief. He had made no preparation for such a critical event; but there is no postponing the ceremony,—no depriving her of the indulgence. Not a moment is to be lost: he sets off, post−haste, for the sheriff's office. That functionary is well known for his crude method of executing business; to ask a favour of him would be like asking the sea to give up its dead. He is cold, methodical, unmoveable; very much opposed to anything having the appearance of an innovation upon his square rules of business.

M'Carstrow finds him in just the mood to interpose all the frigid peculiarities of his incomprehensible nature. The colonel has known him by reputation; he knows him now through a different medium. After listening to M'Carstrow's request, and comporting himself with all imaginable dignity, he runs his fingers through his hair, looks at M'Carstrow vacantly, and well nigh rouses his temper. M'Carstrow feels, as southern gentlemen are wont to feel, that his position and title are enough to ensure courtesy and a quick response. The man of writs and summonses feels quite sure that the pomp of his office is sufficient to offset all other distinctions.

"Whar' d'ye say the gal was,—in my gaol?" the sheriff inquires, with solemn earnestness, and drawling his words measuredly, as if the whole affair was quite within his line of business. The sheriff has the opportunity of making a nice little thing of it; the object to be released will serve the profits of the profession. "Gittin' that gal out

yander ain't an easy thing now, 'taint! It'll cost ye 'bout twenty dollars, sartin," he adds, turning over the leaves of his big book, and running his finger down a scale of names.

"I don't care if it costs a hundred! Give me an order for her release!" M'Carstrow begins to understand Mr. Sheriff's composition, and putting his hand into his pocket, draws forth a dwenty−dollar gold piece, throws it upon the table. The effect is electric: it smooths down the surface of Mr. Sheriff's nature,—brings out the disposition to accommodate. The Sheriff's politeness now taxes M'Carstrow's power to reciprocate.

"Now, ye see, my friend," says Mr. Sheriff, in a quaint tone, "there's three fi fas on that critter. Hold a minute!" He must needs take a better glance; he runs his fingers over the page again, mutters to himself, and then breaks out into a half−musical, half−undefinable humming. "It's a snarled−up affair, the whole on't. T'll take a plaguy cunnin' lawyer to take the shine out." The sheriff pushes the piece of coin nearer the inkstand, into the centre of the table. "I feel all over like accommodatin' ye," he deigns to say; "but then t'll be so pestky crooked gettin' the thing straight." He hesitates before the wonderful difficulty,—he can't see his way straight through it. "Three fi fas! I believe I'm correct; there's one principal one, however."

"I pledge my honour for her return in the morning; and she shall be all shined up with a new dress. Her presence is imperatively necessary to−night," M'Carstrow remarks, becoming impatient.

"Two fi fas!−well, the first look looked like three. But, the principal one out of the way,—no matter." Mr. Sheriff becomes more and more enlightened on the unenlightened difficulties of the law. He remarks, touching M'Carstrow on the arm, with great seriousness of countenance, "I sees how the knot's tied. Ye know, my functions are turned t' most everything; and it makes a body see through a thing just as straight as—. Pest on't! Ye see, it's mighty likely property,—don't strike such every day. That gal 'll bring a big tick in the market−"

"Excuse me, my dear sir," M'Carstrow suddenly interrupts. "Understand me, if you please. I want her for nothing that you contemplate,—nothing, I pledge you my honour as a southern gentleman!"

"'Ah,—bless me! Well, but there's nothin' in that. I see! I see! I see!" Mr. Sheriff brightens up, his very soul seems to expand with legal tenacity. "Well, ye see, there's a question of property raised about the gal, and her young 'un, too−nice young 'un 'tis; but it's mighty easy tellin' whose it is. About the law matter, though, you must get the consent of all the plaintiff's attorneys,—that's no small job. Lawyers are devilish slippery, rough a feller amazingly, once in a while; chance if ye don't have to get the critter valued by a survey. Graspum, though's ollers on hand, is first best good at that: can say her top price while ye'd say seven," says Mr. Sheriff, maintaining his wise dignity, as he reminds M'Carstrow that his name is Cur, commonly called Mr. Cur, sheriff of the county. It must not be inferred that Mr. Cur has any of the canine qualities about him. The hour for the ceremony is close at hand. M'Carstrow, satisfied that rules of law are very arbitrary things in the hands of officials−that such property is difficult to get out of the meshes of legal technicality−that honour is neither marketable or pledgeable in such cases, must move quickly: he seeks the very conscientious attorneys, gets them together, pleads the necessity of the case: a convention is arranged, Graspum will value the property−as a weigher and gauger of human flesh. This done, M'Carstrow signs a bond in the sum of fifteen hundred dollars, making himself responsible for the property. The instrument contains a provision, that should any unforeseen disaster befall it, the question of property will remain subject to the decision of Court. Upon these conditions, M'Carstrow procures an order for her release. He is careful, however, that nothing herein set forth shall affect the suit already instituted.

Love is an exhilarating medicine, moving and quickening the hearts of old and young. M'Carstrow felt its influence sensibly, as he hurried back to the prison−excited by the near approach of the ceremony−with the all−important order. Bolts, bars, and malarious walls, yield to it the pining captive whose presence will soothe Franconia's feelings.

Clotilda was no less elated at the hope of changing her prison for the presence of her young mistress; and yet, the previous summons had nearly unnerved her. She lingers at the grating, waiting M'Carstrow's return. Time seems to linger, until her feelings are nearly overwhelmed in suspense. Again, there is a mystery in the mission of the stranger; she almost doubts his sincerity. It may be one of those plots, so often laid by slave−traders, to separate her from her child,—perhaps to run her where all hope of regaining freedom will be for ever lost. One after another did these things recur to her mind, only to make the burden of her troubles more painful.

Her child has eaten its crust, fallen into a deep sleep, and, its little hands resting clasped on its bosom, lies calmly upon the coarse blanket. She gazes upon it, as a mother only can gaze. There is beauty in that sweet face; it is not valued for its loveliness, its tenderness, its purity. How cursed that it is to be the prime object of her

disgrace! Thus contemplating, M'Carstrow appears at the outer gate, is admitted into the prison, reaches the inner grating, is received by the warden, who smiles generously. "I'm as glad as anything! Hope you had a good time with his honour, Mr. Cur?" he says, holding the big key in his hand, and leading the way into the office. He takes his seat at a table, commences preparing the big book. "Here is the entry," he says, with a smile of satisfaction. "We'll soon straighten the thing now." Puts out his hand for the order which M'Carstrow has been holding. "That's just the little thing," he says, reading it word by word carefully, and concluding with the remark that he has had a deal of trouble with it. M'Carstrow places some pieces of silver in his hand; they turn the man of keys into a subservient creature. He hastens to the cell, M'Carstrow following,—draws the heavy bolts,—bids the prisoner come forth. "Yes, come, girl; I've had a tough time to get you out of that place: it holds its prey like lawyers' seals," rejoins M'Carstrow.

"Not without my child?" she inquires quickly. She stoops down and kisses it. "My daughter,—my sweet child!" she mutters.

"Till to−morrow. You must leave her for to−night."

"If I must!" Again she kisses the child, adding, as she smoothed her hand over Annette, and parted her hair, "Mother will return soon." There was something so touching in the word mother, spoken while leaning over a sleeping babe. Clotilda reaches the door, having kept her eyes upon the child as she left her behind. A tremor comes over her,—she reluctantly passes the threshold of the narrow arch; but she breathes the fresh air of heaven,—feels as if her life had been renewed. A mother's thoughts, a mother's anxieties, a mother's love, veil her countenance. She turns to take a last look as the cold door closes upon the dearest object of her life. How it grates upon its hinges! her hopes seem for ever extinguished.

The law is thus far satisfied−the legal gentlemen are satisfied, the warden is not the least generous; and Mr. Cur feels that, while the job was a very nice one, he has not transcended one jot of his importance. Such is highly gratifying to all parties. Clotilda is hurried into a carriage, driven at a rapid rate, and soon arrives at the mansion. Here she is ushered into a chamber, arrayed in a new dress, and conducted into the presence of Franconia. The meeting may be more easily imagined than described. Their congratulations were warm, affectionate, touching. Clotilda kisses Franconia's hand again and again; Franconia, in turn, lays her hand upon Clotilda's shoulder, and, with a look of commiseration, sets her eyes intently upon her, as if she detects in her countenance those features she cannot disown. She requests to be left alone with Clotilda for a short time. Her friends withdraw. She discloses the difficulties into which the family have suddenly fallen, the plan of escape she has arranged, the hopes she entertains of her regaining her freedom. "Public opinion and the state of our difficulties prompted this course,—I prefer it to any other: follow my directions,—Maxwell has everything prepared, and to−night will carry you off upon the broad blue ocean of liberty. Enjoy that liberty, Clotilda,—be a woman,—follow the path God has strewn for your happiness; above all, let freedom be rewarded with your virtue, your example," says Franconia, as she again places her arm round Clotilda's neck.

"And leave my child, Franconia?" the other inquires, looking up imploringly in Franconia's face.

"To me," is the quick response. "I will be her guardian, her mother. Get you beyond the grasp of slavery−get beyond its contaminating breath, and I will be Annette's mother. When you are safely there, when you can breathe the free air of liberty, write me, and she shall meet you. Leave her to me; think of her only in my care, and in my trust she will be happy. Meet Maxwell−he is your friend−at the centre corridor; he will be there as soon as the ceremony commences; he will have a pass from me; he will be your guide!" She overcomes Clotilda's doubts, reasons away her pleadings for her child, gives her a letter and small miniature (they are to be kept until she reaches her destination of freedom), and commences preparing for the ceremony.

Night arrives, the old mansion brightens and resounds with the bustle of preparation. Servants are moving about in great confusion. Everything is in full dress; "yellow fellows," immersed in trim black coats, nicely−cut pantaloons, white vests and gloves, shirt−collars of extraordinary dimensions, and hair curiously crimped, are standing at their places along the halls, ready for reception. Another class, equally well dressed, are running to and fro through the corridors in the despatch of business. Old mammas have a new shine on their faces, their best "go to church" fixings on their backs. Younger members of the same property species are gaudily attired−some in silk, some in missus's slightly worn cashmere. The colour of their faces grades from the purest ebony to the palest olive. A curious philosophy may be drawn from the mixture: it contrasts strangely with the flash and dazzle of their fantastic dresses, their large circular ear−rings, their curiously−tied bandanas, the large bow points of which

lay crossed on the tufts of their crimpy hair. The whole scene has an air of bewitching strangeness. In another part of the mansion we find the small figures of the estate, all agog, toddling and doddling, with faces polished like black−balled shoes; they are as piquant and interesting as their own admiration of the dress master has provided them for the occasion.

The darkness increases as the night advances. The arbour leading from the great gate to the vaulted hall in the base of the mansion is hung with lanterns of grotesque patterns, emitting light and shade as variegated as the hues of the rainbow. The trees and shrubbery in the arena, hung with fantastic lanterns, enliven the picture−make it grand and imposing. It presents a fairy−like perspective, with spectre lights hung here and there, their mellow glows reflecting softly upon the luxuriant foliage.

Entering the vaulted hall, its floor of antique tiles; frescoed walls with well−executed mythological designs, jetting lights flickering and dazzling through its arches, we find ourselves amidst splendour unsurpassed in our land. At the termination of the great hall a massive flight of spiral steps, of Egyptian marble, ascends to the fourth story, forming a balcony at each, where ottomans are placed, and from which a fine view of the curvature presents itself, from whence those who have ascended may descry those ascending. On the second story is a corridor, with moulded juttings and fretwork overhead; these are hung with festoons of jasmines and other delicate flowers, extending its whole length, and lighted by globular lamps, the prismatic ornaments of which shed their soft glows on the fixtures beneath. They invest it with the appearance of a bower decorated with buds and blossoms. From this, on the right, a spacious arched door, surmounted by a semi−circle of stained glass containing devices of the Muses and other allegorical figures, leads into an immense parlour, having a centre arch hung with heavy folds of maroon coloured velvet overspread with lace. Look where you will, the picture of former wealth and taste presents itself. Around the walls hang costly paintings, by celebrated Italian masters; some are portraits of the sovereigns of England, from that of Elizabeth to George the Third. Brilliant lights jet forth from massive chandeliers and girandoles, lighting up the long line of chaste furniture beneath. The floor is spread with softest Turkey carpet; groups of figures in marble, skilfully executed, form a curiously arranged fire−place; Britannia's crest surmounting the whole. At each end of the room stand chastely designed pieces of statuary of heroes and heroines of past ages. Lounges, ottomans, reclines, and couches, elaborately carved and upholstered, stand here and there in all their antiqueness and grandeur. Pier−glasses, massive tables inlaid with mosaic and pearl, are arranged along the sides, and overhung with flowing tapestry that falls carelessly from the large Doric windows. Over these windows are massive cornices, richly designed and gilded. Quiet grandeur pervades the whole; even the fairy−like dais that has been raised for the nuptial ceremony rests upon four pieces of statuary, and is covered with crimson velvet set with sparkling crystals. And while this spectacle presents but the vanity of our nature, grand but not lasting, the sweet breath of summer is wafting its balmy odours to refresh and give life to its lifeless luxury.

The gay cortŠge begins to assemble; the halls fill with guests; the beauty, grace, and intelligence of this little fashionable world, arrayed in its very best, will be here with its best face. Sparkling diamonds and other precious stones, dazzling, will enhance the gorgeous display. And yet, how much of folly's littleness does it all present! All this costly drapery−all this show of worldly voluptuousness−all this tempest of gaiety, is but the product of pain and sorrow. The cheek that blushes in the gay circle, that fair form born to revel in luxury, would not blush nor shrink to see a naked wretch driven with the lash. Yea! we have said it was the product of pain and sorrow; it is the force of oppression wringing from ignorance and degradation the very dregs of its life. Men say, what of that?−do we not live in a great good land of liberty?

The young affianced,—dressed in a flowing skirt of white satin, with richly embroidered train; a neat bodice of the same material, with incisions of lace tipped with brilliants; sleeves tapering into neat rufflets of lace clasped upon the wrist with diamond bracelets, a stomacher of chastely worked lace with brilliants in the centre, relieved by two rows of small unpolished pearls,—is ushered into the parlour, followed by groomsmen and bridesmaids as chastely dressed.

There is a striking contrast between the youth and delicacy of Franconia, blushing modestly and in her calmness suppressing that inert repugnance working in her mind, and the brusqueness of M'Carstrow, who assumes the free and easy dash, hoping thereby to lessen his years in the picture of himself. Clotilda, for the last time, has arranged Franconia's hair, which lies in simple braids across her polished brows, and folds upon the back, where it is secured and set off with a garland of wild flowers. The hand that laid it there, that arranged it so

neatly, will never arrange it again. As a last token of affection for her young mistress, Clotilda has plucked a new−blown chiponique, white with crystal dew, and surrounded it with tiny buds and orange blossoms: this, Franconia holds in her left hand, the lace to which it is attached falling like mist to the ground.

Thus arrayed, they appear at the altar: the good man of modest cloth takes his place, the ceremony commences; and as it proceeds, and the solemn words fall upon her ear, "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder," she raises her eyes upwards, with a look of melancholy, as tears, like pearls, glisten in her soft expressive eyes. Her heart is moved with deeper emotion than this display of southern galaxy can produce. The combination of circumstances that has brought her to the altar, the decline of fortune, perhaps disgrace, worked upon her mind. It is that which has consigned her to the arms of one she cannot love, whose feelings and associations she never can respect. Was she to be the ransom?−was she to atone for the loss of family fortune, family pride, family inconsistency? kept forcing itself upon her. There was no gladness in it−no happiness. And there was the captive, the victim of foul slavery−so foul that hell yearns for its abettors−whose deliverance she prayed for with her earnest soul. She knew the oppressor's grasp−she had, with womanly pride, come forward to relieve the wronged, and she had become sensible of the ties binding her to Clotilda. Unlike too many of her sex, she did not suppress her natural affections; she could not see only the slave in a disowned sister; she acknowledged the relationship, and hastened to free her, to send her beyond slavery's grasp, into the glad embrace of freedom.

The ceremony ends; the smiles and congratulations of friends, as they gather round Franconia, shower upon her; she receives them coldly, her heart has no love for them, it throbs with anxiety for that slave whose liberty she has planned, and for whose safety she invokes the all−protecting hand of heaven.

CHAPTER XVI. ANOTHER PHASE OF THE PICTURE.

WHILE the ceremony we have described in the foregoing chapter was proceeding, Clotilda, yielding to the earnest request of Franconia, dresses herself in garments she has provided, and awaits the commencement of the scene. A little schooner from one of the Bahama Islands lies moored in the harbour awaiting a fair wind to return.

We need scarcely tell the reader that a plan of escape had been previously arranged between Franconia and Maxwell; but why she took so earnest a part in carrying it out, we must reserve for another chapter.

Maxwell had sought the captain of this schooner, found him of a generous disposition, ready to act in behalf of freedom. Having soon gained his confidence, and enlisted his good services, it took no great amount of persuasion to do this, his feelings having already been aroused against slavery, the giant arms of which, stretched out between fear and injustice, had interfered with his rights. He had seen it grasp the bones and sinews of those who were born in freedom−he had seen men laugh at his appeals for justice−he had seen one of his free−born British seamen manacled and dragged to prison at noonday, merely because his skin was slightly coloured; he had been compelled to pay tribute to keep alive the oppressor's power, to compensate the villainy rogues practise upon honest men.

"Yes!" says the captain, a sturdy son of the sea, in answer to Maxwell; "bring her on board; and with a heart's best wishes, if I don't land her free and safe in Old Bahama I'll never cross the gulf stream again." And the mode of getting the boats ready was at once arranged.

The night was still and dark; picturesque illuminations in and around the mansion glittered in contrast with the starry arch of heaven; the soft south breeze fans to life the dark foliage that clusters around−nature has clothed the scene with her beauties. Clotilda−she has eagerly awaited the coming time−descends to the balustrade in the rear of the mansion. Here she meets a band of musicians; they have assembled to serenade, and wait the benediction, a signal for which will be made from one of the balconies. She fears they may recognise her, hesitates at the entrance, paces backward and forward in the colonnade, and professes to be awaiting some message from her mistress. Again scanning the scene, she watches intently, keeping her eyes fixed in the direction Franconia has suggested. "I was to meet Maxwell there!" works upon her mind until she becomes nervous and agitated. "I was, and must meet him there;" and she walks slowly back to the entrance, turns and returns, watches until her soul has nearly sickened, at length espies the joyous signal. Franconia did not deceive her. Oh, no! he stands there in the glare of a lamp that hangs from a willow−tree. She vaults over the path, grasps his hand with a sister's affection, and simultaneously the soft swelling music of "Still so gently o'er me stealing!" floats in the air, as dulcet and soul−stirring as ever touched the fancy, or clothed with holy inspiration the still repose of a southern landscape at midnight. But she is with Maxwell; they have passed the serenaders,—liberty is the haven of her joy, it gives her new hopes of the future. Those hopes dispel the regrets that hover over her mind as she thinks of her child.

For several minutes they stand together, listening to the music, and watching the familiar faces of old friends as they come upon the balcony in the second story. Southern life had its pleasant associations−none would attempt to deny them; but the evil brooded in the uncertainty that hung over the fate of millions, now yielding indulgence to make life pleasant, then sinking them for ever in the cruelties of a tyrant's power. It is the crushing out of the mind's force,—the subduing the mental and physical man to make the chattel complete,—the shutting out of all the succinct virtues that nurture freedom, that incite us to improve the endowments of nature, that proves the rankling poison. And this poison spreads its baneful influence in and around good men's better desires.

After watching in silence for a few moments, Clotilda gives vent to her feelings. "I should like to see old Daddy Bob once more, I should! And my poor Annette; she is celled to be sold, I'm afraid; but I must yield to the kindness of Franconia. I have seen some good times among the old folks on the plantation. And there's Aunt Rachel,—a good creature after all,—and Harry. Well; I mustn't think of these things; freedom is sweetest," she says. Maxwell suggests that they move onward. The music dies away in the stillness, as they turn from the scene to flee beyond the grasp of men who traffic in human things called property,—not by a great constitution, but under a constitution's freedom giving power. Would that a great and glorious nation had not sold its freedom to

the damning stain of avarice! would that it had not perverted that holy word, for the blessings of which generations have struggled in vain! would that it had not substituted a freedom that mystifies a jurisprudence,—that brings forth the strangest fruit of human passions,—that makes prison walls and dreary cells death−beds of the innocent;−that permits human beings to be born for the market, and judged by the ripest wisdom! "Has God ordained such freedom lasting?" will force itself upon us.−We must return to our humble adventurers.

The fugitives reached the back gate, leading into a narrow lane, from whence they cross into the main street. Clotilda has none of the African about her; the most observing guardsman would not stop her for a slave. They pass along unmolested; the guardsmen, some mounted and some walking at a slow pace, bow politely. No one demands a pass. They arrive in safety at a point about two miles from the city, where the captain and his boat await them. No time is lost in embarking: the little bark rides at anchor in the stream; the boat quietly glides to her; they are safely on board. A few minutes more, and the little craft moves seaward under the pressure of a gentle breeze. There is no tragic pursuit of slave−hunters, no tramp of horses to terrify the bleeding victim, no howlings of ravenous bloodhounds,—nothing that would seem to make the issue freedom or death. No! all is as still as a midsummer night in the same clime. The woman—this daughter of slavery's vices—cherishes a love for freedom; the hope of gaining it, and improving those endowments nature has bestowed upon her, freshens her spirits and gives her life to look forward without desponding. Maxwell is her friend; he has witnessed the blighting power of slavery−not alone in its workings upon the black man, but upon the lineal offspring of freemen−and has resolved to work against its mighty arm. With him it is the spontaneous action of a generous heart sympathising for the wrongs inflicted upon the weak, and loving to see right respected.

The fair Franconia, who has just been forced to accept the hand of a mere charlatan, disclosed the secrets of her mind to him; it was she who incited him to an act which might have sacrificed his freedom, perhaps his life. But mankind is possessed of an innate feeling to do good; and there is a charm added when the object to be served is a fair creature about to be dragged into the miseries of slavery. Even the rougher of our kind cannot resist it; and at times−we except the servile opinion which slavery inflicts upon a people through its profitable issues−prompts the ruffian to generous acts.

The little bark, bound for the haven of freedom, sailed onward over the blue waters, and when daylight dawned had crossed the bar separating the harbour from the ocean. Clotilda ascends to the deck, sits on the companion−seat, and in a pensive mood watches the fading hills where slavery stains the fair name of freedom,—where oppression rears its dark monuments to for ever torture and disgrace a harmless race. She looks intently upon them, as one by one they fade in the obscure horizon, seeming to recall the many associations, pleasant and painful, through which she has passed. She turns from the contemplation to the deep blue sea, and the unclouded arch of heaven, as they spread out before her: they are God's own, man cannot pollute them; they are like a picture of glory inspiring her with emotions she cannot suppress. As the last dim sight of land is lost in the distance, she waves a handkerchief, as if to bid it adieu for ever; then looking at Maxwell, who sits by her side, she says, with a sigh, "I am beyond it! Free,—yes, free! But, have I not left a sufferer behind? There is my poor Annette, my child; I will clasp her to my bosom,—I will love her more when I meet her again. Good−bye, Franconia−dear Franconia! She will be a mother to my little one; she will keep her word." Thus saying, she casts a look upward, invokes heaven to be merciful to her persecutors,—to protect her child,—to guard Franconia through life. Tears stream down her cheeks as she waves her hand and retires to the cabin.

CHAPTER XVII. PLEASANT DEALINGS WITH HUMAN PROPERTY.

WE must deal gently with our scenes; we must describe them without exaggeration, and in rotation. While the scenes we have just described were proceeding, another, of deeper import, and more expressive of slavery's complicated combinations, was being enacted in another part of the city.

A raffle of ordinary character had been announced in the morning papers,—we say ordinary, because it came within the ordinary specification of trade, and violated neither statute law nor municipal ordinance,—and the raffler, esteemed a great character in the city, was no less celebrated for his taste in catering for the amusement of his patrons. On this occasion, purporting to be a very great one, the inducements held out were no less an incentive of gambling propensities than an aim to serve licentious purposes. In a word, it offered "all young connoisseurs of beauty a chance to procure one of the finest−developed young wenches,—fair, bright, perfectly brought up, young, chaste, and of most amiable disposition, for a trifling sum." This was all straight in the way of trade, in a free country; nobody should blush at it (some maidens, reading the notice, might feel modestly inclined to), because nobody could gainsay it. This is prize No. 1, prime−as set down in the schedule−and the amount per toss being only a trifle, persons in want of such prizes are respectfully informed of the fact that only a few chances remain, which will command a premium before candle−light. Prize No. 2 is a superior pony, of well−known breed−here the pedigree is set forth; which advantage had not been accorded to the human animal, lest certain members of the same stock should blush−raised with great care and attention, and exactly suited for a gentleman's jant or a lady's saddle−nag. Prize No. 3 is a superior setter dog, who has also been well brought up, is from good stock, is kind to children, who play with him when they please. He knows niggers, is good to watch them, has been known to catch runaways, to tear their shins wonderfully. Indeed, according to the setting forth of the sagacious animal, he would seem to understand slave−law quite well, and to be ready and willing to lend his aid with dogs of a different species to enforce its provisions. The only fault the brute has, if fault it may be called, is that he does not understand the constitutionality of the fugitive slave law,—a law destined to be exceedingly troublesome among a free people. Did the sagacity of the animal thus extend to the sovereign law of the land of the brave and free, he would bring a large price at the north, where men are made to do what dogs most delight in at the south.

The first prize, as set forth, is valued at seven hundred dollars: the magnanimous gentleman who caters thus generously for his patrons states the delicate prize to be worth fifty or a hundred dollars more, and will, with a little more developing, be worth a great deal more money. Hence, he hopes his patrons will duly appreciate enterprising liberality.

The second prize he considers generously low at two hundred dollars; and the dog−the sagacious animal constituting the third prize−would be a great bargain to anybody wanting such an animal, especially in consideration of his propensity to catch negroes, at sixty dollars. The trio of human and animal prizes produce no distinctive effect upon the feelings of those who speculate in such property; with them it is only a matter of gradation between dollars and cents.

But, to be more off−handed in this generous undertaking, and in consideration of the deep−felt sensibility and hospitality which must always protect southern character, the chances will be restricted to two hundred, at five dollars per chance. Money must be paid in before friends can consider themselves stock−holders. It is to be a happy time, in a happy country, where all are boasted happy. The first lucky dog will get the human prize; the next lucky dog will get the pony; the third will make a dog of himself by only winning a dog. The fun of the thing, however, will be the great attraction; men of steady habits are reminded of this. Older gentlemen, having very nice taste for colour, but no particular scruples about religion, and who seldom think morals worth much to niggers, "because they aint got sense to appreciate such things," are expected to be on hand. Those who know bright and fair niggers were never made for anything under the sun but to gratify their own desires, are expected to spread the good news, to set the young aristocracy of the city all agog,—to start up a first−best crowd,—have some tall drinking and first−rate amusement. Everybody is expected to tell his friend, and his friend is expected to

help the generous man out with his generous scheme, and all are expected to join in the "bender." Nobody must forget that the whole thing is to come off at "Your House,"−an eating and drinking saloon, of great capacity, kept by the very distinguished man, Mr. O'Brodereque.

Mr. O'Brodereque, who always pledges his word upon the honour of a southern gentleman−frequently asserting his greatness in the political world, and wondering who could account for his not finding his way into Congress, where talent like his would be brought out for the protection of our south−has made no end of money by selling a monstrous deal of very bad liquor to customers of all grades,—niggers excepted. And, although his hair is well mixed with the grey of many years, he declares the guilt of selling liquor to niggers is not on his shoulders. It is owing to this clean state of his character, that he has been able to maintain his aristocratic position. "Yes, indeed," said one of his patrons, who, having fallen in arrears, found himself undergoing the very disagreeable process of being politely kicked into the street, "money makes a man big in the south: big in niggers, big in politics, big with everything but the way I'm big,—with an empty pocket. I don't care, though; he's going up by the process that I'm coming down. There's philosophy in that." It could not be denied that Mr. O'Brodereque−commonly called General O'Brodereque−was very much looked up to by great people and Bacchanalians,—men who pay court to appease the wondrous discontent of the belly, to the total neglect of the back. Not a few swore, by all their importance, a greater man never lived. He is, indeed, all that can be desired to please the simple pretensions of a free−thinking and free−acting southern people, who, having elevated him to the office of alderman, declare him exactly the man to develope its functions. A few of the old school aristocracy, who still retain the bad left them by their English ancestry, having long since forgotten the good, do sneer now and then at Mr. Brodereque's pretensions. But, like all great men who have a great object to carry out, he affects to frown such things down,—to remind the perpetrators of such aristocratic sneers what a spare few they are. He asserts, and with more truth than poetry, that any gentleman having the capacity to deluge the old aristocracy with doubtful wine, line his pockets while draining theirs−all the time making them feel satisfied he imports the choicest−and who can keep on a cheerful face the while, can fill an alderman's chair to a nicety.

In addition to the above, Mr. O'Brodereque is one of those very accommodating individuals who never fail to please their customers, while inciting their vanity; and, at the same time, always secure a good opinion for themselves. And, too, he was liberally inclined, never refused tick, but always made it tell; by which well−devised process, his patrons were continually becoming his humble servants, ready to serve him at call.

Always civil, and even obsequious at first, ready to condescend and accommodate, he is equally prompt when matters require that peculiar turn which southerners frequently find themselves turned into,—no more tick and a turn out of doors. At times, Mr. O'Brodereque's customers have the very unenviable consolation of knowing that a small document called a mortgage of their real and personal property remains in his hands, which he will very soon find it necessary to foreclose.

It is dark,—night has stolen upon us again,—the hour for the raffle is at hand. The saloon, about a hundred and forty feet long by forty wide, is brilliantly lighted for the occasion. The gas−lights throw strange shadows upon the distemper painting with which the walls are decorated. Hanging carelessly here and there are badly−daubed paintings of battle scenes and heroic devices, alternated with lithographic and badly−executed engravings of lustfully−exposed females. Soon the saloon fills with a throng of variously−mixed gentlemen. The gay, the grave, the old, and the young men of the fashionable world, are present. Some affect the fast young man; others seem mere speculators, attracted to the place for the purpose of enjoying an hour, seeing the sight, and, it may be, taking a throw for the "gal." The crowd presents a singular contrast of beings. Some are dressed to the very extreme of fantastic fashion, and would seem to have wasted their brains in devising colours for their backs; others, aspiring to the seriously genteel, are fashioned in very extravagant broadcloth; while a third group is dressed in most niggardly attire, which sets very loosely. In addition to this they wear very large black, white, and grey−coloured felt hats, slouched over their heads; while their nether garments, of red and brown linsey−woolsey, fit like Falstaff's doublet on a whip stock. They seem proud of the grim tufts of hair that, like the moss−grown clumps upon an old oak, spread over their faces; and they move about in the grotesque crowd, making their physiognomies increase its piquancy.

The saloon is one of those places at the south where great men, small men, men of different spheres and occupations, men in prominently defined positions, men in doubtful calls of life, and men most disreputably employed, most do congregate. At one end of the saloon is a large oyster counter, behind which stand two

coloured men, with sauces, savories, and other mixtures at hand, ready to serve customers who prefer the delicacy in its raw state. Men are partaking without noting numbers. Mr. O'Brodereque has boys serving who take very good care of the numbers. Extending along one side of the saloon is an elaborately carved mahogany counter, with panels of French white and gilt mouldings. This is surmounted with a marble slab, upon which stand well−filled decanters, vases, and salvers. Behind this counter, genteelly−dressed and polite attendants are serving customers who stand along its side in a line, treating in true southern style. The calling for drinks is a problem for nice ears to solve, so varied are the sounds, so strange the names: style, quantity, and mixture seemed without limit, set on in various colours to flow and flood the spirits of the jovial. On the opposite side of the saloon are rows of seats and arm−chairs, interspersed with small tables, from which the beverage can be imbibed more at ease. On the second story is the great "eating saloon," with its various apartments, its curtained boxes, its prim−looking waiters, its pier−glass walls. There is every accommodation for belly theologians, who may discuss the choicest viands of the season.

The company are assembled,—the lower saloon is crowded; Mr. O'Brodereque, with great dignity, mounts the stand,—a little table standing at one end of the room. His face reddens, he gives several delinquent coughs, looks round and smiles upon his motley patrons, points a finger recognisingly at a wag in the corner, who has addressed some remarks to him, puts his thumbs in the sleeve−holes of his vest, throws back his coat−collar, puts himself in a defiant attitude, and is ready to deliver himself of his speech.

"A political speech from the General! Gentlemen, hats off, and give your attention to Mr. General O'Brodereque's remarks!" resounds from several voices. Mr. O'Brodereque is somewhat overcome, his friends compliment him so: he stands, hesitating, as if he had lost the opening part of his speech, like a statue on a molasses−cask. At length he speaks. "If it was a great political question, gentlemen, I'd get the twist of the thing,—I'd pitch into it, big! These little things always trouble public men more than the important intricacies of government do. You see, they are not comesurate,—that's it!" says Mr. Brodereque, looking wondrously wise the while. After bowing, smiling, and acknowledging the compliments of his generous customers with prodigious grace, he merely announces to his friends—with eloquence that defies imitation, and turns rhetoric into a discordant exposition of his own important self—that, not having examined the constitution for more nor three Sundays, they must, upon the honour of a gentleman, excuse his political speech. "But, gents," he says, "you all know how I trys to please ye in the way of raffles and such things, and how I throws in the belly and stomach fixins. Now, brighten up, ye men of taste"—Mr. Brodereque laughs satisfactorily as he surveys his crowd—"I'm going to do the thing up brown for ye,—to give ye a chance for a bit of bright property what ye don't get every day; can't scare up such property only once in a while. It'll make ye old fellers wink, some"—Mr. O'Brodereque winks at several aged gentlemen, whose grey hair is figurative in the crowd—"think about being young again. And, my friends below thirty−my young friends—ah, ye rascals! I thought I'd play the tune on the right string!"—he laughs, and puts his finger to his mouth quizzically—"I likes to suit ye, and please ye: own her up, now,— don't I?"

"Hurrah! for Brod,—Brod's a trump!" again resounds from a dozen voices.

They all agree to the remark that nobody can touch the great Mr. O'Brodereque in getting up a nice bit of fun, amusing young men with more money than mind, and being in the favour of aristocratic gentlemen who think nothing of staking a couple of prime niggers on a point of faro.

Mr. O'Brodereque has been interrupted; he begs his friends will, for a moment, cease their compliments and allow him to proceed. "Gentlemen!" he continues, "the gal's what ye don't get every day; and she's as choice as she's young; and she's as handsome as she's young; and for this delicious young crittur throws are only five dollars a piece." The sentimental southern gentleman has no reference to the throes of anguish that are piercing the wounded soul of the woman.

"A gentleman what ain't got a five−dollar bill in his pocket better not show his winkers in this crowd. After that, gentlemen, there's a slap−up pony, and one of the knowinest dogs outside of a court−house. Now,—gents! if this ain't some tall doings,—some of a raffle, just take my boots and I'll put it for Texas. A chance for a nigger gal−a pony−a dog; who on 'arth wants more, gentlemen?" Mr. O'Brodereque again throws back his coat, shrugs his shoulders, wipes the perspiration from his brow, and is about to descend from the table. No, he won't come down just yet. He has struck a vein; his friends are getting up a favourable excitement.

"Bravo! bravo!−long may General Brodereque keep the hospitable Your House! Who wouldn't give a vote for

Brodereque at the next election?" re−echoes through the room.

"One more remark, gentlemen." Mr. Brodereque again wipes the perspiration from his forehead, and orders a glass of water, to loosen his oratorical organs. He drinks the water, seems to increase in his own greatness; his red face glows redder, he makes a theatrical gesticulation with his right hand, crumples his hair into curious points, and proceeds:—"The lucky man what gets the gal prize is to treat the crowd!" This is seconded and carried by acclamation, without a dissenting voice.

A murmuring noise, as of some one in trouble, is now heard at the door: the crowd gives way: a beautiful mulatto girl, in a black silk dress, with low waist and short sleeves, and morocco slippers on her feet, is led in and placed upon the stand Mr. O'Brodereque has just vacated. Her complexion is that of a swarthy Greek; her countenance is moody and reflective; her feelings are stung with the poison of her degraded position. This last step of her disgrace broods in the melancholy of her face. Shame, pain, hope, and fear, combine to goad her very soul. But it's all for a bit of fun, clearly legal; it's all in accordance with society; misfortune is turned into a plaything, that generous, good, and noble−hearted men may be amused. Those who stand around her are extravagant with joy. After remaining a few moments in silence, a mute victim of generous freedom, she turns her head bashfully, covers her face with her hands. Her feelings gush forth in a stream of tears; she cannot suppress them longer.

There is a touching beauty in her face, made more effective by the deplorable condition to which she is reduced. Again she looks upward, and covers her face with her hands; her soul seems merged in supplication to the God who rules all things aright. He is a forgiving God! Can he thus direct man's injustice to man, while this poor broken flower thus withers under the bane? Sad, melancholy, doomed! there is no hope, no joy for her. She weeps over her degradation.

"Stop that whimperin!" says a ruffianly bystander, who orders a coloured boy to let down her hair. He obeys the summons; it falls in thick, black, undulating tresses over her neck and shoulders. A few moments more, and she resumes a calm appearance, looks resolutely upon her auditors, with indignation and contempt pictured in her countenance.

"She'll soon get over that!" ejaculates another bystander, as he smooths the long beard on his haggard face. "Strip her down!" The request is no sooner made, than Mr. O'Brodereque mounts the stand to perform the feat. "Great country this, gentlemen!" he speaks, taking her by the shoulders.

"All off! all off, general!" is the popular demand.

The sensitive nature of the innocent girl recoils; she cringes from his touch; she shudders, and vainly attempts to resist. She must yield; the demand is imperative. Her dress falls at Mr. O'Brodereque's touch. She stands before the gazing crowd, exposed to the very thighs, holding the loose folds of her dress in her hands. There is no sympathy for those moistened eyes; oh, no! it is a luscious feast−puritans have no part in the sin−for those who, in our land of love and liberty, buy and sell poor human nature, and make it food for serving hell.

Naked she stands for minutes; the assembled gentlemen have feasted their eyes,—good men have played the part of their good natures. General O'Brodereque, conscious of his dignity, orders her to be taken down. The waiter performs the duty, and she is led out midst the acclamations and plaudits of the crowd, who call for the raffle.

Mr. O'Brodereque hopes gentlemen are satisfied with what they have seen, and will pledge his honour that the pony and dog are quite as sound and healthy as the wench whose portions they have had a chance to shy; and for which−the extra sight−they should pay an extra treat. This, however, his generosity will not allow him to stand upon; and, seeing how time is precious, and the weather warm, he hopes his friends will excuse the presence of the animals, take his word of honour in consideration of the sight of the wench.

"Now, gentlemen," he says, "the throws are soon to commence, and all what ain't put down the tin better attend that ar' needful arrangement, quicker!"

As the general concludes this very significant invitation, Dan Bengal, Anthony Romescos, and Nath Nimrod, enter together. Their presence creates some little commotion, for Romescos is known to be turbulent, and very uncertain when liquor flows freely, which is the case at present.

"I say, general!−old hoss! I takes all the chances what's left," Romescos shouts at the top of his voice. His eyes glare with anxiety,—his red, savage face, doubly sun−scorched, glows out as he elbows his way through the crowd up to the desk, where sits a corpulent clerk. "Beg your pardon, gentlemen: not so fast, if you please!" he

says, entering names in his ledger, receiving money, "doing the polite of the establishment."

Romescos's coat and nether clothing are torn in several places, a hunting−belt girdles his waist; a bowie−knife (Sheffield make) protrudes from his breast−pocket, his hair hangs in jagged tufts over the collar of his coat, which, with the rough moccasons on his feet, give him an air of fierce desperaton and recklessness. His presence is evidently viewed with suspicion; he is a curious object which the crowd are willing to give ample space to.

"No, you don't take 'em all, neither!" says another, in a defiant tone. The remaining "chances" are at once put up for sale; they bring premiums, as one by one they are knocked down to the highest bidders, some as much as fifty per cent. advance. Gentlemen are not to know it, because Mr. O'Brodereque thinks his honour above everything else; but the fact is, there is a collusion between Romescos and the honourable Mr. O'Brodereque. The former is playing his part to create a rivalry that will put dollars and cents into the pocket of the latter.

"Well!" exclaims Romescos, with great indifference, as soon as the sale had concluded, "I've got seven throws, all lucky ones. I'll take any man's bet for two hundred dollars that I gets the gal prize." Nobody seems inclined to accept the challenge. A table is set in the centre of the saloon, the dice are brought on, amidst a jargon of noise and confusion; to this is added drinking, smoking, swearing, and all kinds of small betting.

The raffle commences; one by one the numbers are called. Romescos' turn has come; all eyes are intently set upon him. He is celebrated for tricks of his trade; he seldom repudiates the character, and oftener prides in the name of a shrewd one, who can command a prize for his sharp dealing. In a word, he has a peculiar faculty of shielding the doubtful transactions of a class of men no less dishonest, but more modest in point of reputation.

Romescos spreads himself wonderfully, throws his dice, and exults over the result. He has turned up three sixes at the first and second throws, and two sixes and five at the third.

"Beat that! who can?" he says. No one discovers that he has, by a very dexterous movement, slipped a set of false dice into the box, while O'Brodereque diverted attention at the moment by introducing the pony into the saloon.

We will pass over many things that occurred, and inform the reader that Romescos won the first prize−the woman. The dog and pony prizes were carried off by legitimate winners. This specific part of the scene over, a band of negro minstrels are introduced, who strike up their happy glees, the music giving new life to the revelry. Such a medley of drinking, gambling, and carousing followed, as defies description. What a happy thing it is to be free; they feel this,—it it is a happy feeling! The sport lasts till the small hours of morning advance. Romescos is seen leaving the saloon very quietly.

"There!" says Mr. O'Brodereque exultingly, "he hasn't got so much of a showing. That nigger gal ain't what she's cracked up to be!" and he shakes his head knowingly, thrusts his hands deep into his breeches pockets, smiles with an air of great consequence.

"Where did ye raise the critter? devil of a feller ye be, Brodereque!" says a young sprig, giving his hat a particular set on the side of his head, and adjusting his eye−glass anew. "Ye ain't gin her a name, in all the showin'," he continues, drawlingly.

"That gal! She ain't worth so much, a'ter all. She's of Marston's stock; Ellen Juvarna, I think they call her. She's only good for her looks, in the animal way,—that's all!"

"Hav'n't told where ye got her, yet," interrupts the sprig; "none of yer crossin' corners, general."

"Well, I started up that gal of Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy. She takes it into her mind to get crazed now and then, and Marston had to sell her; and the Elder bought her for a trifle, cured up her thinkin'−trap, got her sound up for market, and I makes a strike with the Elder, and gets her at a tall bargain." Mr. O'Brodereque has lost none of his dignity, none of his honour, none of his hopes of getting into Congress by the speculation.

It is poor Ellen Juvarna; she has been cured for the market. She might have said, and with truth,—"You don't know me now, so wonderful are they who deal with my rights in this our world of liberty!"

CHAPTER XVII. A NOT UNCOMMON SCENE SLIGHTLY CHANGED.

ROMESCOS, having withdrawn from the saloon while the excitement raged highest, may be seen, with several others, seated at a table in the upper room. They are in earnest consultation,—evidently devising some plan for carrying out a deep−laid plot.

"I have just called my friend, who will give us the particulars about the constitutionality of the thing. Here he is. Mr. Scranton, ye see, knows all about such intricacies; he is an editor! formerly from the North," one of the party is particular to explain, as he directs his conversation to Romescos. That gentleman of slave−cloth only knows the part they call the rascality; he pays the gentlemen of the learned law profession to shuffle him out of all the legal intricacies that hang around his murderous deeds. He seems revolving the thing over in his mind at the moment, makes no reply. The gentleman turns to Mr. Scranton—the same methodical gentleman we have described with the good Mrs. Rosebrook—hopes he will be good enough to advise on the point in question. Mr. Scranton sits in all the dignity of his serious philosophy, quite unmoved; his mind is nearly distracted about all that is constitutionally right or constitutionally wrong. He is bound to his own ways of thinking, and would suffer martyrdom before his own conscientious scruples would allow him to acknowledge a right superior to that constitution. As for the humanity! that has nothing to do with the constitution, nothing to do with the laws of the land, nothing to do with popular government,—nothing to do with anything, and never should be taken into consideration when the point at issue involved negro property. The schedule of humanity would be a poor account at one's banker's. Mr. Scranton begins to smooth his face, which seems to elongate like a wet moon. "The question is, as I understand it, gentlemen, how far the law will give you a right to convict and sell the woman in the absence of papers and against the assertions of her owner, that she is free? Now, gentlemen, in the absence of my law books, and without the least scruple that I am legally right, for I'm seldom legally wrong, having been many years secretary to a senator in Congress who made it my particular duty to keep him posted on all points of the constitution—he drawls out with the serious complacency of a London beggar—I will just say that, whatever is legal must be just. Laws are always founded in justice—that's logical, you see,—and I always maintained it long 'afore I come south, long 'afore I knowed a thing about 'nigger law.' The point, thus far, you see, gentlemen, I've settled. Now then!" Mr. Scranton rests his elbow on the table, makes many legal gesticulations with his finger; he, however, disclaims all and every connection with the legal body, inasmuch as its members have sunk very much in the scale of character, and will require a deal of purifying ere he can call them brothers; but he knows a thing or two of constitutional law, and thus proceeds: "'Tain't a whit of matter about the woman, barring the dockerment's all right. You only want to prove that Marston bought her, that's all! As for the young scraps, why—supposing they are his−that won't make a bit of difference; they are property for all that, subject to legal restraints. Your claim will be valid against it. You may have to play nicely over some intricate legal points. But, remember, nigger law is wonderfully elastic; it requires superhuman wisdom to unravel its social and political intricacies, and when I view it through the horoscope of an indefinite future it makes my very head ache. You may, however, let your claim revert to another, and traverse the case until such time as you can procure reliable proof to convict." Mr. Scranton asserts this as the force of his legal and constitutional acumen. He addresses himself to a mercantile−looking gentleman who sits at the opposite side of the table, attentively listening. He is one of several of Marston's creditors, who sit at the table; they have attached certain property, and having some doubts of overthrowing Marston's plea of freedom, which he has intimated his intention to enter, have called in the valuable aid of Romescos. That indomitable individual, however, has more interests than one to serve, and is playing his cards with great "diplomatic skill." Indeed, he often remarks that his wonderful diplomatic skill would have been a great acquisition to the federal government, inasmuch as it would have facilitated all its Southern American projects.

The point in question at present, and which they must get over, in order to prove the property, is made more difficult by the doubt in which the origin of Clotilda has always been involved. Many are the surmises about her parentage−many are the assertions that she is not of negro extraction—she has no one feature indicating it—but

no one can positively assert where she came from; in a word, no one dare! Hence is constituted the ground for fearing the issue of Marston's notice of freedom.

"Well! I'll own it puzzles my cunnin'; there's a way to get round it−there is−but deuced if 'tain't too much for my noddle," Romescos interposes, taking a little more whiskey, and seeming quite indifferent about the whole affair. "Suppose−Marston−comes−forward! yes, and brings somebody to swear as a kind a' sideways? That'll be a poser in asserting their freedom; it'll saddle you creditors with the burden of proof. There'll be the rub; and ye can't plead a right to enjoin the schedule he files in bankruptcy unless ye show how they were purchased by him. Perchance on some legal uncertainty it might be done,—by your producing proof that he had made an admission, anterior to the levy, of their being purchased by him," Romescos continues, very wisely appealing to his learned and constitutional friend, Mr. Scranton, who yields his assent by adding that the remarks are very legal, and contain truths worth considering, inasmuch as they involve great principles of popular government. "I think our worthy friend has a clear idea of the points," Mr. Scranton concludes.

"One word more, gentlemen: a bit of advice what's worth a right smart price to ye all"—here he parenthesises by saying he has great sympathy for creditors in distress—"and ye must profit by it, for yer own interests. As the case now stands, it's a game for lawyers to play and get fat at. And, seein' how Marston's feelins are up in a sort of tender way, he feels strong about savin' them young 'uns; and ye, nor all the gentlemen of the lower place, can't make 'em property, if he plays his game right;—he knows how to! ye'll only make a fuss over the brutes, while the lawyers bag all the game worth a dollar. Never see'd a nigger yet what raised a legal squall, that didn't get used up in law leakins; lawyers are sainted pocket masters! But—that kind a' stuff!—it takes a mighty deal of cross−cornered swearing to turn it into property. The only way ye can drive the peg in so the lawyers won't get hold on't, is by sellin' out to old Graspum−Norman, I mean—he does up such business as fine as a fiddle. Make the best strike with him ye can—he's as tough as a knot on nigger trade!—and, if there's any making property out on 'em, he's just the tinker to do it."

They shake their heads doubtingly, as if questioning the policy of the advice. Mr. Scranton, however, to whom all looked with great solicitation, speaks up, and affirms the advice to be the wiser course, as a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

"Oh, yes!" says Romescos, significantly, "you'll be safe then, and free from responsibility; Graspum's a great fellow to buy risks; but, seeing how he's not popular with juries, he may want to play behind the scenes, continue to prosecute the case in the name of the creditors,—that's all! Curious work, this making property out of doubtful women. Sell out to them what understands the curious of the things, clear yerselfs of the perplexin' risks—ye won't bag a bit of the game, you won't. Saddle it on Norman; he knows the philosophy of nigger trade, and can swim through a sea of legal perplexities in nigger cases." Mr. Romescos never gave more serious advice in his life; he finishes his whiskey, adjusts his hat slouchingly on his head, bids them good night; and, in return for their thanks, assures them that they are welcome. He withdraws; Mr. Scranton, after a time, gets very muddled; so much so, that, when daylight appears, he finds, to his utter astonishment, he has enjoyed a sweet sleep on the floor, some of his quizzical friends having disfigured his face very much after the fashion of a clown's. He modestly, and mechanically, picks up his lethargic body, views his constitutional self in the glass, and is much horrified, much disgusted with those who perpetrated the freak.

CHAPTER XVIII. THEY ARE ALL GOING TO BE SOLD.

SLOWLY we pass through the precious scenes, hoping our readers will indulge us with their patience.

Five days have passed since Clotilda's departure; her absence is creating alarm. No one knows anything of her! a general search is instituted, but the searchers search in vain. Maxwell has eluded suspicion−Franconia no one for a moment suspects. Colonel M'Carstrow−his mind, for the time, absorbed in the charms of his young bride−gives little attention to the matter. He only knows that he has signed a bond for fifteen hundred dollars, to indemnify the sheriff, or creditors, in the event of loss; he reconciles himself with the belief that she has been enticed into some of the neighbouring bright houses, from which he can regain her in the course of time. M'Carstrow knows little of Clotilda's real character; and thus the matter rests a time.

The sheriff,—important gentleman of an important office,—will give himself no concern about the matter: the plaintiff's attorney acknowledged the deed of release, which is quite enough for him. Graspum, a perfect savan where human property was to be judged, had decided that her square inches of human vitality were worth strong fifteen hundred; that was all desirable for the sheriff−it would leave margin enough to cover the cost. But M'Carstrow, when given the bond, knew enough of nigger law to demand the insertion of a clause leaving it subject to the question of property, which is to be decided by the court. A high court this, where freemen sit assembled to administer curious justice. What constitutional inconsistencies hover over the monstrous judicial dignity of this court,—this court having jurisdiction over the monetary value of beings moulded after God's own image! It forms a happy jurisprudence for those who view it for their selfish ends; it gains freedom tyranny's license, gives birth to strange incongruities, clashing between the right of property in man and all the viler passions of our nature. It holds forth a jurisprudence that turns men into hounds of hell, devouring one another, and dragging human nature down into the very filth of earth.

Marston's troubles keep increasing. All the preliminaries of law necessary to a sale of the undisputed property have been gone through; the day of its disposal has arrived. The children, Annette and Nicholas, have remained in a cell, suffering under its malarious atmosphere, anxiously awaiting their fate. Marston has had them taught to read,—contrary to a generous law of a generous land,—and at intervals they sit together pondering over little books he has sent them.

What are such little books to them? the unbending avarice of human nature, fostered by slavery's power, is grappling at their existence. There is no sympathy for them; it is crushed out by the law which makes them chattels. Oh, no! sympathy, generosity, human affections, have little to do with the transactions of slave dealing; that belongs to commerce,—commerce has an unbending rule to maintain while money is to be made by a legalised traffic.

We must invite the reader to accompany us to the county gaol, on the morning of sale.

The "gang"−Marston's slaves−have been ordered to prepare themselves for the market; the yard resounds with their jargon. Some are arranging their little clothing, washing, "brightening up" their faces to make the property show off in the market. Others are preparing homony for breakfast; children, in ragged garments, are toddling, running, playing, and sporting about the brick pavement; the smallest are crouched at the feet of their mothers, as if sharing the gloom or nonchalance of their feeling. Men are gathering together the remnants of some cherished memento of the old plantation; they had many a happy day upon it. Women view as things of great worth the little trinkets with which good master, in former days, rewarded their energy. They recall each happy association of the cabin. Husbands, or such as should be husbands, look upon their wives with solicitude; they feel it is to be the last day they will meet together on earth. They may meet in heaven; there is no slavery there. Mothers look upon their children only to feel the pangs of sorrow more keenly; they know and feel that their offspring are born for the market, not for the enjoyment of their affections. They may be torn from them, and sold like sheep in the shambles. Happy, free country! How fair, how beautiful the picture of constitutional rights! how in keeping with every−day scenes of southern life!

"I'ze gwine to be sold; you're gwint to be sold; we're all gwine to be sold. Wonder what mas'r's gwine t'buy dis

child," says Aunt Rachel, arranging her best dress, making her face "shine just so." Aunt Rachel endeavours to suit her feelings to the occasion, trims her bandana about her head with exquisite taste, and lets the bright−coloured points hang about her ears in great profusion.

"Da'h 's a right smart heap o' dollar in dis old nigger, yet!−if mas'r what gwine t'buy 'em know how't fotch um out; Mas'r must do da'h clean ting wid dis child," Rachel says, as if exulting over the value of her own person. She brushes and brushes, views and reviews herself in a piece of mirror−several are waiting to borrow it−thinks she is just right for market, asks herself what's the use of fretting? It's a free country, with boundless hospitality−of the southern stamp,—and why not submit to all freedom's dealings? Aunt Rachel is something of a philosopher.

"Aunte! da' would'nt gin much fo'h yer old pack a' bones if mas'r what gwine to buy ye know'd ye like I. Ye' h'ant da property what bring long price wid Buckra," replies Dandy, who views Aunt Rachel rather suspiciously, seems inclined to relieve her conceit, and has taken very good care that his own dimensions are trimmed up to the highest point.

"Dis nigger would'nt swop h'r carcas fo'h yourn. Dat she don't," Rachel retorts.

"Reckon how ye wouldn't, ah!" Dandy's face fills with indignation. "Buckra what sting ye back wid de lash 'll buy ye old bag a' bones fo'h down south; and when 'e get ye down da' he make ye fo'h a corn grinder." Dandy is somewhat inflated with his rank among the domestics; he is none of yer common niggers, has never associated with black, field niggers, which he views as quite too common for his aristocratic notions, has on his very best looks, his hair combed with extraordinary care, his shirt collar dangerously standing above his ears. He feels something better than nigger blood in his composition, knows the ins and outs of nigger philosophy; he knows it to be the very best kind of philosophy for a "nigger" to put on a good appearance at the shambles. A dandy nigger is not plantation stock,—hence he has "trimmed up," and hopes to find a purchaser in want of his specific kind of property; it will save him from that field−life so much dreaded.

The property, in all its varied shades, comes rolling out from all manner of places in and about the gaol, filling the yard. It is a momentous occasion, the most momentous of their life−time. And yet many seem indifferent about its consequences. They speak of the old plantation, jeer each other about the value of themselves, offer bets on the price they will bring, assert a superiority over each other, and boast of belonging to some particular grade of the property. Harry—we mean Harry the preacher—is busy getting his wife and children ready for market. He evinces great affection for his little ones, has helped his wife to arrange their apparel with so much care. The uninitiated might imagine them going to church instead of the man shambles. Indeed, so earnest are many good divines in the promotion of slavery, that it would not be unbecoming to form a connection between the southern church and the southern man shambles. The material aid they now give each other for the purpose of keeping up the man trade would be much facilitated.

However, there is a chance of Harry being sold to a brother divine, who by way of serving his good Lord and righteous master, may let him out to preach, after the old way. Harry will then be serving his brother in brotherly faith; that is, he will be his brother's property, very profitable, strong in the faith with his dear divine brother, to whom he will pay large tribute for the right to serve the same God.

Harry's emotions−he has been struggling to suppress them−have got beyond his control; tears will now and then show themselves and course down his cheeks. "Never mind, my good folks! it is something to know that Jesus still guards us; still watches over us." He speaks encouragingly to them. "The scourge of earth is man's wrongs, the deathspring of injustice. We are made bearers of the burden; but that very burden will be our passport into a brighter, a juster world. Let us meekly bear it. Cheer up! arm yourselves with the spirit of the Lord; it will give you fortitude to live out the long journey of slave life. How we shall feel when, in heaven, we are brought face to face with master, before the Lord Judge. Our rights and his wrongs will then weigh in the balance of heavenly justice." With these remarks, Harry counsels them to join him in prayer. He kneels on the brick pavement of the yard, clasps his hands together as they gather around him kneeling devotedly. Fervently he offers up a prayer,—he invokes the God of heaven to look down upon them, to bestow his mercy upon master, to incline his ways in the paths of good; and to protect these, his unfortunate children, and guide them through their separate wayfaring. The ardour, grotesqueness, and devotion of this poor forlorn group, are painfully touching. How it presents the portrait of an oppressed race! how sunk is the nature that has thus degraded it! Under the painful burden of their sorrow they yet manifest the purity of simple goodness. "Oh! Father in heaven, hast thou thus ordained it to be so?" breaks forth from Harry's lips, as the criminals, moved by the affecting picture, gather upon

the veranda, and stand attentive listeners. Their attention seems rivetted to his words; the more vicious, as he looks through grated bars upon them, whispers words of respect.

Harry has scarcely concluded his prayer when the sheriff, accompanied by several brokers (slave−dealers), comes rushing through the transept into the yard. The sheriff is not rude; he approaches Harry, tells him he is a good boy, has no objection to his praying, and hopes a good master will buy him. He will do all he can to further his interests, having heard a deal about his talents. He says this with good−natured measure, and proceeds to take a cursory view of the felons. While he is thus proceeding, the gentlemen of trade who accompanied him are putting "the property" through a series of examinations.

"Property like this ye don't start up every day," says one. "Best I'ze seen come from that ar' district. Give ye plenty corn, down there, don't they, boys?" enjoins another, walking among them, and every moment bringing the end of a small whip which he holds in his right hand about their legs. This, the gentleman remarks, is merely for the purpose−one of the phrases of the very honourable trade−of testing their nimbleness.

"Well!" replies a tall, lithe dealer, whose figure would seem to have been moulded for chasing hogs through the swamp, "There's some good bits among it; but it won't stand prime, as a lot!" The gentleman, who seems to have a nicely balanced mind for judging the human nature value of such things, is not quite sure that they have been bacon fed. He continues his learned remarks. "Ye'h han't had full tuck out, I reckon, boys?" he inquires of them, deliberately examining the mouths and nostrils of several. The gentleman is very cool in this little matter of trade; it is an essential element of southern democracy; some say, nothing more!

"Yes, Boss!" replies Enoch, one of the negroes; "Mas'r ollers good t' e niggers, gin him bacon free times a week−sometimes mo' den dat." Several voices chime in to affirm what Enoch says.

"Ah, very good. Few planters in that district give their negroes bacon; and an all corn−fed nigger won't last two years on a sugar plantation," remarks one of the gentlemen dealers, as he smokes his cigar with great nonchalance.

While these quaint appendancies of the trade are proceeding, Romescos and Graspum make their appearance. They have come to forestall opinion, to make a few side−winded remarks. They are ready to enter upon the disgusting business of examining property more carefully, more scrupulously, more in private. The honourable sheriff again joins the party. He orders that every accommodation be afforded the gentlemen in their examinations of the property. Men, women, and children−sorrowing property−are made to stand erect; to gesticulate their arms; to expand their chests, to jump about like jackals, and to perform sundry antics pleasing to the gentlemen lookers−on. This is all very free, very democratic, very gentlemanly in the way of trade,—very necessary to test the ingredient of the valuable square inches of the property. What matters all this! the honourable sheriff holds it no dishonour; modest gentlemen never blush at it; the coarse dealer makes it his study,—he trades in human nature; the happy democrat thinks it should have a co−fellowship with southern hospitality−so long and loudly boasted.

Those little necessary displays over, the honourable sheriff invites his distinguished friends to "have a cigar round;" having satisfied their taste in gymnastarising the property. Romescos, however, thinks he has not quite satisfied his feelings; he is very dogged on nigger flesh. The other gentlemen may smoke their cigars; Mr. Romescos thinks he will enjoy the exercise of his skill in testing the tenacity of negroes' chests; which he does by administering heavy blows, which make them groan out now and then. Groans, however, don't amount to much; they are only nigger groans. Again Mr. Romescos applies the full force of his hands upon their ears; then he will just pull them systematically. "Nice property!" he says, telling the forbearing creatures not to mind the pain.

Messrs. Graspum and Romescos will make a close inspection of a few pieces. Here, several men and women are led into a basement cell, under the veranda, and stript most rudely. No discrimination is permitted. Happy freedom! What a boon is liberty! Mr. Romescos views their nice firm bodies, and their ebony black skins, with great skill and precaution; his object is to prove the disposition of the articles,—strong evidence being absence of scars. He lays his bony fingers on their left shoulders−they being compelled to stand in a recumbent position−tracing their bodies to the hips and thighs. Here the process ends. Mr. Romescos has satisfied his very nice judgment on the solidity of the human−flesh−property−he has put their bodies through other disgusting inspections−they belong to the trade−which cannot be told here; but he finds clean skins, very smooth, without scars or cuts, or dangerous diseases. He laughs exultingly, orders the people to stow themselves in their clothes again, and relights his cigar. "If it 'ant a tall lot!" he whispers to Graspum, and gives him a significant touch with

his elbow. "Bright−smooth as a leather ninepence; han't had a lash−Marston was a fool, or his niggers are angels, rather black, though−couldn't start up a scar on their flesh. A little trimmin' down−it wants it, you see!−to make it show off; must have it−eh! Graspum, old feller? It only wants a little, though, and them dandy niggers, and that slap−up preacher, will bring a smart price fixed up. Great institution! The preacher's got knowin'; can discourse like a college−made deacon, and can convert a whole plantation with his nigger eloquence. A nigger preacher with Bible knowin, when it's smart, is right valuable when ye want to keep the pious of a plantation straight. And then! when the preacher 'ant got a notion a' runnin away in him." Romescos crooks his finger upon Graspum's arm, whispers cautiously in his ear.

"There 'll be a sharp bidding for some of it; they 'll run up some on the preacher. He 'll be a capital investment,—pay more than thirty per cent. insinuates another gentleman−a small inquisitive looking dealer in articles of the nigger line. When a planter's got a big gang a' niggers, and is just fool enough to keep such a thing for the special purpose of making pious valuable in 'um," Mr. Romescos rejoins, shrugging his shoulders, rubbing his little hawk's eyes, and looking seriously indifferent. Romescos gives wonderful evidence of his "first best cunning propensities;" and here he fancies he has pronounced an opinion that will be taken as profound. He affects heedlessness of everything, is quite disinterested, and, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, assumes an air of dignity that would not unbecome my Lord Chief Justice.

"Let us see them two bits of disputed property,—where are they?" inquires Graspum, turning half round, and addressing himself to the gaoler.

"In the close cells," is the quick reply,—"through the narrow vault, up the stone passage, and on the right, in the arched cell."

The gaoler−good, honest−hearted man−leads the way, through a chilly vault, up the narrow passage, to the left wing of the building. The air is pestiferous; warm and diseased, it fans us as we approach. The gaoler puts his face to the grating, and in a guttural voice, says, "You're wanted, young uns." They understand the summons; they come forward as if released from torture to enjoy the pure air of heaven. Confinement, dreary and damp, has worn deep into their systems.

Annette speaks feebly, looks pale and sickly. Her flaxen curls still dangle prettily upon her shoulders. She expected her mother; that mother has not come. The picture seems strange; she looks childishly and vacantly round,—at the dealers, at Graspum, at the sheriff, at the familiar faces of the old plantation people. She recognizes Harry, and would fain leap into his arms. Nicholas, less moved by what is going on around him, hangs reluctantly behind, holding by the skirt of Annette's frock. He has lost that vivacity and pertness so characteristic on the plantation. Happy picture of freedom's love! Happy picture of immortalised injustice! Happy picture of everything that is unhappy! How modest is the boast that we live to be free; and that in our virtuous freedom a child's mother has been sold for losing her mind: a faithful divine, strong with love for his fellow divines, is to be sold for his faith; the child−the daughter of the democrat−they say, will be sold from her democratic father. The death−stinging enemy Washington and Jefferson sought to slaughter−to lay ever dead at their feet, has risen to life again. Annette's mother has fled to escape its poison. We must pause! we must not discourse thus in our day, when the sordid web of trade is being drawn over the land by King Cotton.

The children, like all such doubtful stock, are considered very fancy, very choice of their kind. It must be dressed in style to suit nice eyes at the shambles.

"Well! ye'r right interesting looking," says the sheriff—Messrs. Graspum and Co. look upon them with great concern, now and then interrupting with some observations upon their pedigree,—taking them by the arms, and again rumpling their hair by rubbing his hands over their heads. "Fix it up, trim; we must put them up along with the rest to−day. It 'll make Marston—I pity the poor fellow—show his hand on the question of their freedom. Mr. sheriff, being sufficiently secured against harm, is quite indifferent about the latent phases of the suit. He remarks, with great legal logic—we mean legal slave logic—that Marston must object to the sale when the children are on the stand. It is very pretty kind a' property, very like Marston—will be as handsome as pictures when they grow up," he says, ordering it put back to be got ready.

"Why didn't my mother come?" the child whimpers, dewy tears decorating her eyes. "Why won't she come back and take me to the plantation again? I want her to come back; I've waited so long." As she turns to follow the gaoler—Nicholas still holds her by the skirt of her frock—her flaxen curls again wave to and fro upon her shoulders, adding beauty to her childlike simplicity. "You'll grow to be something, one of these days, won't ye,

little dear?" says the gaoler, taking her by the hand. She replies in those silent and touching arguments of the soul; she raises her soft blue eyes, and heaven fills them with tears, which she lifts her tiny hands to wipe away.

Nicholas tremblingly−he cannot understand the strange movement−follows them through the vault; he looks up submissively, and with instinctive sympathy commences a loud blubbering. "You're going to be sold, little uns! but, don't roar about it; there's no use in that," says the gaoler, inclining to sympathy.

Nicholas does'nt comprehend it; he looks up to Annette, plaintively, and, forgetting his own tears, says, in a whisper, "Don't cry, Annette; they 'll let us go and see mother, and mother will be so kind to us−."

"It does seem a pity to sell ye, young 'uns; ye'r such nice 'uns,—have so much interestin' in yer little skins!" interrupts the gaoler, suddenly. The man of keys could unfold a strange history of misery, suffering, and death, if fear of popular opinion, illustrated in popular liberty, did not seal his lips. He admits the present to be

We are narrating a scene related to us by the very gaoler we here describe, and as nearly as possible in his own language. rather an uncommon case, says it makes a body feel kind a' unhinged about the heart, which heart, however rocky at times, will have its own way when little children are sorrowing. "And then, to know their parents! that's what tells deeper on a body's feeling,—it makes a body look into the hereafter." The man of keys and shackles would be a father, if the law did but let him. There is a monster power over him, a power he dreads−it is the power of unbending democracy, moved alone by fretful painstakers of their own freedom.

"Poor little things! ye 'r most white, yes!−suddenly changing−just as white as white need be. Property's property, though, all over the world. What's sanctioned by the constitution, and protected by the spirit and wisdom of Congress, must be right, and maintained," the gaoler concludes. His heart is at war with his head; but the head has the power, and he must protect the rights of an unrighteous system. They have arrived at a flight of steps, up which they ascend, and are soon lost in its windings. They are going to be dressed for the market.

The sheriff is in the yard, awaiting the preparation of the property. Even he−iron−hearted, they say−gives them a look of generous solicitude, as they pass out. He really feels there is a point, no less in the scale of slave dealing, beyond which there is something so repugnant that hell itself might frown upon it. "It's a phase too hard, touches a body's conscience," he says, not observing Romescos at his elbow.

"Conscience!" interrupts Romescos, his eyes flashing like meteors of red fire, "the article don't belong to the philosophy of our business. Establish conscience−let us, gentlemen, give way to our feelins, and trade in nigger property 'd be deader than Chatham's statue, what was pulled through our streets by the neck. The great obstacle, however, is only this−it is profitable in its way!" Romescos cautiously attempts to shield this, but it will not do.

The gaoler, protruding his head from a second−story window, like a mop in a rain storm, enquires if it is requisite to dress the children in their very best shine. It is evident he merely views them as two bales of merchandise.

The sheriff, angrily, says, "Yes! I told you that already. Make them look as bright as two new pins." His honour has been contemplating how they will be mere pins in the market,—pins to bolt the doors of justice, pins to play men into Congress, pins to play men out of Congress, pins to play a President into the White House.

An old negress, one of the plantation nurses, is called into service. She commences the process of preparing them for market. They are nicely washed, dressed in clean clothes; they shine out as bright and white as anybody's children. Their heads look so sleek, their hair is so nicely combed, so nicely parted, so nicely curled. The old slave loves them,—she loved their father. Her skill has been lavished upon them,—they look as choice and interesting as the human property of any democratic gentleman can be expected to do. Let us be patriotic, let us be law−loving, patient law−abiding citizens, loving that law of our free country which puts them under the man−vender's hammer,—say our peace−abiding neighbours.

The gaoler has not been long in getting Annette and Nicholas ready. He brings them forward, so neatly and prettily dressed: he places them among the "gang." But they are disputed property: hence all that ingenuity which the system engenders for the advancement of dealers is brought into use to defeat the attempt to assert their freedom. Romescos declares it no difficult matter to do this: he has the deadly weapon in his possession; he can work (shuffle) the debt into Graspum's hands, and he can supply the proof to convict. By this very desirable arrangement the thing may be made nicely profitable.

No sooner has Aunt Rachel seen the children in their neat and familiar attire, than her feelings bound with joy,—she cannot longer restrain them. She has watched Marston's moral delinquencies with suspicion; but she loves the children none the less. And with honest negro nature she runs to them, clasps them to her bosom,

fondles them, and kisses them like a fond mother. The happy associations of the past, contrasted with their present unhappy condition, unbind the fountain of her solicitude,—she pours it upon them, warm and fervent. "Gwine t' sell ye, too! Mas'r, poor old Mas'r, would'nt sell ye, no how! that he don't. But poor old Boss hab 'e trouble now, God bless 'em," she says, again pressing Annette to her bosom, nearer and nearer, with fondest, simplest, holiest affection. Looking intently in the child's face, she laughs with the bounding joy of her soul; then she smooths its hair with her brawny black hands: they contrast strangely with the pure carnatic of the child's cheek.

"Lor! good Lor, Mas'r Buckra," aunt Rachel exclaims, "if eber de Lor' smote 'e vengence on yeh, 't'll be fo' sellin' de likes o' dese. Old Mas'r tinks much on 'em, fo' true. Gwine t' sell dem what Mas'r be so fond on? Hard tellin' what Buckra don't sell win i' makes money on him. Neber mind, children; de Lor' aint so unsartin as white man. He,—da'h good Mas'r yonder in the clouds,—save ye yet; he'll make white man gin ye back when de day o' judgment come." Aunt Rachel has an instinctive knowledge of the errors, accidents, and delays which have brought about this sad event,—she becomes absorbed in their cares, as she loses sight of her own trouble.

All ready for the market, they are chained together in pairs, men and women, as if the wrongs they bore had made them untrustworthy.

Romescos, ever employed in his favourite trade, is busily engaged chaining up−assorting the pairs! One by one they quietly submit to the proceeding, until he reaches Harry. That minister−of−the−gospel piece of property thinks,—that is, is foolish enough to think,—his nigger religion a sufficient guarantee against any inert propensity to run away. "Now, good master, save my hands from irons, and my heart from pain. Trust me, let me go unbound; my old Master trust me wid 'is life−"

"Halloo!" says Romescos, quickly interrupting, and beginning to bristle with rage; "preach about old Master here you'll get the tinglers, I reckon. Put 'em on−not a grunt−or you'll get thirty more−yes, a collar on yer neck." Holding a heavy stick over the poor victim's head, for several minutes with one hand, he rubs the other, clenched, several times across his nose. Graspum interposes by reminding the minister that it is for his interest to be very careful how he makes any reply to white gentlemen.

"Why, massa, I'ze the minister on de plantation. My old master wouldn't sell−wouldn't do so wid me. Master knows I love God, am honest and peaceable. Why chain the honest? why chain the peaceable? why chain the innocent? They need no fetters, no poisoning shackles. The guilty only fear the hand of retribution," says Harry, a curl of contempt on his lip. He takes a step backwards as Romescos holds the heavy irons before him.

"You don't come nigger preacher over this ar' child; 't'ant what's crack'd up to be. I larns niggers to preach different tunes. Don't spoil prime stock for such nonsense−"

"Master Sheriff will stand answerable for me," interrupts Harry, turning to that honourable functionary, and claiming his protection. That gentleman says it is rather out of his line to interfere.

"Not a preacher trick, I say again−Romescos evinces signs of increasing temper−ya' black theologin. Preachers can't put on such dignity when they'r property." Preachers of colour must be doubly humbled: they must be humble before God, humbled before King Cotton, humbled before the king dealer, who will sell them for their dollars' worth. Harry must do the bidding of his king master; his monkey tricks won't shine with such a philosopher as Romescos. The man of bones, blood, and flesh, can tell him to sell a nigger preacher to his brother of the ministry, and make it very profitable. He assures Harry, while holding the shackles in his hands, that he may put on just as much of the preacher as he can get, when he gets to the shambles, and hears the fives and tens bidding on his black hide.

Harry must submit; he does it with pain and reluctance. He is chained to his wife−a favour suggested by the sheriff−with whom he can walk the streets of a free country,—but they must be bound in freedom's iron fellowship. The iron shackle clasps his wrist; the lock ticks as Romescos turns the key: it vibrates to his very heart. With a sigh he says, "Ours is a life of sorrow, streaming its dark way along a dangerous path. It will ebb into the bright and beautiful of heaven; that heaven wherein we put our trust−where our hopes are strengthened. O! come the day when we shall be borne to the realms of joy−joy celestial! There no unholy shade of birth−unholy only to man−shall doom us; the colour of our skin will not there be our misfortune−"

"What!" quickly interrupts Romescos, "what's that?" The property minister, thus circumstanced, must not show belligerent feelings. Romescos simply, but very skilfully, draws his club; measures him an unamiable blow on the head, fells him to the ground. The poor wretch struggles a few moments, raises his manacled hands to his face as his wife falls weeping upon his shuddering body. She supplicates mercy at the hands of the ruffian−the

ruffian torturer. "Quietly, mas'r; my man 'ill go wid me," says the woman, interposing her hand to prevent a second blow.

Harry opens his eyes imploringly, casts a look of pity upon the man standing over him. Romescos is in the attitude of dealing him another blow. The wretch stays his hand. "Do with me as you please, master; you are over me. My hope will be my protector when your pleasure will have its reward."

A second thought has struck Romescos; the nigger isn't so bad, after all. "Well, reckon how nobody won't have no objection to ya'r thinking just as ya'v mind to; but ya' can't talk ya'r own way, nor ya' can't have ya'r own way with this child. A nigger what puts on parson airs−if it is a progressive age nigger−musn't put on fast notions to a white gentleman of my standing! If he does, we just take 'em out on him by the process of a small quantity of first− rate knockin down," says Romescos, amiably lending him a hand to get up. Graspum and the honourable sheriff are measuredly pacing up and down the yard, talking over affairs of state, and the singular purity of their own southern democracy−that democracy which will surely elect the next President. Stepping aside in one of his sallies, Graspum, in a half whisper, reminds Romescos that, now the nigger has shown symptoms of disobedience, he had better prove the safety of the shackles. "Right! right! all right!" the man of chains responds; he had forgot this very necessary piece of amusement. He places both hands upon the shackles; grasps them firmly; places his left foot against Harry's stomach; and then, uttering a fierce imprecation, makes his victim pull with might and main while he braces against him with full power. The victim, groaning under the pain, begs for mercy. Mercy was not made for him. Freedom and mercy, in this our land of greatness, have been betrayed.

Harry, made willing property, is now placed by the side of his wife, as four small children—the youngest not more than two years old—cling at the skirts of her gown. The children are scarcely old enough to chain; their strong affections for poor chained mother and father are quite enough to guarantee against their running away. Romescos, in his ample kindness, will allow them to toddle their way to market. They are not dangerous property;—they have their feelings, and will go to market to be sold, without running away.

The gang is ready. The gaoler, nearly out of breath, congratulates himself upon the manner of dispatching business at his establishment. Romescos will put them through a few evolutions before marching in the street; so, placing himself at their right, and the gaoler at their left flank, they are made to march and counter−march several times round the yard. This done, the generous gaoler invites the gentlemen into his office: he has a good glass of whiskey waiting their superior tastes.

The ward gates are opened; the great gate is withdrawn; the property, linked in iron fellowship,—the gentlemen having taken their whiskey,—are all ready for the word, march! This significant admonition the sheriff gives, and the property sets off in solemn procession, like wanderers bound on a pilgrimage. Tramp, tramp, tramp, their footsteps fall in dull tones as they sally forth, in broken file, through the long aisles. Romescos is in high glee,—his feelings bound with exultation, he marches along, twirling a stick over his head. They are soon in the street, where he invites them to strike up a lively song—"Jim crack corn, and I don't care, fo'h Mas'r's gone away!" he shouts; and several strike up, the rest joining in the old plantation chorus—"Away! away! away! Mas'r's gone away." Thus, with jingling chorus and seemingly joyous hearts, they march down to the man−market. The two children, Annette and Nicholas, trail behind, in charge of the sheriff, whose better feelings seem to be troubling him very much. Every now and then, as they walk by his side, he casts a serious look at Annette, as if conscience, speaking in deep pulsations, said it wasn't just right to sell such an interesting little creature. Onward they marched, his head and heart warring the while. "There's something about it that does'nt seem to come just right in a fellow's feelins," keeps working itself in his mind, until at length he mutters the words. It is the natural will to do good, struggling against the privileges which a government gives ungovernable men to do wrong.

CHAPTER XVIII. LET US FOLLOW POOR HUMAN NATURE TO THE MAN SHAMBLES.

GENTLEMEN dealers in want of human property,—planters in want of a few prime people,—brokers who have large transactions in such articles,—and factors who, being rather sensitive of their dignity, give to others the negotiation of their business,—are assembled in and around the mart, a covered shed, somewhat resembling those used by railroad companies for the storing of coarse merchandise. Marston's negroes are to be sold. Suspicious circumstances are connected with his sudden decline: rumour has sounded her seven−tongued symbols upon it, and loud are the speculations. The cholera has made mighty ravages; but the cholera could not have done all. Graspum has grasped the plantation, quietly and adroitly, but he has not raised the veil of mystery that hangs over the process. There must be long explanations before the obdurate creditors are satisfied.

The irons have been removed from the property, who are crouched round the stand−an elevated platform−in a forlorn group, where sundry customers can scrutinize their proportions. Being little or no fancy among it, the fast young gentlemen of the town, finding nothing worthy their attention and taste, make a few cursory observations, and slowly swagger out of the ring. The children are wonderfully attractive and promising; they are generally admired by the customers, who view them with suspicious glances. Annette's clean white skin and fine features are remarkably promising,—much valued as articles of merchandise,—and will, in time, pay good interest. Her youth, however, saves her from present sacrifice,—it thwarts that spirited competition which older property of the same quality produces when about to be knocked down under the hammer of freedom.

It is a great day, a day of tribulation, with the once happy people of Marston's plantation. No prayer is offered up for them, their souls being only embodied in their market value. Prayers are not known at the man shambles, though the hammer of the vender seals with death the lives of many. No gentleman in modest black cares aught for such death. The dealer will not pay the service fee! Good master is no longer their protector; his familiar face, so buoyant with joy and affection, has passed from them. No more will that strong attachment manifest itself in their greetings. Fathers will be fathers no longer−it is unlawful. Mothers cannot longer clasp their children in their arms with warm affections. Children will no longer cling around their mothers,—no longer fondle in that bosom where once they toyed and joyed.

The articles murmur among themselves, cast longing glances at each other, meet the gaze of their purchasers, with pain and distrust brooding over their countenances. They would seem to trace the character−cruel or gentle−of each in his look.

Was it that God ordained one man thus to doom another? No! the very thought repulsed the plea. He never made one man's life to be sorrow and fear−to be the basest object, upon which blighting strife for gold fills the passions of tyrants. He never made man to be a dealer in his own kind. He never made man after his own image to imprecate the wrath of heaven by blackening earth with his foul deeds. He never made man to blacken this fair portion of earth with storms of contention, nor to overthrow the principles that gave it greatness. He never made man to fill the cup that makes the grim oppressor fierce in his triumphs over right.

Come reader−come with us: let us look around the pale of these common man shambles. Here a venerable father sits, a bale of merchandise, moved with the quick pulsation of human senses. He looks around him as the storm of resentment seems ready to burst forth: his wrinkled brow and haggard face in vain ask for sympathy. A little further on, and a mother leans over her child,—tremblingly draws it to her side; presses it nearer and nearer to her bosom. Near her, feeding a child with crumbs of bread, is a coarse negro, whose rough exterior covers a good heart. He gives a glance of hate and scorn at those who are soon to tear from him his nearest and dearest. A gloomy ring of sullen faces encircle us: hope, fear, and contempt are pictured in each countenance. Anxious to know its doom, the pent−up soul burns madly within their breasts; no tears can quench the fire−freedom only can extinguish it. But, what are such things? mere trifles when the soul loves only gold. What are they to men who buy such human trifles? who buy and sell mankind, with feelings as unmoved as the virgin heart that knows no guilt?

Various are the remarks made by those who are taking a cursory view of the people; very learned in nigger nature are many; their sayings evince great profoundness. A question seems to be the separating of wenches from their young 'uns. This is soon settled. Graspum, who has made his appearance, and is very quaintly and slowly making his apprehensions known, informs the doubting spectators that Romescos, being well skilled, will do that little affair right up for a mere trifle. It takes him to bring the nonsense out of nigger wenches. This statement being quite satisfactory, the gentlemen purchasers are at rest on that point.

The hour of sale has arrived,—the crier rings his bell, the purchasers crowd up to the stand, the motley group of negroes take the alarm, and seem inclined to close in towards a centre as the vender mounts the stand. The bell, with the sharp clanking sound, rings their funeral knell; they startle, as with terror; they listen with subdued anxiety; they wait the result in painful suspense. How little we would recognise the picture from abroad. The vender, an amiable gentleman dressed in modest black, and whose cheerful countenance, graced with the blandest smile, betokens the antipodes of his inhuman traffic, holding his hat in his left hand, and a long paper in his right, makes an obsequious bow to those who have honoured him with their company. He views them for a few moments, smiles, casts his eye over the paper again,—it sets forth age and quality—and then at his marketable people. The invoice is complete; the goods correspond exactly. The texture and quality have been appraised by good judges. Being specified, he commences reading the summons and writs, and concludes with other preliminaries of the sale.

"Now, gentlemen," says Mr. Forshou—for such is his name—as he adjusts his hat, lays the document on the desk at his right hand, pulls up the point of his shirt−collar, sets his neatly−trimmed whiskers a point forward, and smooths his well−oiled hair: "We−will−proceed−with−the−sale−of this lot of negroes, according to the directions of the sheriff of the county. And if no restrictions are imposed, gentlemen can make their selection of old or young to suit their choice or necessities! Gentlemen, however, will be expected to pay for separating." Mr. Forshou, by way of interpolation, reminds his friends that, seeing many of his very best customers present, he expects sharp and healthy bids. He will further remind them (smiling and fretting his hands, as if to show the number of diamond rings he can afford to wear), that the property has been well raised, is well known, and ranges from the brightest and most interesting, to the commonest black field hand. "Yes, gentlemen," he adds, "by the fortune of this unfortunate sale we can accommodate you with anything in the line of negro property. We can sell you a Church and a preacher−a dance−house and a fiddler−a cook and an oyster−shop. Anything! All sold for no fault; and warranted as sound as a roach. The honourable sheriff will gives titles−that functionary being present signifies his willingness−and every man purchasing is expected to have his shiners ready, so that he can plunk down cash in ten days. I need not recount the circumstances under which this property is offered for sale; it is enough to say that it is offered; but, let me say, gentlemen, to enlarge upon it would be painful to my feelings. I will merely read the schedule, and, after selling the people, put up the oxen, mules, and farming utensils." Mr. Forshou, with easy contentment, takes up the list and reads at the top of his voice. The names of heads of families are announced one by one; they answer the call promptly. He continues till he reaches Annette and Nicholas, and here he pauses for a few moments, turning from the paper to them, as if he one minute saw them on the paper and the next on the floor. "Here, gentlemen," he ejaculates, in a half guttural voice−something he could not account for touched his conscience at the moment−holding the paper nearer his eye−glass, "there is two bits of property bordering on the sublime. It dazzles−seems almost too interesting to sell. It makes a feller's heart feel as if it warn't stuck in the right place." Mr. Forshou casts another irresistible look at the children; his countenance changes; he says he is very sensitive, and shows it in his blushes. He might have saved his blushes for the benefit of the State. The State is careful of its blushes; it has none to sell−none to bestow on a child's sorrow!

Annette returns his somewhat touching manifestation of remorse with a childlike smile.

"Well! I reckon how folks is gettin' tenderish, now a' days. Who'd thought the major had such touchy kind a' feelins? Anything wrong just about yer goggler?" interrupts Romescos, giving the vender a quizzical look, and a "half−way wink." Then, setting his slouch hat on an extra poise, he contorts his face into a dozen grimaces. "Keep conscience down, and strike up trade," he says, very coolly, drawing a large piece of tobacco from his breast−pocket and filling his mouth to its utmost capacity.

"Feelings are over all things," responds the sheriff, who stands by, and will speak for the vender, who is less accustomed to speaking for himself. "Feelings bring up recollections of things one never thought of before,—of the happiest days of our happiest home. 'Tain't much, no, nothing at all, to sell regular black and coloured

property; but there's a sort of cross−grained mythology about the business when it comes to selling such clear grain as this."

The vender relieves the honourable sheriff from all further display of sympathy, by saying that he feels the truth of all the honourable and learned gentleman has said, "which has 'most made the inward virtue of his heart come right up." He leans over the desk, extends his hand, helps himself to a generous piece of Romescos' tobacco.

Romescos rejoins in a subdued voice−"He thinks a man what loves dimes like the major cannot be modest in nigger business, because modesty ain't trade commodity. It cannot be; the man who thinks of such nonsense should sell out−should go north and join the humane society. Folks are all saints, he feels sure, down north yander; wouldn't sell nigger property;—they only send south right smart preachers to keep up the dignity of the institution; to do the peculiar religion of the very peculiar institution. No objection to that; nor hain't no objection to their feelin' bad about the poor niggers, so long as they like our cash and take our cotton. That's where the pin's drove in; while it hangs they wouldn't be bad friends with us for the world."

"You may, Mr. Romescos, suspend your remarks," says the vender, looking indignant, as he thrusts his right hand into his bosom, and attempts a word of introduction.

Romescos must have his last word; he never says die while he has a word at hand. "The major's love must be credited, gentlemen; he's a modest auctioneer,—a gentleman what don't feel just right when white property's for sale," he whispers, sarcastically.

Another pause, then a hearty laughing, and the man commences to sell his people. He has uttered but a few words, when Marston's attorney, stepping into the centre of the ring, and near the vender, draws a paper from his pocket, and commences reading in a loud tone. It is a copy of the notice he had previously served on the sheriff, setting forth in legal phraseology the freedom of the children, "And therfo'h this is t' stay proceedings until further orders from the honourable Court of Common Pleas," is audible at the conclusion. The company are not much surprised. There is not much to be surprised at, when slave law and common law come in contact. With Marston's sudden decline and unfathomable connection with Graspum, there is nothing left to make the reading of the notice interesting.

"You hear this, gentlemen?" says the vender, biting his lips: "the sale of this very interesting portion of this very interesting property is objected to by the attorney for the defendant at law. They must, therefore, be remanded to the custody of the sheriff, to await the decision of court." That court of strange judgments! The sheriff, that wonderful medium of slaveocratic power, comes forward, muttering a word of consolation; he will take them away. He passes them over to an attendant, who conducts them to their dark chilly cells.

"All right!" says Graspum, moving aside to let the children pass out. "No more than might have been expected; it's no use, though. Marston will settle that little affair in a very quiet way." He gives the man−vender a look of approval; the very celebrated Mr. Graspum has self−confidence enough for "six folks what don't deal in niggers." A bystander touching him on the arm, he gives his head a cunning shake, crooks his finger on his red nose. "Just a thing of that kind," he whispers, making some very delicate legal gesticulations with the fore−finger of his right hand in the palm of his left; then, with great gravity, he discusses some very nice points of nigger law. He is heard to say it will only be a waste of time, and make some profitable rascality for the lawyers. He could have settled the whole on't in seven minutes. "Better give them up honourably, and let them be sold with the rest. Property's property all over the world; and we must abide by the laws, or what's the good of the constitution? To feel bad about one's own folly! The idea of taking advantage of it at this late hour won't hold good in law. How contemptibly silly! men feeling fatherly after they have made property of their own children! Poor, conscientious fools, how they whine at times, never thinking how they would let their womanish feelings cheat their creditors. There's no honour in that."

"Gentlemen!" interrupts the vender, "we have had enough discussion, moral, legal, and otherwise. We will now have some selling."

The honourable sheriff desires to say a word or two upon points not yet advanced. "The sheriff! the sheriff!" is exclaimed by several voices. He speaks, having first adjusted his spectacles, and relieved himself of three troublesome coughs. "The institution−I mean, gentlemen, the peculiar institution−must be preserved; we cannot, must not, violate statutes to accommodate good−feeling people. My friend Graspum is right, bob and sinker; we'd get ourselves into an everlasting snarl, if we did. I am done!" The sheriff withdraws his spectacles, places them very carefully in a little case, wipes his mouth modestly, and walks away humming an air.

"Now, gentlemen," says the vender, bristling with renewed animation "seeing how you've all recovered from a small shock of conscience, we will commence the sale."

Aunt Rachel is now placed upon the stand. Her huge person, cleanly appearance−Auntie has got her bandana tied with exquisite knot−and very motherly countenance excite general admiration, as on an elevated stand she looms up before her audience. Mr. Forshou, the very gentlemanly vender, taking up the paper, proceeds to describe Aunt Rachel's qualities, according to the style and manner of a celebrated race−horse. Auntie doesn't like this,—her dignity is touched; she honours him with an angry frown. Then she appeals to the amiable gentleman; "come, mas'r, sell 'um quick; don' hab no nonsense wid dis child! Sell 'um to some mas'r what make I housekeeper. Old mas'r,—good old Boss,—know I fus' rate at dat. Let 'um done gone, mas'r, fo'h soon." Rachel is decidedly opposed to long drawn−out humbuggery.

The bids now commence; Rachel, in mute anxiety, tremblingly watches the lips they fall from.

"Give you a first best title to this ar' old critter, gentlemen!" says the vender, affecting much dignity, as he holds up his baton of the trade in flesh. "Anybody wanting a good old mother on a plantation where little niggers are raised will find the thing in the old institution before you. The value is not so much in the size of her, as in her glorious disposition." Aunt Rachel makes three or four turns, like a peacock on a pedestal, to amuse her admirers. Again, Mr. Wormlock intimates, in a tone that the vender may hear, that she has some grit, for he sees it in her demeanour, which is assuming the tragic. Her eyes, as she turns, rest upon the crispy face of Romescos. She views him for a few moments−she fears he will become her purchaser. Her lip curls with contempt, as she turns from his gaze and recognises an old acquaintance, whom she at once singles out, accosts and invites beseechingly to be her purchaser, "to save her from dat man!" She points to Romescos.

Her friend shakes his head unwillingly. Fearing he may become an object of derision, he will not come forward. Poor old slave! faithful from her childhood up, she has reached an age where few find it profitable to listen to her supplications. The black veil of slavery has shut out the past good of her life,—all her faithfulness has gone for nothing; she has passed into that channel where only the man−dealer seeks her for the few dollars worth of labour left in a once powerful body. Oh! valuable remnant of a life, how soon it may be exhausted−forgotten!

Bidders have some doubts about the amount of labour she can yet perform; and, after much manifest hesitancy, she is knocked down to Romescos for the sum of two hundred and seventy dollars. "There! 'tain't a bad price for ye, nohow!" says the vender, laconically. "Get down, old woman." Rachel moves to the steps, and is received by Romescos, who, taking his purchase by the arm, very mechanically sets it on one side. "Come, Auntie, we'll make a corn−cracker a' you, until such time as we can put yer old bones in trim to send south. Generousness, ye see, made me gin more nor ye war' worth−not much work in ye when ye take it on the square;—but a feller what understands the trimmin' a' niggers like I can do ye up young, and put an honest face on while he's cheatin' some green chap with yer old bones." Romescos, very clever in his profession, is not quite sure that his newly−purchased property will "stay put." He turns about suddenly, approaches Rachel−crouched in a corner−mumbling over some incomprehensible jargon, evidently very much disturbed in her feelings, saying, "I kind a' think I see devil in yer eye, old woman." Rachel turns her head aside, but makes no answer. Mr. Romescos will make everything certain; so, drawing a cord, similar to a small sized clothes line, from his pocket, she holds up her hands at his bidding: he winds it several times round her wrists, then ties it securely. "The property's all safe now," he whispers, and returns to attend the bidding arrangements.

One by one−mothers, fathers, and single property, old and young, as may be−are put upon the stand; sold for the various uses of manifest democracy. Harry,—the thinking property, whose sense−keeping has betrayed the philosophy of profound democracy,—is a preacher, and, by the value of his theological capacity, attracts more than ordinary attention. But his life has been a failure,—a mere experiment in divinity struggling with the sensitive power of model democracy. He now seems impatient to know that doom to which the freedom of an enlightened age has consigned him. One minute some cheering hope of his getting a good master presents itself in a familiar face; then it turns away, and with it vanishes his hope. Another comes forward, but it is merely to view his fine proportions.

Harry has feelings, and is strongly inclined to cling to the opinion that those who know his character and talents, will be inclined to purchase. Will they save him from the cruelties of ordinary plantation life?

"Now for the preacher!"−Mr. Forshou touches his hat, politely. "Gentlemen purchasing, and wanting a church can be accommodated with that article to−morrow. Come, boy, mount up here!" The preaching article draws his

steps reluctantly, gets up, and there stands,—a black divine: anybody may look at him, anybody may examine him, anybody may kick him; anybody may buy him, body, soul, and theology. How pleasing, how charmingly liberal, is the democracy that grants the sweet privilege of doing all these things! Harry has a few simple requests to make, which his black sense might have told him the democracy could not grant. He requests (referring to his position as a minister of the gospel) that good master−the vender−will sell him with his poor old woman, and that he do not separate him from his dear children. In support of his appeal he sets forth, in language that would be impressive were it from white lips, that he wants to teach his little ones in the ways of the Lord. "Do, mas'r! try sell us so we live together, where my heart can feel and my eyes see my children," he concludes, pointing to his children (living emblems of an oppressed race), who, with his hapless wife, are brought forward and placed on the stand at his feet. Harry (the vender pausing a moment) reaches out his hand (that hand so feared and yet so harmless), and affectionately places it on the head of his youngest child; then, taking it up, he places it in the arms of his wife,—perhaps not long to be so,—who stands trembling and sobbing at his side. Behold how picturesque is the fruit of democracy! Three small children, clinging round the skirts of a mother's garment, casting sly peeps at purchasers as if they had an instinctive knowledge of their fate. They must be sold for the satisfaction of sundry debts held by sundry democratic creditors. How we affect to scorn the tyranny of Russia, because of her serfdom! Would to God there were truth and virtue in the scorn!

Mr. Forshou, the very sensitive and gentlemanly vender−he has dropped the title of honourable, which was given him on account of his having been a member of the State Senate−takes Harry by the right hand, and leads him round, where, at the front of the tribune, customers may have a much better opportunity of seeing for themselves.

"Yes! he's a swell−a right good fellow." Mr. Forshou turns to his schedule, glancing his eye up and down. "I see; it's put down here in the invoice: a minister−warranted sound in every respect. It does seem to me, gentlemen, that here 's a right smart chance for a planter who 'tends to the pious of his niggers, giving them a little preaching once in a while. Now, let the generous move; shake your dimes; let us turn a point, and see what can be done in the way of selling the lot,—preacher, wife, and family. The boy, Harry, is a preacher by nature; has by some unknown process tumbled into the profession. He's a methodist, I reckon! But there's choice field property in him; and his wife, one of the primest wenches in the gang, never says die when there's plenty of cotton to pick. As for the young uns, they are pure stock. You must remember, gentlemen, preachers are not in the market every day; and when one's to be got that'll preach the right stripe, there's no knowing the value of him−"

"We don't want so much of this," interrupts a voice in the crowd.

"Rather anxious to buy the feller," Mr. Forshou replies, affecting much indifference. He will say a few words more. "Think the matter over, upon strict principles of political economy, and you'll find, gentlemen, he's just the article for big planters. I am happy to see the calm and serene faces of three of my friends of the clergy present; will they not take an interest for a fellow−worker in a righteous cause?" The vender smiles, seems inclined to jocularity, to which the gentlemen in black are unwilling to submit. They have not been moving among dealers, and examining a piece of property here and there, with any sinecure motive. They view the vender's remarks as exceedingly offensive, return a look of indignation, and slowly, as if with wounded piety, walk away. The gentlemen in black are most sensitive when any comparison is made between them and a black brother. How horible shocked they seem, as, with white neckerchiefs so modest, they look back as they merge from the mart into the street!

It is a question whether these sensitive divines were shocked at the affectation and cold indifference manifested by legitimate dealers, or at the vender's very impertinent remarks. We will not charge aught against our brethren of the clergy: no, we will leave the question open to the reader. We love them as good men who might labour for a better cause; we will leave them valiant defenders of southern chivalry, southern generosity, southern affability, and southern injustice. To be offended at so small an affair as selling a brother clergyman,—to make the insinuation that they are not humane, cause of insult,—is, indeed, the very essence of absurdity.

The vender makes a few side−motions with his thumbs, winks to several of his customers, and gives a significant nod, as the gentlemen in black pass out of the insulting establishment. "Well, gentlemen, I'm sorry if I've offended anybody; but there's a deep−rooted principle in what I've said, nor do I think it christian for the clergy to clear out in that shape. However, God bless 'em; let 'em go on their way rejoicing. Here's the boy−he turns and puts his hand kindly on Harry's shoulder−and his wench, and his young uns,—a minister and family, put

down in the invoice as genuine prime. Our worthy sheriff's a good judge of deacons−the sheriff−high functionary−acknowledges the compliment by respectfully nodding−and my opinion is that the boy'll make a good bishop yet: he only wants an apron and a fair showing." He touches Harry under the chin, laughing heartily the while.

"Yes, master," replies Harry−he has little of the negro accent−quieting his feelings; "what I larn is all from the Bible, while master slept. Sell my old woman and little ones with me; my heart is in their welfare−"

"Don't trifle with the poor fellow's feelings; put him up and sell him to the best advantage. There's nobody here that wants a preacher and family. It's only depreciating the value of the property to sell it in the lot," says Graspum, in a firm voice. He has been standing as unmoved as a stoic, seeing nothing but property in the wretch of a clergyman, whose natural affections, pictured in his imploring looks, might have touched some tender chord of his feelings.

After several attempts, it is found impossible to sell the minister and his family in one lot. Hence, by the force of necessity, his agonising beseechings pouring forth, he is put up like other single bales of merchandise, and sold to Mr. M'Fadden, of A—district. The minister brought eleven hundred dollars, ready money down! The purchaser is a well−known planter; he has worked his way up in the world, is a rigid disciplinarian, measuring the square inches of labour in his property, and adapting the best process of bringing it all out.

"He's all I want," says M'Fadden, making a move outward, and edging his way through the crowd.

"A moment with my poor old woman, master, if you please?" says Harry, turning round to his wife.

"None of your black humbugging; there's wives enough on my place, and a parson can have his choice out of fifty," returns M'Fadden, dragging him along by the arm. The scene that here ensues is harrowing in the extreme. The cries and sobs of children,—the solicitude and affection of his poor wife, as she throws her arms about her husband's neck,—his falling tears of sorrow, as one by one he snatches up his children and kisses them,—are painfully touching. It is the purest, simplest, holiest of love, gushing forth from nature's fountain. It were well if we could but cherish its heavenly worth. That woman, the degraded of a despised race, her arms round a fond husband's neck, struggling with death−like grasp, and imploring them not to take him from her. The men who have made him merchandise,—who have trodden his race in the dust,—look on unmoved as the unfeeling purchaser drags him from the embrace of all that is near and dear to him on earth. Here, in this boasted freest country the sun shines on−where freedom was bequeathed by our brave forefathers,—where the complex tyranny of an old world was overthrown,—such scenes violate no law. When will the glorious, the happy day of their death come? When shall the land be free?

M'Fadden, having paid the price of his clergyman, drags him to the door. "Once more, master," mutters the victim, looking back with fear and hope pictured on his imploring face. M'Fadden has no patience with such useless implorings, and orders him to move along. "I will see them once more!" the man exclaims, "I will! Good bye! may Heaven bless you on earth, my little ones!−God will protect us when we meet again!" The tears course down his cheeks.

"None of that ar' kind of nonsense! Shut down yer tear−trap," says M'Fadden, calling an attendant, and, drawing a pair of irons from his pocket, placing them about Harry's hands. Mr. M'Fadden's property shows signs of being somewhat belligerent: to obviate any further nonsense, and to make short work of the thing, Mr. M'Fadden calls in aid, throws his property on the ground, ties its legs with a piece of rope, places it upon a drag, and orders it to be conveyed to the depot, from whence it will be despatched by rail for a new home.

This little ceremony over, the wife and children (Romescos and M'Fadden, not very good friends, were competitors for the preacher property) are put up and sold to Romescos. That skilful and very adroit gentleman is engaged to do the exciting business of separating, which he is progressing with very coolly and cleverly. The whole scene closes with selling the animal property and farming utensils. Happy Christian brothers are they who would spread the wings of their Christianity over such scenes!

CHAPTER XX. A FATHER'S TRIALS.

IF modern Christianity, as improved in our southern world−we mean our world of slavery−had blushes, it might improve the use of them were we to recount in detail the many painful incidents which the improved and very christianly process of separating husbands from wives, parents from children, brothers from sisters, and friends from all the ties and associations the heart, gives birth to. Negroes have tender sympathies, strong loves. Reader, we will save your feelings,—we will not recount them; our aim is not to excite undue feeling, but to relate every−day scenes.

Days and weeks pass on drearily with Marston. Unhappy, forlorn, driven to the last extremity by obdurate creditors, he waits the tardy process of the law. He seldom appears in public; for those who professed to be his best friends have become his coldest acquaintances. But he has two friends left,—friends whose pure friendship is like sweetest dew−drops: they are Franconia and Daddy Bob. The rusty old servant is faithful, full of benevolence, gratitude, and unshaken fidelity; the other is the generous woman, in whose bosom beat the tender impulses of a noble soul. Those impulses have been moved to action in defence of the innocent; they never can be defeated. Bob is poor, abject, and old with toil. He cares not to be free,—he wants mas'r free. But there yet remains some value in Bob; and he has secreted himself, in hopes of escaping the man−dealer, and sharing his earnings in the support of old mas'r. Franconia is differently situated; yet she can only take advantage of circumstances which yet depend upon the caprice of a subtle−minded husband. Over both these friends of the unfortunate, slavery has stretched its giant arms, confusing the social system, uprooting the integrity of men, weakening respect for law, violating the best precepts of nature, substituting passion for principle, confounding reason, and enslaving public opinion.

Under the above disorganising state of the social compact, the children, known to be Marston's, are pursued as property belonging to the bankrupt estate. When the law has made it such, it must be sold in satisfaction of Marston's debts.

Seven months have passed since they were shut up in a felon's cell. They have been visited by Marston; he has been kind to them,—kind as a father could be under such circumstances. Franconia has not forgotten them: she sends many little things to lighten the gloom of their confinement; but society closes her lips, and will frown upon any disclosure she may make of their parentage. Were she to disclose it to Colonel M'Carstrow, the effect would be doubtful: it might add to the suspicious circumstances already excited against her unfortunate uncle. The paramount question−whether they are hereafter to be chattel slaves, or human beings with inalienable rights−must be submitted to the decision of a judicial tribunal. It is by no means an uncommon case, but very full of interest. It will merely be interesting−not as involving any new question of law, nor presenting new phases of southern jurisprudence−in showing what very notorious dealers in human kind, and lawyers of great legal ability, can morally and legally perform. It will show how great men figure in the arena of legal degradation, how they unravel the mystery of slave power.

Graspum, professedly uninterested, has purchased the claims, and will pursue the payment in the name of the original plaintiffs. With Romescos's cunning aid, of course the trial will be a perfect farce, the only exception being that the very profound Mr. Graspum will exhibit a degree of great sincerity on his part.

The sessions are sitting; the day for the trial of this important case has arrived; the little dingy court−room is early crowded to excess, but there is not much expression of anxiety. Men speak lightly of the issue, as if some simple game were to be played. The judge, a grave−looking gentleman of no ordinary mien, in whose full countenance sternness is predominant in the well−displayed estimation in which he holds his important self, walks measuredly into court−the lacqueys of the law crying "Court! court!" to which he bows−and takes his seat upon an elevated tribune. There is great solemnity preserved at the opening: the sheriff, with well−ordained costume and sword, sits at his honour's left, his deputy on the right, and the very honourable clerk of the court just below, where there can be no impediment during the process of feeding "the Court" on very legal points of "nigger law." In truth, the solemnity of this court, to those unacquainted with the tenor of legal proceedings at the

south, might have been misconstrued for something more in keeping with justice.

The legal gentlemen, most modest of face, are seated round the bar−a semicircular railing dividing their dignity from the common spectator−waiting the reading of the docket. The clerk takes his time about that, and seems a great favourite with the spectators, who applaud his rising. He reads, the sheriff crying "order! order!" while the judge learnedly examines his notes. Some consultation takes place between several of the attorneys, which is interlarded with remarks from the judge, who, with seeming satisfaction to all parties, orders the case of B. C. R. K. Marston's writ of replevin to be called and proceeded with. "As there are three fi fas," says the junior attorney for the defendants, a very lean strippling of the law, just working his way up in the world, "I object to the manner of procedure; the case only involves a question of law, and should be submitted to the special decision of the Court. It is not a matter for a jury to decide upon," he concludes. The judge has listened to his remarks, objections, and disclaimers, with marked attention; nevertheless, he is compelled to overrule them, and order the case to proceed. Upon this it is agreed among the attorneys−happy fellows, always ready to agree or disagree−that a decision taken upon one fi fa shall be held as establishing a decision for all the cases at issue.

The children are now brought into Court, and seated near one of the attorneys. Marston stands, almost motionless, a few steps back, gazing upon them as intently and solicitously as if the issue were life or death. Deacon Rosebrook, his good lady, and Franconia, have been summoned as witnesses, and sit by the side of each other on a bench within the bar. We hear a voice here and there among the crowd of spectators expressing sympathy for the children; others say they are only "niggers," and can't be aught else, if it be proved that Marston bought the mother. And there is Mr. Scranton! He is well seated among the gentlemen of the legal profession, for whom he has a strong fellow feeling. He sits, unmoved, in his wonted moodiness; now and then he gives the children a sly look of commiseration, as if the screws of his feelings were unloosing. They−the little property−look so interesting, so innocent, so worthy of being something more than merchandise in a land of liberty, that Mr. Scranton's heart has become irresistibly softened. It gets a few degrees above Mr. Scranton's constitutional scruples. "Painful affair this! What do you think of it, Mr. Scranton?" enquires a member of the profession, touching his arm.

"It is the fruit of Marston's weakness, you see!−don't feel just straight, I reckon. Didn't understand the philosophy of the law, neither; and finds himself pinched up by a sort of humanity that won't pass for a legal tender in business−"

"Ah! we cannot always look into the future," interrupts the attorney.

Mr. Scranton holds that whatever is constitutional must be right and abidable; that one's feelings never should joggle our better understanding when these little curiosities come in the way. He admits, however, that they are strange attendants coming up once in a while, like the fluctuations of an occult science. With him, the constitution gives an indisputable right to overlook every outrage upon natural law; and, while it exists in full force, though it may strip one half the human race of rights, he has no right to complain so long as it does not interfere with him. It strikes Mr. Scranton that people who differ with him in opinion must have been educated under the teaching of a bad philosophy. Great governments, he holds, often nurture the greatest errors. It matters not how much they feel their magnitude; often, the more they do, the least inclined are they to correct them. Others fear the constitutional structure so much, that they stand trembling lest the slightest correction totter it to the ground. Great governments, too, are most likely to stand on small points when these errors are pointed out. Mr. Scranton declares, with great emphasis, that all these things are most legally true, perfectly natural: they follow in man as well as governments.

With all due deference to Mr. Scranton's opinion, so much demanded among his admiring neighbours, it must be said that he never could bring his mind to understand the difference between natural philosophy and his own constitutional scruples, and was very apt to commit himself in argument, forgetting that the evil was in the fruits of a bad system, bringing disgrace upon his countrymen, corrupting the moral foundation of society, spreading vice around the domestic fireside, and giving to base−minded men power to speculate in the foulness of their own crimes.

The case is opened by the attorney for the plaintiff, who makes a great many direct and indirect remarks, and then calls witnesses. "Marco Graspum!" the clerk exclaims. That gentleman comes forward, takes his place, calmly, upon the witnesses' stand. At first he affects to know but little; then suddenly remembers that he has heard Marston call their mothers property. Further, he has heard him, while extolling their qualities, state the purchase

to have been made of one Silenus, a trader.

"He stated−be sure now!−to you, that he purchased them of one Silenus, a trader?" interpolates the judge, raising his glasses, and advancing his ear, with his hand raised at its side.

Yes, yer honour!" "Please observe this testimony," rejoins the attorney, quickly. He bows; says that is enough. The opposing attorney has no question to put on cross−examination: he knows Graspum too well. Being quite at home with the gentlemen of the legal profession, they know his cool nonchalance never can be shaken upon a point of testimony.

"Any questions to put?" asks the legal opponent, with an air of indifference.

"No, nothing," is the reply.

His brother of special pleas smiles, gives a cunning glance at Graspum, and wipes his face with a very white handkerchief. He is conscious of the character of his man; it saves all further trouble. "When we know who we have to deal with, we know how to deal," he mutters, as he sits down.

Graspum retires from the stand, and takes his seat among the witnesses. "We will now call Anthony Romescos," says the attorney. A few minutes' pause, and that individual rolls out in all his independence, takes his place on the stand. He goes through a long series of questioning and cross−questioning, answers for which he seems to have well studied.

The whole amounts to nothing more than a corroboration of Graspum's testimony. He has heard Marston call their mothers property: once, he thinks, but would hesitate before pledging his honour, that Marston offered to him the woman Clotilda. Yes; it was her!

Considerable excitement is now apparent; the auditory whisper among themselves, attorneys put their heads together, turn and turn over the leaves of their statutes. His honour, the Court, looks wiser still. Marston trembles and turns pale; his soul is pinioned between hope and fear. Romescos has told something more than he knows, and continues, at random, recounting a dozen or more irrelevant things. The court, at length, deems it necessary to stop his voluntary testimony, orders that he only answer such questions as are put to him.

"There's no harm in a feller tellin' what he knows, eh! judge?" returns Romescos, dropping a quid of tobacco at his side, bowing sarcastically to the judge, and drawing his face into a comical picture.

Mr. Romescos is told that he can stand aside. At this seemingly acceptable announcement, he bristles his crispy red hair with his fingers, shrugs his shoulders, winks at two or three of the jurymen, pats Graspum on the shoulder as he passes him, and takes his seat.

"We will close the case here, but reserve the right of introducing further testimony, if necessary," says the learned and very honourable counsel.

The defence here rises, and states the means by which his client intends to prove the freedom of the children; and concludes by calling over the names of the witnesses. Franconia! Franconia! we hear that name called; it sounds high above the others, and falls upon our ear most mournfully. Franconia, that sweet creature of grace and delicacy, brought into a court where the scales of injustice are made to serve iniquity!

Franconia's reserve and modesty put legal gentlemen's gallantry to the test. One looks over the pages of his reports, another casts a sly look as she sweeps by to take that place the basest of men has just left. The interested spectators stretch their persons anxiously, to get a look at the two pretty children, honourable and legal gentlemen are straining their ability to reduce to property. There stands the blushing woman, calm and beautiful, a virtuous rebuke to curious spectators, mercenary slave dealers, the very learned gentlemen of the bar, and his enthroned honour, the Court! She will give testimony that makes nature frown at its own degradation. Not far from Franconia sits the very constitutional Mr. Scranton, casting side glances now and then. Our philosopher certainly thinks, though he will not admit it, the chivalry is overtaxing itself; there was no occasion for compelling so fair a creature to come into court, and hear base testimony before a base crowd,—to aid a base law in securing base ends. And then, just think and blush, ye who have blushes to spare.

"Will the learned gentleman proceed with the examination of this witness?" says his honour, who, pen in hand, has been waiting several minutes to take down her testimony. Court and audience, without knowing why, have come to an unconscious pause.

"Will the witness state to the court in what relation she stands to the gentleman who defends title freedom of the children,—Mr. Hugh Marston?" says the attorney, addressing his bland words to Franconia, somewhat nervously.

"He—he—he—is my—," she mutters, and stops. Her face turns pale; then suddenly changes to glowing crimson. She rests her left hand on the rail, while the judge, as if suddenly moved by a generous impulse, suggests that the attorney pause a moment, until the deputy provides a chair for the lady. She is quiet again. Calmly and modestly, as her soft, meaning eyes wander over the scene before her, compelled to encounter its piercing gaze, the crystal tears leave their wet courses on her blushing cheeks. Her feelings are too delicate, too sensitive, to withstand the sharp and deadly poison of liberty's framework of black laws. She sees her uncle, so kind, so fond of her and her absent brother; her eye meets his in kindred sympathy, imagination wings its way through recollections of the past, draws forth its pleasures with touching sensations, and fills the cup too full. That cup is the fountain of the soul, from which trouble draws its draughts. She watches her uncle as he turns toward the children; she knows they are his; she feels how much he loves them.

The attorney—the man of duty—is somewhat affected. "I have a duty to perform," he says, looking at the court, at the witness, at the children, at the very red−faced clerk, at the opposing counsel, and anything within the precincts of the court−room. We see his lips move; he hesitates, makes slight gesticulations, turns and turns a volume of Blackstone with his hands, and mutters something we cannot understand. The devil is doing battle with his heart−a heart bound with the iron strings of the black law. At length, in broken accents, we catch the following remarks, which the learned gentleman thinks it necessary to make in order to save his gallantry:—"I am sorry—extremely sorry, to see the witness, a lady so touchingly sensitive, somewhat affected; but, nevertheless" (the gentleman bows to the judge, and says the Court will understand his position!) "it is one of those cases which the demands of the profession at times find us engaged in. As such we are bound, morally, let me say, as well as legally, to protect the interests of our clients. In doing so, we are often compelled to encounter those delicate irregularities to which the laws governing our peculiar institutions are liable. I may say that they are so interwoven with our peculiar institution, that to act in accordance with our duty makes it a painful task to our feelings. We—I may appeal to the court for corroboration—can scarcely pursue an analysation of these cases without pain; I may say, remorse of conscience." Mr. Petterwester, for such is his name, is evidently touched with that sense of shame which the disclosures of the black system bring upon his profession. This is aided by the fascinating appearance of the witness on the stand. It is irresistible because it is at variance with those legal proceedings, those horrors of southern jurisprudence, which he is pressing for the benefit of his clients. Again he attempts to put another question, but is seized with a tremor; he blushes, is nervous and confused, casts a doubting look at the judge. That functionary is indeed very grave—unmoved. The responsibility of the peculiar institution sorely hardened the war of heart against head that was waging among the learned gentlemen; but the institution must be preserved, for its political power works wonders, and its legal power is wondrously curious. "Please tell the court and jury what you know about the relation in which these children stand to the gentleman who asserts their freedom, dear madam? We will not trouble you with questions; make a statement," says Mr. Petterwester, with great sincerity of manner. Indeed, Mr. Petterwester has been highly spoken of among the very oldest, most respectable, and best kind of female society, for his gallantry.

The brother opposite, a small gentleman, with an exceedingly studious countenance, dressed in shining black, and a profusion of glossy hair falling upon his shoulders, rises with great legal calmness, and objects to the manner of procedure, describing it as contrary to the well−established rules of the bar. The court interpolates a few remarks, and then intimates that it very seriously thinks gentlemen better waive the points,—better come to an understanding to let the lady make her statements! Courtesy entitles her, as a lady, to every respect and consideration. The gentlemen, having whispered a few words together, bow assent to the high functionary's intimation.

Franconia proceeds. She asserts that Hugh Marston (pointing to him) is her uncle; that she knows little or nothing of his business affairs, cannot tell why her brother left the country so suddenly; she knew Clotilda and Ellen Juvarna, mothers of the children. They never were considered among the property of the plantation. Her short story is told in touching tones. The learned and gallant attorney, esteeming it indispensable, puts a question or two as to whether anything was ever said about selling them in consequence of certain jealousies. Before the brother can object, she answers them evasively, and the testimony amounts to just no testimony at all. The court, bowing respectfully, informs the lady she can get down from the stand.

The next witness called is Mrs. Rosebrook. This good and benevolent lady is more resolute and determined. The gentlemen of the bar find her quite clever enough for them. Approaching the stand with a firm step, she takes

her place as if determined upon rescuing the children. Her answers come rather faster than is compatible with the dignity of the learned gentlemen of the bar. She knows Marston, knows Franconia, knows the old plantation, has spent many happy hours upon it, is sorry to see the old proprietor reduced to this state of things. She knows the two children,—dear creatures,—has always had a kindly feeling for them; knew their poor mothers, has befriended them since Marston's troubles began. She always−her large, loving eyes glowing with the kindness of her soul−heard Marston say they were just as free as people could be, and they should be free, too! Some people did'nt look at the moral obligation of the thing. Here, the good lady, blushing, draws the veil over her face. There is something more she would like to disclose if modesty did not forbid.

"Nothing direct in such testimony, your honour will perceive!" says Mr. Petterwester, directing himself to the judge.

"Is there any question with regard to the father of the children?" enquires his honour, again placing his hand to his ear and leaning forward inquisitively. His honour suddenly forgot himself.

"Ah, ha'h, he−em! The question, so buried under a mountain of complexity, requires very nice legal discrimination to define it properly. However, we must be governed by distinct pleadings, and I think that, in this case, this specific question is not material; nor do my brother colleagues of the Bench think it would be advisable to establish such questions, lest they affect the moral purity of the atmosphere we live in."

"If your honour will permit it, I may say it will only be necessary in this case to establish the fact of property existing in the mothers. That will settle the whole question; fathers, as you are aware, not being embraced in the law regulating this species of property;" the learned gentleman instructs the court.

His honour, rejoining with a few very grave and very legal remarks, says they look very much alike, and are of one mother. He is a little undecided, however, takes another good stare at them, and then adds his glasses, that the affinity may be more clear. Turning again to his book, he examines his pages, vacantly. A legal wag, who has been watching the trial for mere amusement, whispering in the ear of his brother, insinuates that the presiding functionary is meditating some problem of speculation, and has forgotten the point at issue.

"No!" interrupts Mr. Petterwester, "your honour is curiously labouring under an error; they have two mothers, both of the same tenour in life—that is"—Mr. Petterwester corrects himself—"embodying the same questions of property. The issue of the case now on is taken as final over the rest."

"Ah! bless me, now−I−rather−see−into it. The clerk will hand me Cobb's Georgia Reports. A late case, curiously serious, there recorded, may lead me to gather a parallel. Believe me, gentlemen, my feelings are not so dead−his honour addresses himself to the bar in general—that I cannot perceive it to be one of those very delicate necessities of our law which so embarrasses the gallantry of the profession at times—"

"Yes! yer honour," the attorney for the defence suddenly interrupts, "and which renders it no less a disgrace to drag ladies of high rank into a court of this kind—."

His honour can assure the learned gentleman that this court has very high functions, and can administer justice equal to anything this side of divine power,—his honour interrupts, indignantly.

"The court misunderstood the counsel,—he had no reference to the unquestioned high authority of the tribunal; it was only the character of the trials brought before it. When, notwithstanding our boasts of chivalry, delicate ladies are dragged before it in this manner, they must not only endure the painful tenour of the evidence, but submit to the insolence of men who would plunder nature of its right—"

"I shall claim the protection of the court against such unprofessional imputations," his brother of the opposite interrupts, rising and affecting an air of indignation. The court, quite bewildered, turns a listening ear to his remarks—"Hopes the learned gentlemen will not disgrace themselves."

Order! order! order! demands the sheriff, making a flourish with his sword. The spectators, rising on tip−toe, express their anxiety to have the case proceed. They whisper, shake their heads, and are heard to say that it will be utterly useless to attempt anything against the testimony of Graspum and Romescos. Mr. Graspum, in the fulness of his slavish and impudent pedantry, feeling secure in the possession of his victims, sits within the bar, seeming to feel his position elevated a few degrees above his highness the judge.

"I do hope the interposition of this Court will not be necessary in this case. Gentlemen of the learned profession should settle those differences more like gentlemen," says his honour, looking down upon his minions with a frown of contempt.

"The matter is one entirely of a professional nature, yer honour!" responds the scion of the law, quickly, first

addressing himself to the judge, and then to the jury. "If the testimony we have already adduced—direct as it is—be not sufficient to establish the existence of property in these children" (Romescos has just whispered something in his ear) "we will produce other testimony of the most conclusive character. However, we will yield all further cross−questioning the ladies; and I now suggest that they be relieved from the painful position of appearing before this court again."

Mrs. Rosebrook descends from the stand amidst murmurs and applause. Some amount of legal tact now ensues; the attorney for the prosecution displays an earnestness amounting to personal interest.

Here the counsel for the defence steps forward, whispers to the clerk, and gives notice that he shall call witnesses to impeach the characters of Graspum and Romescos. These two high dignitaries, sitting together, express the utmost surprise at such an insinuation. The character of neither is sacred material, nor will it stand even in a southern atmosphere. They have been pronounced legally impure many years ago.

Just at this juncture there is quite an excitement in the court−room. Romescos, like a disfigured statue, rises from among his legal friends and addresses the court on the independent principle. "Well now, Squire, if ya'r goin' to play that ar' lawyer game on a feller what don't understand the dodge, I'll just put a settler on't; I'll put a settler on't what ya' won't get over. My word's my honour; didn't come into this establishment to do swarin' cos I wanted to; seein' how, when a feller's summoned by the Boss Squire, he's got to walk up and tell the truth and nothin' shorter. I knows ya' don't feel right about it; and it kind a hurts a feller's feelins to make property of such nice young uns, especially when one knows how nice they've been brought up. This aint the thing, though; 'taint the way to get along in the world; and seein' I'm a man of honour, and wouldn't do a crooked thing nohow−"

His honour the Sheriff, being somewhat impressed with the fact that Mr. Romescos is rather transgressing the rules of the court, interposes. His defence of his honour cannot longer be tolerated; and yet, very much after the fashion of great outlaws, who, when arraigned for their crimes, think themselves very badly used men, Romescos has the most exalted opinion of himself; never for a moment entertains a doubt of his own integrity.

He reaches over the bar; places his lips to the attorney's ear; is about to whisper something. That gentleman quickly draws back, as if his presence were repulsive. Not the least offended, Romescos winks significantly, crooks the fore−finger of his right hand, and says−"something that'll put the stopper on." The legal gentleman seems reconciled; listens attentively to the important information. "All right! nothing more is needed," he says, rising from his seat, and asking permission to introduce proof which will render it quite unnecessary to proceed with anything that may have for its object the impeachment of the witnesses.

The attorney for the defence objects to this mode of procedure; and the judge, having sustained the objections, orders the counsel to proceed with his witnesses. Several persons, said to be of very high standing, are now called. They successively depose that they would not believe Romescos nor Graspum upon oath; notwithstanding, both may be very honourable and respectable gentlemen. Thus invalidating the testimony of these high functionaries of the peculiar institution, the gentleman of the prosecution has an opportunity of producing his conclusive proof. Romescos has been seen passing him a very suspicious−looking document.

All attention is now directed to the children; they sit pensively, unconscious of the dread fate hanging over them. "What can this testimony be?" rings in whispers about the court−room. Some deep intrigue is going on; it is some unforeseen movement of the slave−dealers, not comprehended by the spectators. Can the bon*f*−fide creditors be implicated? Even Mr. Scranton feels that his knowledge of the philosophy of slave power is completely at fault.

"Now, your honour, and gentlemen of the jury," says the gentleman of the prosecution, "I am fully aware of the painful suspense in which this case has kept the court, the jury, and the very respectable persons I see assembled; but, notwithstanding the respectability and well−known position of my clients and witnesses, the defence in this case has succeeded in expunging the testimony, and compelling us to bring forward such proof as cannot be impeached." Here the legal gentleman draws from his pocket a stained and coloured paper, saying, "Will the gentlemen of the jury be kind enough to minutely examine that instrument." He passes it to the foreman.

"What is the purport of the instrument?" his honour enquires.

"The bill of sale, your honour."

Foreman has examined it satisfactorily; passes it to several of his fellows. All are satisfied. He returns it to the learned gentleman. That very important and chivalrous individual throws it upon the table with great self−confidence.

His honour would like to scan over its details. It is passed to the little fat clerk, and by that gentleman to his honour. "Very, singularly strong!" his honour says, giving his head a very wise shake.

"When the court gets through," says the advocate for the defence, rising and placing his hand on the clerk's desk.

"The gentleman can examine," replies the court, passing it coldly to the Sheriff, who politely forwards it.

He turns it and turns it; reads it slowly; examines the dates minutely. "How did the prosecution come in possession of this document?"

His brother of the law objects, "That's not an admissible question. If the defence will institute an action against the parties for unlawfully procuring it, we will take great pleasure in showing our hands. It may be, however, well to say, that Mr. Marston and Mr. Graspum have always been on the most friendly terms; but the former gentleman forgot to take care of this very essential document," he continues, taking it from the hand of his professional brother, and turning toward the spectators, his countenance glowing with exultation. The pride of his ambition is served. The profession has honourably sustained itself through the wonderful abilities of this learned brother, who, holding the paper in his hand, awaits the gracious applause of the assembled spectators. There is some applause, some murmuring, much whispering.

The court, in coldly measured words, hopes the audience will evince no excitement pro or con.

Some persons declare the bill of sale a forgery,—that Romescos has tried that very same trick twice before. Others say it matters but little on that score,—that all the law in the country won't restrain Graspum; if he sets at it in good earnest he can turn any sort of people into property. A third whispers that the present order of things must be changed, or nobody's children will be safe. Legal gentlemen, not interested in the suit, shake their heads, and successively whisper, "The prosecution never came by that bill of sale honestly." Creditors, not parties to this suit, and brokers who now and then do something in the trade of human beings, say, "If this be the way Marston's going to play the dodge with his property, we will see if there be not some more under the same shaded protection."

"Will the counsel for the defence permit his client to inspect this instrument?" says the learned gentleman, passing it across the table.

Marston's face flushes with shame; he is overcome; he extends his trembling hand and takes the fatal document. It is, to him, his children's death−warrant. A cloud of darkness overshadows his hopes; he would question the signature, but the signer, Silenus, is dead,—as dead as the justice of the law by which the children are being tried. And there is the bond attached to it! Again the thought flashed through his mind, that he had sold Ellen Juvarna to Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy. However much he might struggle to save his children−however much a father's obligations might force themselves upon him−however much he might acknowledge them the offspring of his own body, they were property in the law−property in the hands of Graspum; and, with the forethought of that honourable gentleman opposed to him—as it evidently was—his efforts and pleadings would not only prove futile, but tend to expose Lorenzo's crime.

"The philosophy of the thing is coming out, just as I said−precisely," ejaculates Mr. Scranton, raising his methodical eyes, and whispering to a legal gentleman who sits at his right.

"Serious philosophy, that embraces and sanctions the sale of such lovely children,—making property of one's children against his wishes! I'm a great Southern rights man, but this is shaving the intermixture a little too close," rejoins the other, casting a solicitous look at Marston, who has been intently and nervously examining the bill of sale.

"Any objections to make to it?" says the learned gentleman, bowing politely and extending his hand, as he concludes by inquiring how it happened, in the face of such an array of evidence, that he sold the girl, Ellen Juvarna?

"No objection, none!" is Marston's quick response. His head droops; he wipes the tears from his eyes; he leaves the court in silence, amid murmurs from the crowd. The female witnesses left before him; it was well they did so.

That this is the original bill of sale, from one Silenus to Hugh Marston, has been fully established. However painful the issue, nothing remained but to give the case to the jury. All is silent for several minutes. The judge has rarely sat upon a case of this kind. He sits unnerved, the pen in his hand refusing to write as his thoughts wander into the wondrous vortex of the future of slavery. But the spell has passed; his face shades with pallor as slowly

he rises to address the jury. He has but few words to say; they fall like death−knells on the ears of his listeners. Some touching words escape his hesitating lips; but duty, enforced by the iron rod of slave power, demands him to sustain the laws of the land. He sets forth the undisputed evidence contained in the bill of sale, the unmistakeable bond, the singular and very high−handed attempt to conceal it from the honest creditors, and the necessity of jurymen restraining their sympathies for the children while performing a duty to the laws of the land. Having thus made his brief address, he sits down; the sheriff shoulders his tip−staff, and the august twelve, with papers provided, are marched into the jury−room, as the court orders that the case of Dunton v. Higgins be called.

Five minutes have intervened; the clerk calling the case s interrupted by a knocking at the jury−room door; he stops his reading, the door is opened, and the sheriff conducts his twelve gentlemen back to their seats. Not a whisper is heard; the stillness of the tomb reigns over this high judicial scene. The sheriff receives a packet of papers from the foreman's hands, and passes them to the clerk.

"Gentlemen of the jury will please stand up," says that very amiable functionary. "Have you agreed on your verdict?" The foreman bows assent.

"Guilty or not guilty, gentlemen?"

"Guilty," says the former, in tones like church−yard wailings: "Guilty. I suppose that's the style we must render the verdict in?" The foreman is at a loss to know what style of verdict is necessary.

"Yes," returns the clerk, bowing; and the gentlemen of the jury well complimented by the judge, are discharged until to−morrow. The attorney for the defence made a noble, generous, and touching appeal to the fatherly twelve; but his appeal fell like dull mist before the majesty of slavery. Guilty! O heavens, that ever the innocent should be made guilty of being born of a mother! That a mother−that name so holy−should be stained with the crime of bearing her child to criminal life!

Two children, fair and beautiful, are judged by a jury of twelve−perhaps all good and kind fathers, free and enlightened citizens of a free and happy republic−guilty of the crime of being born of a slave mother. Can this inquiring jury, this thinking twelve, feel as fathers only can feel when their children are on the precipice of danger? Could they but break over that seeming invulnerable power of slavery which crushes humanity, freezes up the souls of men, and makes the lives of millions but a blight of misery, and behold with the honesty of the heart what a picture of misery their voice "Guilty!" spreads before these unfortunate children, how changed would be the result!

A judge, endeared to his own children by the kindest affections, feels no compunction of conscience while administering the law which denies a father his own children−which commands those children to be sold with the beasts of the field! Mark the slender cord upon which the fate of these unfortunates turns; mark the suffering through which they must pass.

The hand on the clock's pale face marks four. His honour reminds gentlemen of the bar that it is time to adjourn court. Court is accordingly adjourned. The crowd disperse in silence. Gentlemen of the legal profession are satisfied the majesty of the law has been sustained.

Hence the guilty children, scions of rights−loving democracy, like two pieces of valuable merchandise judicially decreed upon, are led back to prison, where they will await sale. Annette has caught the sound of "Guilty!"−she mutters it while being taken home from the court, in the arms of an old slave. May heaven forgive the guilt we inherit from a mother, in this our land of freedom!

CHAPTER XXI. WE CHANGE WITH FORTUNE.

BUT a few months have passed since the popularly called gallant M'Carstrow led the fair Franconia to the hymeneal altar; and, now that he has taken up his residence in the city, the excitement of the honeymoon is waning, and he has betaken himself to his more congenial associations. The beautiful Franconia for him had but transient charms, which he now views as he would objects necessary to the gratifications of his coarse passions. His feelings have not been softened with those finer associations which make man the kind patron of domestic life; nor is his mind capable of appreciating that respect for a wife which makes her an ornament of her circle. Saloons, race−courses, and nameless places, have superior attractions for him: home is become but endurable.

In truth, Franconia, compelled to marry in deference to fortune, finds she is ensnared into misfortunes. M'Carstrow (Colonel by courtesy) had fifteen hundred dollars, cash down, to pay for Clotilda: this sad grievance excites his feelings, inasmuch as it was all owing to his wife's whims, and the poverty of her relations. The verdict of the jury, recently rendered, was to his mind a strictly correct one; but he cannot forget the insane manner in which the responsibility was fastened upon him, and the hard cash−which might have made two handsome stakes on the turf−drawn from his pocket. His wife's poverty−stricken relations he now detests, and can tolerate them best when farthest away from him. But Franconia does not forget that he is her husband; no, night after night she sits at the window until midnight, waiting his return. Feeble and weary with anxiety, she will despatch a negro on a hopeless errand of search; he, true to his charge, returns with the confidential intelligence of finding Mas'r in a place less reputable than it is proper to mention. Such is our southern society,—very hospitable in language, chivalrous in memory,—base in morals! Some− times the gallant colonel deems it necessary to remain until daylight, lest, in returning by night, the pavement may annoy his understanding. Of this, however, he felt the world knew but little. Now and then, merely to keep up the luxury of southern life, the colonel finds it gratifying to his feelings, on returning home at night, to order a bed to be made for him in one of the yard−houses, in such manner as to give the deepest pain to his Franconia. Coarse and dissolute, indifference follows, cold and cutting; she finds herself a mere instrument of baser purpose in the hands of one she knows only as a ruffian−she loathes! Thus driven under the burden of trouble, she begins to express her unhappiness, to remonstrate against his associations, to plead with him against his course of life. He jeers at this, scouts such prudery, proclaims it far beneath the dignity of his standing as a southern gentleman.

The generous woman could have endured his dissipation−she might have tolerated his licentiousness, but his arbitrary and very uncalled−for remarks upon the misfortunes of her family are more than she can bear. She has tried to respect him−love him she cannot−and yet her sensitive nature recoils at the thought of being attached to one whose feelings and associations are so at variance with her own. Her impulsive spirit quails under the bitterness of her lot; she sees the dreary waste of trouble before her only to envy the happiness of those days of rural life spent on the old plantation. That she should become fretful and unhappy is a natural consequence.

We must invite the reader to go with us to M'Carstrow's residence, an old−fashioned wooden building, three stories high, with large basement windows and doors, on the south side of King Street. It is a wet, gloomy night, in the month of November,—the wind, fierce and chilling, has just set in from the north−east; a drenching rain begins to fall, the ships in the harbour ride ill at ease; the sudden gusts of wind, sweeping through the narrow streets of the city, lighted here and there by the sickly light of an old−fashioned lamp, bespread the scene with drear. At a second−story window, lighted by a taper burning on the sill, sits Franconia, alone, waiting the return of M'Carstrow. M'Carstrow is enjoying his night orgies! He cares neither for the pelting storm, the anxiety of his wife, nor the sweets of home.

A gust of wind shakes the house; the windows rattle their stormy music; the cricket answers to the wailings of the gale as it gushes through the crevices; Franconia's cares are borne to her husband. Now the wind subsides,—a slow rap is heard at the hall door, in the basement: a female servant, expecting her master, hastens to open it. Her master is not there; the wind has extinguished the flaring light; and the storm, sweeping through the sombre arch, spreads noise and confusion. She runs to the kitchen, seizes the globular lamp, and soon returns, frightened at the

sight presented in the door. Master is not there−it is the lean figure of a strange old "nigger," whose weather−worn face, snowy with beard and wrinkled with age, is lit up with gladness. He has a warm soul within him,—a soul not unacceptable to heaven! The servant shrinks back,—she is frightened at the strange sight of the strange old man. "Don' be feared, good child; Bob ain't bad nigger," says the figure, in a guttural whisper.

"An't da'h fo'h notin good; who is ye'?" returns the girl, holding the globular lamp before her shining black face. Cautiously she makes a step or two forward, squinting at the sombre figure of the old negro, as he stands trembling in the doorway. "Is my good young Miss wid'n?" he enquires, in the same whispering voice, holding his cap in his right hand.

"Reckon how ye bes be gwine out a dat afo'h Miss come. Yer miss don' lib in dis ouse." So saying, the girl is about to close the door in the old man's face, for he is ragged and dejected, and has the appearance of a "suspicious nigger without a master."

"Don' talk so, good gal; ye don' know dis old man,—so hungry,—most starved. I lub Miss Franconia. Tell she I'ze here," he says, in a supplicating tone, as the girl, regaining confidence, scrutinises him from head to foot with the aid of her lamp.

The servant is about to request he will come inside that she may shut out the storm. "Frankone knows old Daddy Bob,—dat she do!" he reiterates, working his cap in his fingers. The familiar words have caught Franconia's ear; she recognises the sound of the old man's voice; she springs to her feet, as her heart gladdens with joy. She bounds down the stairs, and to the door, grasps the old man's hand, as a fond child warmly grasps the hand of a parent, and welcomes him with the tenderness of a sister. "Poor−my poor old Daddy!" she says, looking in his face so sweetly, so earnestly, "where have you come from? who bought you? how did you escape?" she asks, in rapid succession. Holding his hand, she leads him along the passage, as he tells her. "Ah, missus, I sees hard times since old mas'r lef' de plantation. Him an't how he was ven you dah." He views her, curiously, from head to foot; kisses her hand; laughs with joy, as he was wont to laugh on the old plantation.

"Faithful as ever, Daddy? You found me out, and came to see me, didn't you?" says Franconia, so kindly, leading him into a small room on the left hand of the hall, where, after ordering some supper for him, she begs he will tell her all about his wayfaring. It is some minutes before Bob can get an opportunity to tell Franconia that he is a fugitive, having escaped the iron grasp of the law to stand true to old mas'r. At length he, in the enthusiastic boundings of his heart, commences his story.

"Nigger true, Miss Franconia"−he mumbles out−"on'e gib 'im chance to be. Ye sees, Bob warn't gwine t' lef' old mas'r, nohow; so I gin 'ein da slip when'e come t' takes 'em fo'h sell−"

"Then they didn't sell you, old Dad? That's good! that's good! And Daddy's cold and wet?" she interrupts, anxiously, telling the servant to get some dry clothes for him.

"I is dat, Miss Frankone. Han't ad nofin t' eat dis most two days," he returns, looking at her affectionately, with one of those simple smiles, so true, so expressive.

A supper is soon ready for Daddy, to which he sits down as if he were about to renew all his former fondness and familiarity. "Seems like old times, don 'un, Miss Frankone? Wish old mas'r war here, too," says the old man, putting the bowl of coffee to his lips, and casting a side−look at the servant.

Franconia sits watching him intently, as if he were a child just rescued from some impending danger. "Don't mention my poor uncle, Daddy. He feels as much interest in you as I do; but the world don't look upon him now as it once did−"

"Neber mind: I gwine to work fo' old mas'r. It'll take dis old child to see old mas'r all right," replies the old man, forgetting that he is too old to take care of himself, properly. Bob finishes his supper, rests his elbow on the table and his head in his hand, and commences disclosing his troubles to Franconia. He tells her how he secreted himself in the pine−woods,—how he wandered through swamps, waded creeks, slept on trunks of trees, crept stealthily to the old mansion at night, listened for mas'r's footsteps, and watched beneath the veranda; and when he found he was not there, how he turned and left the spot, his poor heart regretting. How his heart beat as he passed the old familiar cabin, retracing his steps to seek a shelter in the swamp; how, when he learned her residence, famished with hunger, he wended his way into the city to seek her out, knowing she would relieve his wants.

"What vil da do wid me, spose da cotch me, Miss Frankone?" enquires the old man, simply, looking down at his encrusted feet, and again at his nether wardrobe, which he feels is not just the thing to appear in before young missus.

"They won't do anything cruel to you, Daddy. You are too old; your grey hairs will protect you. Why, Daddy, you would not fetch a bid if they found out who owned you, and put you up at auction to−morrow," she says, with seeming unconsciousness. She little knew how much the old man prided in his value,—how much he esteemed the amount of good work he could do for master. He shakes his head, looks doubtingly at her, as if questioning the sincerity of her remark.

"Just get Daddy Bob−he mutters−a badge, den 'e show missus how much work in 'um."

Franconia promises to comply with his request, and, with the aid of a friend, will intercede for him, and procure for him a badge, that he may display his energies for the benefit of old mas'r. This done, she orders the servant to show him his bed in one of the "yard houses;" bids the old man an affectionate good night, retires to her room, and watches the return of her truant swain.

There, seated in an arm−chair, she waits, and waits, and waits, hope and anxiety recording time as it passes. The servant has seen Daddy safe in his room, and joins her missus, where, by the force of habit, she coils herself at her feet, and sleeps. She has not long remained in this position when loud singing breaks upon her ear; louder and louder it vibrates through the music of the storm, and approaches. Now she distinctly recognises the sharp voice of M'Carstrow, which is followed by loud rappings at the door of the basement hall. M'Carstrow, impatiently, demands entrance. The half−sleeping servant, startled at the noise, springs to her feet, rubs her eyes, bounds down the stairs, seizes the globular lamp, and proceeds to open the door. Franconia, a candle in her hand, waits at the top of the stairs. She swings back the door, and there, bespattered with mud, face bleeding and distorted, and eyes glassy, stands the chivalrous M'Carstrow. He presents a sorry picture; mutters, or half growls, some sharp imprecations; makes a grasp at the girl, falls prostrate on the floor. Attempting to gain his perpendicular, he staggers a few yards−the girl screaming with fright−and groans as his face again confronts the tiles. To make the matter still worse, three of his boon companions follow him, and, almost in succession, pay their penance to the floor, in an indescribable catacomb.

"I tell you what, Colonel! if that nigger gal a' yourn don't stand close with her blazer we'll get into an all−fired snarl," says one, endeavouring to extricate himself and regain his upright. After sundry ineffectual attempts, surging round the room in search of his hat, which is being very unceremoniously transformed into a muff beneath their entangled extremes, he turns over quietly, saying, "There's something very strange about the floor of this establishment,—it don't seem solid; 'pears how there's ups and downs in it." They wriggle and twist in a curious pile; endeavour to bring their knees out of "a fix"—to free themselves from the angles which they are most unmathematically working on the floor. Working and twisting,—now staggering, and again giving utterance to the coarsest language,—one of the gentry—they belong to the sporting world−calls loudly for the colonel's little 'oman. Regaining his feet, he makes indelicate advances towards the female servant, who, nearly pale with fright—a negro can look pale—runs to her mistress at the top of the stairs.

He misses the frightened maid, and seats himself on the lowest step of the stairs. Here he delivers a sort of half−musical soliloquy, like the following: "Gentlemen! this kind a' thing only happens at times, and isn't just the square thing when yer straight; but—seein' how southern life will be so—when a body get's crooked what's got a wife what don't look to matters and things, and never comes to take care on a body when he's done gone, he better shut up shop. Better be lookin' round to see what he can scare up!"

Franconia holds the flaring light over the stairs: pale and death−like, she trembles with fear, every moment expecting to see them ascend.

"I see the colonel's 'oman! yander she is; she what was imposed on him to save the poverty of her folks. The M'Carstrows know a thing or two: her folks may crawl under the dignity of the name, but they don't shell under the dignity of the money−they don't!" says a stalwart companion, attempting to gain a position by the side of his fellow on the steps. He gives a leering wink, contorts his face into a dozen grimaces, stares vacantly round the hall (sliding himself along on his hands and knees), his glassy eyes inflamed like balls of fire. "It'll be all square soon," he growls out.

The poor affrighted servant again attempts−having descended the stairs−to relieve her master; but the crawling creature has regained his feet. He springs upon her like a fiend, utters a fierce yell, and, snatching the lamp from her hand, dashes it upon the tiles, spreading the fractured pieces about the hall. Wringing herself from his grasp, she leaves a portion of her dress in his bony hand, and seeks shelter in a distant part of the hall. Holding up the fragment as a trophy, he staggers from place to place, making hieroglyphics on the wall with his fingers.

His misty mind searches for some point of egress. Confronting (rather uncomfortably) hat stands, tables, porcelains, and other hall appurtenances, he at length shuffles his way back to the stairs, where, as if doubting his bleered optics, he stands some moments, swaying to and fro. His hat again falls from his head, and his body, following, lays its lumbering length on the stairs. Happy fraternity! how useful is that body! His companion, laying his muddled head upon it, says it will serve for a pillow. "E'ke−hum−spose 'tis so? I reckon how I'm some−ec! eke!−somewhere or nowhere; aint we, Joe? It's a funny house, fellers," he continues to soliloquise, laying his arm affectionately over his companion's neck, and again yielding to the caprice of his nether limbs.

The gentlemen will now enjoy a little refreshing sleep; to further which enjoyment, they very coolly and unceremoniously commence a pot−pourri of discordant snoring. This seems of grateful concord for their boon companions, who−forming an equanimity of good feeling on the floor−join in.

The servant is but a slave, subject to her owner's will; she dare not approach him while in such an uncertain condition. Franconia cannot intercede, lest his companions, strangers to her, and having the appearance of low−bred men, taking advantage of M'Carstrow's besotted condition, make rude advances. M'Carstrow, snoring high above his cares, will take his comfort upon the tiles.

The servant is supplied with another candle, which, at Franconia's bidding, she places in a niche of the hall. It will supply light to the grotesque sleepers, whose lamp has gone out.

Franconia has not forgotten that M'Carstrow is her husband; she has not forgotten that she owes him a wife's debt of kindness. She descends the stairs gently, leans over his besotted body, smooths his feverish brow with her hand, and orders the servant to bring a soft cushion; which done, she raises his head and places it beneath−so gently, so carefully. Her loving heart seems swelling with grief, as compassionately she gazes upon him; then, drawing a cambric handkerchief from her bosom, spreads it so kindly over his face. Woman! there is worth in that last little act. She leaves him to enjoy his follies, but regrets their existence. Retiring to the drawing−room, agitated and sleepless, she reclines on a lounge to await the light of morning. Again the faithful servant, endeavouring to appease her mistress's agitation, crouches upon the carpet, resting her head on the ottoman at Franconia's feet.

The morning dawns bright and sunny: Franconia has not slept. She has passed the hours in watchfulness; has watched the negro sleeping, while her thoughts were rivetted to the scene in the hall. She gets up, paces the room from the couch to the window, and sits down again undecided, unresolved. Taking Diana−such is the servant's name−by the hand, she wakes her, and sends her into the hall to ascertain the condition of the sleepers. The metamorphosed group, poisoning the air with their reeking breath, are still enjoying the morbid fruits of their bacchanalianism. Quietly, coolly, and promiscuously, they lay as lovingly as fellows of the animal world could desire.

The servant returns, shaking her head. "Missus, da'h lays yander, so in all fixins dat no tellin' which most done gone. Mas'r seems done gone, sartin!" says the servant, her face glowing with apprehension.

The significant phrase alarms Franconia. She repairs to the hall, and commences restoring the sleepers to consciousness. The gentlemen are doggedly obstinate; they refuse to be disturbed. She recognises the face of one whose business it is to reduce men to the last stage of poverty. Her sensitive nature shudders at the sight, as she views him with a curl of contempt on her lip. "Oh, M'Carstrow,—M'Carstrow!" she whispers, and taking him by the hand, shakes it violently. M'Carstrow, with countenance ghastly and inflamed, begins to raise his sluggish head. He sees Franconia pensively gazing in his face; and yet he enquires who it is that disturbs the progress of his comforts. "Only me!" says the good woman, soliciting him to leave his companions and accompany her.

Oh, you, is it?" he replies, grumblingly, rising on his right elbow, and rubbing his eyes with his left hand. Wildly and vacantly he stares round the hall, as if aroused from a trance, and made sensible of his condition.

"Yes, me−simply me, who, lost to your affections, is made most unhappy−" Franconia would proceed, but is interrupted by her muddling swain.

"Unhappy! unhappy!" says the man of southern chivalry, making sundry irresistible nods. "Propagator of mischief, of evil contentions, of peace annihilators. Ah! ah! ah! Thinking about the lustre of them beggared relations. It always takes fools to make a fuss over small things: an angel wouldn't make a discontented woman happy." Franconia breaks out into a paroxysm of grief, so unfeeling is the tone in which he addresses her. He is a southern gentleman,—happily not of New England in his manners, not of New England in his affections, not of New England in his domestic associations. He thinks Franconia very silly, and scouts with derision the idea of

marrying a southern gentleman who likes enjoyment, and then making a fuss about it. He thinks she had better shut up her whimpering,—learn to be a good wife upon southern principles.

"Husbands should be husbands, to claim a wife's respect; and they should never forget that kindness makes good wives. Take away the life springs of woman's love, and what is she? What is she with her happiness gone, her pride touched, her prospects blasted? What respect or love can she have for the man who degrades her to the level of his own loathsome companions?" Franconia points to those who lie upon the floor, repulsive, and reeking with the fumes of dissipation. "There are your companions," she says.

"Companions?" he returns, enquiringly. He looks round upon them with surprise. "Who are those fellows you have got here?" he enquires, angrily.

"You brought them to your own home; that home you might make happy−"

"Not a bit of it! They are some of your d−d disreputable relations."

"My relations never violate the conduct of gentlemen." "No; but they sponge on me. These my companions!" looking at them inquisitively. "Oh, no! Don't let us talk about such things; I'ze got fifteen hundred dollars and costs to pay for that nigger gal you were fool enough to get into a fit about when we were married. That's what I'ze got for my good−heartedness." M'Carstrow permits his very gentlemanly southern self to get into a rage. He springs to his feet suddenly, crosses and recrosses the hall like one frenzied with excitement. Franconia is frightened, runs up the stairs, and into her chamber, where, secreting herself, she fastens the door. He looks wistfully after her, stamping his foot, but he will not follow. Too much of a polished gentleman, he will merely amuse himself by running over the gamut of his strongest imprecations. The noise creates general alarm among his companions, who, gaining their uprights, commence remonstrating with him on his rude conduct, as if they were much superior beings.

"Now, colonel, major,—or whatever they dubbed ye, in the way of a title," says one, putting his hand to his hat with a swaggering bow; "just stop that ar' sort a' nonsense, and pay over this 'ere little affair afore we gets into polite etiquette and such things. When, to make the expenses, ye comes into a place like ours, and runs up a credit score,—when ye gets so lofty that ye can't tell fifty from five, we puts a sealer on, so customers don't forget in the morning." The modest gentleman presents to M'Carstrow's astonished eyes a note for twenty−seven hundred dollars, with the genuine signature. M'Carstrow takes it in his hand, stares at it, turns it over and over. The signature is his; but he is undecided about the manner of its getting there, and begins to give expression to some doubt.

The gentleman watches M'Carstrow very cautiously. "Straight! colonel−he says−just turn out the shiners, or, to 'commodate, we'll let ye off with a sprinkling of niggers."

The colonel puts the fore−finger of his left hand to his lips, and, with serious countenance, walks twice or thrice across the hall, as if consulting his dignity: "Shell out the niggers first; we'll take the dignity part a'ter," he concludes.

"I demand to know how you came in my house," interrupts the colonel, impatiently. He finds himself in very bad company; company southern gentlemen never acknowledge by daylight.

"We brought you here! Anything else you'd like to know?" is the cool, sneering response. The gentleman will take a pinch of snuff; he draws his fancy box from his pocket, gives the cover a polite rap with his finger, invites the enraged M'Carstrow to "take." That gentleman shakes his head,—declines. He is turning the whole affair over in his head, seems taking it into serious consideration. Seriously, he accepted their accommodation, and now finds himself compelled to endure their painful presence.

"I, I, I−m, rather in doubt," stammers M'Carstrow, fingering the little obligation again, turning it over and over, rubbing his eyes, applying his glass. He sees nothing in the signature to dispute. "I must stop this kind of fishing," he says; "don't do. It 's just what friend Scranton would call very bad philosophy. Gentlemen, suppose you sit down; we'd better consider this matter a little. Han't got a dime in the bank, just now." M'Carstrow is becoming more quiet, takes a philosophical view of the matter, affects more suavity. Calling loudly for the negro servant, that personage presents herself, and is ordered to bring chairs to provide accommodation for the gentlemen, in the hall.

"Might just as well settle the matter in the parlour, colonel; t'wont put you out a mite," the gambler suggests, with a laconic air. He will not trouble M'Carstrow by waiting for his reply. No; he leads the way, very coolly, asking no odds of etiquette; and, having entered the apartment, invites his comrades to take seats. The dignity and

coolness with which the manouvre is executed takes "Boss" M'Carstrow by surprise; makes him feel that he is merely a dependent individual, whose presence there is not much need of. "I tell you what it is, gents, I'ze shaved my accounts at the bank down to the smallest figure, have! but there's an honourable consideration about this matter; and, honour's honour, and I want to discharge it somehow—niggers or cash!" The gentlemen's feelings have smoothed down amazingly. M'Carstrow is entirely serious, and willing to comply.

The gentlemen have seated themselves in a triangle, with the "done over" colonel in the centre.

"Well, niggers will do just as well, provided they are sound, prime, and put at prices so a feller can turn 'em into tin, quick," says the gentleman, who elects himself spokesman of the party.

"Keeps my property in tall condition, but won't shove it off under market quotations, no how!" M'Carstrow interrupts, as the spokesman, affecting the nonchalance of a newly−elected alderman, places his feet upon the rich upholstery of a sofa close by. He would enjoy the extremes of southern comfort. "Colonel, I wish you had a more convenient place to spit," rejoins the gentleman. He will not trouble the maid, however−he let's fly the noxious mixture, promiscuously; it falls from his lips upon the soft hearth−rug. "It will add another flower to the expensive thing," he says, very coolly, elongating his figure a little more. He has relieved himself, wondrously. M'Carstrow calls the servant, points to the additional wreath on the hearth−rug!

"All your nigger property as good−conditioned as that gal?" enquires the gentleman, the others laughing at the nicety of his humour. Rising from his seat very deliberately, he approaches the servant, lays his hand upon her neck and shoulders.

"Not quite so fast, my friend: d−n it, gentlemen, don't be rude. That's coming the thing a little too familiar. There is a medium: please direct your moist appropriations and your improper remarks in their proper places." The girl, cringing beneath the ruffian's hand, places the necessary receptacle at his feet.

The gentleman is offended,—very much offended. He thinks it beneath the expansion of his mind−to be standing on aristocratic nonsense! "Spit boxes and nigger property ain't the thing to stand on about haristocrats; just put down the dimes. Three bright niggers 'll do: turn 'em out."

"Three of my best niggers!" ejaculates the Colonel.

"Nothin' shorter, Colonel."

"Remember, gentlemen, the market price of such property. The demand for cotton has made niggers worth their weight in gold, for any purpose. Take the prosperity of our country into consideration, gentlemen; remember the worth of prime men. The tip men of the market are worth 1200 dollars."

"Might as well lay that kind a' financerin aside, Colonel. What's the use of living in a free country, where every man has a right to make a penny when he can, and talk so? Now, 'pears to me t'aint no use a' mincing the matter; we might a' leaked ye in for as many thousands as hundreds. Seein' how ye was a good customer, we saved ye on a small shot. Better put the niggers out: ownin' such a lot, ye won't feel it! Give us three prime chaps; none a' yer old sawbones what ye puts up at auction when ther' worked down to nothin'."

M'Carstrow's powers of reasoning are quite limited; and, finding himself in one of those strange situations southern gentlemen so often get into, and which not unfrequently prove as perplexing as the workings of the peculiar institution itself, he seeks relief by giving an order for three prime fellows. They will be delivered up, at the plantation, on the following day, when the merchandise will be duly made over, as per invoice. Everything is according to style and honour; the gentlemen pledge their faith to be gentlemen, to leave no dishonourable loop−hole for creeping out. And now, having settled the little matter, they make M'Carstrow the very best of bows, desire to be remembered to his woman, bid him good morning, and leave. They will claim their property−three prime men−by the justice of a "free−born democracy."

M'Carstrow watches them from the house, moralising over his folly. They have gone! He turns from the sight, ascends the stairs, and repairs to meet his Franconia.

CHAPTER XXII. THE VICISSITUDES OF A PREACHER.

WE left Harry, the faithful servant, whose ministerial functions had been employed in elevating the souls of Marston's property, being separated from his wife and sold to Mr. M'Fadden. M'Fadden is a gentleman—we do not impugn the name, in a southern sense—of that class—very large class—who, finding the laws of their own country too oppressive for their liberal thoughts, seek a republican's home in ours. It is to such men, unhappily, the vices of slavery are open. They grasp them, apply them to purposes most mercenary, most vile. The most hardened of foreigners−that essence of degraded outcasts,—may, under the privileges of slavery, turn human misery into the means of making money. He has no true affiliations with the people of the south, nor can he feel aught beyond a selfish interest in the prosperity of the State; but he can be active in the work of evil. With the foreigner—we speak from observation—affecting love of liberty at home, it would seem, only makes him the greater tyrant when slavery gives him power to execute its inhuman trusts. Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden is one of this description of persons; he will make a fortune in the South, and live a gentleman in the North— perhaps, at home on his own native Isle. Education he has none; moral principle he never enjoyed,—never expects to. He is a tall, athletic man, nearly six feet two inches in height, with extremely broad, stooping shoulders, and always walks as if he were meditating some speculation. His dress is usually of southern red−mixed homespun,—a dress which he takes much pride in wearing, in connection with a black brigand hat, which gives his broad face, projecting cheek−bones, and blunt chin, a look of unmistakeable sullenness. Add to this a low, narrow forehead, generally covered with thick tufts of matted black hair, beneath which two savage eyes incessantly glare, and, reader, you have the repulsive personification of the man. Mr. M'Fadden has bought a preacher,—an article with the very best kind of a soul,—which he would send to his place in the country. Having just sent the article to the rail−road, he stands in a neighbouring bar−room, surrounded by his cronies, who are joining him in a social glass, discussing the qualities of the article preacher. We are not favoured with the point at issue; but we hear Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden say, with great force,—"Preachers are only good property under certain circumstances; and if them circumstances ain't just so, it won't do to buy 'em. Old aristocrat rice planters may make a good thing or two on 'em, because they can make 'em regulate the cummin' o' their property, and make it understand what the Lord says about minding their masters." For his−Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden's−own part, he wouldn't give seven coppers for the thinking part of any property, having no belief in that fashionable way of improving its value. "My preacher has been nicely packed up and sent off in advance," he says, wiping his mouth with his coat sleeve, and smacking his lips, as he twirls his glass upon the zinc counter, shakes hands with his friends−they congratulate him upon the good bargain in his divine−and proceeds to the railroad dep“t. Harry has arrived nearly two hours in advance,—delivered in good condition, as stated in a receipt which he holds in his hand, and which purports to be from the baggage−master. "Ah! here you are," says M'Fadden, taking the paper from Harry's hand, as he enters the luggage−room. "Take good care on ye,—I reckon I will!" He looks down upon him with an air of satisfaction. The poor preacher−the soul−glowing property−is yet chained, hand and foot. He sits upon the cold floor, those imploring eyes swelling at the thought that freedom only awaits him in another world. M'Fadden takes a little flask from his breast pocket, and, with a motion of kindness, draws the cork, passes it to him. "It's whiskey!" he says; "take a drop−do ye good, old feller." Quietly the man passes it to his lips, and moistens his mouth. "No winking and blinking−it's tip−top stuff," enjoins M'Fadden; "don't get it every day."

Mr. M'Fadden will take a little himself. "Glad to find ye here, all straight!" he mutters, taking the flask from his mouth. He had returned the receipt to his property; and, having gratified his appetite a little, he begins to take a more perspective view of his theological purchase.

"Yes, master; I am here!" He again holds up his chained hands, drops his face upon his knees; as much as to say, be sure I am all safe and sound.

Looking at the receipt again, and then at his preacher, "Guess 'hain't made a bad rap on ye' to−day!" he ejaculates, taking out his pocket−book and laying away the precious paper as carefully as if it were a hundred dollar note. "Should like to have bought your old woman and young 'uns, but hadn't tin enough. And the way

stock's up now, ain't slow! Look up here, my old buck! just put on a face as bright and smooth as a full moon−no sulkin'. Come along here."

The manacled preacher turns upon his hands, gets up as best he can−M'Fadden kindly assists by taking hold of his shoulder−and follows his purchaser to the platform,—like a submissive animal goaded to the very flesh, but chained, lest it make some show of resentment. "Good heap o' work in ye', old chuck; had a master what didn't understand bringing on't out, though!" mutters M'Fadden, as he introduces Harry to the negro car, at the same time casting a look of satisfaction at the brakeman standing at his left hand ready to receive the freight.

In the car−a dungeon−like box about ten feet square, the only aperture for admitting light being a lattice of about eight inches square, in the door−are three rough negro men and one woman, the latter apparently about twenty years of age.

"Got a tall chap here, boys! Make ye stand round some, in pickin' time; and can preach, too." M'Fadden shakes his head exultingly! "Can put in the big licks preachin'; and I'ze goin' t' let 'im, once in a while. Goin' t' have good times on my place, boys—ha'h! Got a jug of whiskey to have a fandango when ye gits home. Got it somewhere, I knows." Mr. M'Fadden exults over the happy times his boys have at home. He shakes himself all over, like a polar bear just out of the water, and laughs heartily. He has delivered himself of something that makes everybody else laugh; the mania has caught upon his own subtle self. The negroes laugh in expressive cadences, and shrug their shoulders as Mr. M'Fadden continues to address them so sportively, so familiarly. Less initiated persons might have formed very satisfactory opinions of his character. He takes a peep under one of the seats, and with a rhapsody of laughter draws forth a small jug. "You can't come the smuggle over me, boys! I knew ye had a shot somewhere," he exclaims. At his bidding, the woman hands him a gourd, from which he very deliberately helps himself to a stout draught.

"Sit down here!−Isaac, Abraham, Daniel, or whatever yer name is−Mr. M'Fadden addresses himself to his preacher. Ye'll get yer share on't when ye gits to my place." He sets the jug down, and passes the gourd back, saying: "What a saucy hussy ye are!" slapping the woman's black shoulder playfully. "Give him some−won't ye', boys?" he concludes.

Mr. M'Fadden (the cars are not yet ready to start, but the dep“t is thronging with travellers, and the engine is puffing and snorting, as the driver holds his hand on the throttle, and the stoker crams with pitch pine knots the iron steed of fiery swiftness) will step out and take the comfort of his cigar. He pats his preacher on the shoulder, takes off his shackles, rubs his head with his hand, tells the boys to keep an eye on him. "Yes, mas'r," they answer, in tones of happy ignorance. The preacher must be jolly, keep on a bright face, never mind the old gal and her young 'uns, and remember what a chance he will have to get another. He can have two or more, if he pleases; so says his very generous owner.

Mr. M'Fadden shakes hands with his friends on the platform, smokes his cigar leisurely, mingles with the crowd importantly, thinking the while what an unalloyed paragon of amiability he is. Presently the time−bell strikes its warning; the crowd of passengers rush for the cars; the whistle shrieks; the exhaust gives forth its gruff snorts, the connections clank, a jerk is felt, and onward bounds−mighty in power, but controlled by a finger's slightest touch−the iron steed, dragging its curious train of living merchandise.

M'Fadden again finds his way to the negroes' car, where, sitting down in front of his property, he will take a bird's−eye view of it. It is very fascinating to a man who loves the quality of such articles as preachers. He will draw his seat somewhat closer to the minister; his heart bounds with joy at the prime appearance of his purchase. Reaching out his hand, he takes the cap from Harry's head, throws it into the woman's lap; again rubs his hair into a friz. Thus relieved of his pleasing emotions, he will pass into one of the fashionable cars, and take his place among the aristocrats.

"Boss mighty funny when 'e come t' town, and git just so 'e don't see straight: wish 'e so good wen 'e out da'h on de plantation yander," ejaculates one of the negroes, who answers to the name−Joe! Joe seems to have charge of the rest; but he watches M'Fadden's departure with a look of sullen hatred.

"Hard old Boss on time−an't he, boys?" enquires Harry, as an introduction to the conversation.

"Won't take ye long t' find 'um out, I reckon! Git nigger on de plantation 'e don't spa' him, nohow," rejoins another.

"Lor', man, if ye ain't tough ye'll git used up in no time, wid him!" the woman speaks up, sharply. Then, pulling her ragged skirts around her, she casts a sympathising look at Harry, and, raising her hand in a threatening

attitude, and shaking it spitefully in the direction M'Fadden has gone, says:—"If only had dat man, old Boss, where 'um could revenge 'um, how a' would make 'um suffer! He don' treat 'e nigger like 'e do 'e dog. If 'twarn't fo'h Buckra I'd cut 'e troat, sartin." This ominous expression, delivered with such emphasis, satisfies Harry that he has got into the hands of a master very unlike the kind and careless Marston.

Onward the cars speed, with clanking music making din as they go. One of the negroes will add something to change the monotony. Fumbling beneath the seats for some minutes, he draws forth a little bag, carefully unties it, and presents his favourite violin. Its appearance gladdens the hearts of his comrades, who welcome it with smiling faces and loud applause. The instrument is of the most antique and original description. It has only two strings; but Simon thinks wonders of it, and would not swap it for a world of modern fiddles, what don't touch the heart with their music. He can bring out tremendous wailings with these two strings; such as will set the whole plantation dancing. He puts it through the process of tuning, adding all the scientific motions and twists of an Italian first−fiddling artiste. Simon will moisten its ears by spitting on them, which he does, turning and twisting himself into the attitudes of a pompous maestro. But now he has got it in what he considers the very nick of tune; it makes his face glow with satisfaction. "Jest−lef'−'um cum, Simon;—big and strong!" says Joe, beginning to keep time by slapping his hands on his knees. And such a sawing, such a scraping, as he inflicts, never machine of its kind, ancient or modern, got before. Simon and his companions are in ecstasies; but such cross−grained, such painful jingling of sounds! Its charm is irresistible with the negro; he mustn't lose a note of the tune; every creak is exhausted in a break−down dance, which the motion of the "Jim Crow" car makes more grotesque by every now and then jolting them into a huddle in one corner.

Mr. M'Fadden has been told that his property are having a lively time, and thinks he will leave his aristocratic friends, and go to see it; here he is followed by several young gentlemen, anxious to enjoy the hilarity of the scene.

"All my property,—right prime, isn't it?" says M'Fadden, exultingly, nudging one of the young men on the shoulder, as he, returning, enters the car. The gentleman nods assent, sits down, and coolly lights his cigar. "Good thing to have a fiddler on a plantation! I'd rather have it than a preacher; keeps the boys together, and makes 'um a deal better contented," he adds, beginning to exhale the fumes from his weed.

"Yes!−and ye sees, fellers, how I'ze bought a parson, too. Can do the thing up brown now, boys, I reckon," remarks the happy politician, slapping his professional gentleman on the knee, and laughing right heartily.

Turning to Harry with a firm look, he informs the gentlemen that "this critter's kind o got the sulks, a'cos Romescos−he hates Romescos−has bought his wench and young 'uns. Take that out on him, at my place," he adds.

The dancing continues right merrily. One of the young gentlemen would like to have the fiddler strike up "Down in Old Tennessee." The tune is sounded forth with all that warmth of feeling the negro only can add to the comical action of his body.

"Clar' the way; let the boys have a good time," says Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden, taking Harry by the arm and giving him a violent shake. He commands him to join in, and have a jolly good tune with the rest on 'em.

"Have no call for that, master. Let me act but the part of servant to you."

"Do you mean to come nigger sulks over this child?" interrupts M'Fadden, impatiently, scowling his heavy eyebrows, and casting a ferocious look at Harry. After ordering him to stow himself in a corner, he gets the others upon the floor, and compels them to shuffle what he calls a plantation "rip−her−up." The effect of this, added to the singular positions into which they are frequently thrown by the motion of the cars, affords infinite amusement.

"You see, gentlemen, there's nothing like putting the springs of life into property. Makes it worth fifty per cent. more; and then ye'll get the hard knocks out to a better profit. Old southerners spoil niggers, makin' so much on 'em; and soft−soapin' on 'em. That bit o' property's bin spiled just so−he points to Harry, crouched in the corner−And the critter thinks he can preach! Take that out on him with a round turn, when I git to my place," he continues.

Harry cares very little for M'Fadden's conversation; he sits as quietly and peaceably as if it had been addressed to some other negro. M'Fadden, that he may not be found wanting in his efforts to amuse the young gentlemen, reaches out his hand to one of them, takes his cigar from a case, lights it, and proceeds to keep time by beating his hands on his knees.

The train is approaching the crossing where Mr. M'Fadden will discharge his property,—his human

merchandise, and proceed with it some eleven miles on the high road. The noise created by the exuberance of feeling on the part of Mr. M'Fadden has attracted a numerous assemblage of passengers to the "Jim Crow" car. The conductor views this as violating the rules of the corporation; he demands it shall be stopped. All is quiet for a time; they reach the "crossing" about five o'clock P.M., where, to Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden's great delight, he finds himself surrounded by a promiscuous assembly of sovereign citizens, met to partake of the hospitalities offered by the candidate for the Assembly, who, having offered himself, expects the distinguished honour of being elected. The assembled citizens will hear what the learned man's going to talk about when he gets into the Assembly.

As Mr. M'Fadden is a great politician, and a greater democrat−we speak according to the southern acceptation−his presence is welcomed with an enthusiastic burst of applause. Shout after shout makes the very welkin ring, as his numerous friends gather round him, smile solicitously, shake him warmly by the hand, honour him as the peasantry honour the Lord of the Manor.

The crossing−one of those points so well known in the south−is a flat, wooded lawn, interspersed here and there with clumps of tall pine−trees. It is generally dignified with a grocery, a justice's office, and a tavern, where entertainment for man and beast may always be had. An immense deal of judicial and political business "is put through a process" at these strange places. The squire's law−book is the oracle; all settlements must be made by it; all important sayings drawn from it. The squire himself is scarcely less an individual of mysterious importance; he draws settled facts from his copious volume, and thus saves himself the trouble of analysing them. Open it where he will, the whys and wherefores for every case are never wanting.

Our present crossing is a place of much importance, being where the political effervescence of the state often concentrates. It will not do, however, to analyse that concentration, lest the fungi that give it life and power may seem to conflict with the safety of law and order. On other occasions it might be taken for a place of rural quiet, instead of those indescribable gatherings of the rotten membranes of a bad political power.

Here the justice's office is attached to the grocery, a little shop in which all men may drink very deleterious liquor; and, in addition to the tavern, which is the chief building−a quadrangular structure raised a few feet from the ground on piles of the palmetto tree−there is a small church, shingled and clapboarded, and having a belfry with lattice−work sides. An upper and lower veranda surround the tavern, affording gentlemen an opportunity to enjoy the shade.

Several of Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden's friends meet him at the station, and, as he receives his property, assist him in securing it with irons preparatory to lodging it in a place of safe keeping.

"Goin' t' make this chap a deacon on my place; can preach like sixty. It'll save the trouble sendin' north for such trash as they send us. Can make this feller truer on southern principles," says M'Fadden, exultingly, addressing himself to his companions, looking Harry smilingly in the face, and patting him on the shoulder. The gentlemen view Harry with particular admiration, and remark upon his fine points with the usual satisfaction of connoisseurs. Mr. M'Fadden will secure his preacher, in iron fellowship, to the left hand of the woman slave.

"All right!" he says, as the irons are locked, and he marches his property up to the tavern, where he meets mine host−a short, fat man, with a very red and good−natured face, who always dresses in brown clothes, smiles, and has an extra laugh for 'lection days−who stands his consequential proportions in the entrance to the lower veranda, and is receiving his customers with the blandest smiles. "I thinks a right smart heap on ye, or I would'nt a' 'gin ye that gal for a mate," continues M'Fadden, walking along, looking at Harry earnestly, and, with an air of self−congratulation, ejecting a quantity of tobacco−juice from his capacious mouth. "Mr. M'Fadden is very, very welcome;" so says mine host, who would have him take a social glass with his own dear self.

Mr. M'Fadden must be excused until he has seen the place in which to deposit his preacher and other property.

"Ah, ha!"−mine host cants his ear, enquiringly;—"want grits for 'em, I s'pose?" he returns, and his round fat face glows with satisfaction. "Can suit you to a shavin'."

"That's right, Colonel; I know'd ye could," ejaculates the other. Mine host is much elated at hearing his title appended. Colonel Frank Jones−such is mine host's name—never fought but one duel, and that was the time when, being a delegate to the southern blowing−up convention, lately holden in the secession city of Charleston, he entered his name on the register of the Charleston Hotel—"Colonel Frank Jones, Esq., of the South Carolina Dragoons;" beneath which an impertinent wag scrawled−"Corporal James Henry Williamson M'Donal Cudgo, Esq. of the same regiment." Colonel Frank Jones, Esq. took this very gross insult in the highest kind of dudgeon,

and forthwith challenged the impertinent wag to settle the matter as became gentlemen. The duel, however, ended quite as harmlessly as the blowing−up convention of which Mr. Colonel Frank Jones was a delegate, the seconds−thoughtless wretches−having forgot to put bullets in the weapons.

Our readers must excuse us for digressing a little. Mine host rubs his hands, draws his mouth into a dozen different puckers, and then cries out at the top of his voice, "Ho, boys, ho!"

Three or four half−clad negroes come scampering into the room, ready to answer the summons. "Take charge o' this property o' my friend's here. Get 'em a good tuck out o' grits."

"Can grind 'em themselves," interrupts M'Fadden, quickly. "About the price, Colonel?"

"That's all straight," spreading his hands with an accompanying nod of satisfaction: "'commodate ye with a first−rate lock−up and the grits at seven−pence a day."

"No objection." Mr. M'Fadden is entirely satisfied. The waiters take the gentleman's property in charge, and conduct it to a small building, an appropriate habitation of hens and pigs. It was of logs, rough hewn, without chinking; without floor to keep Mr. M'Fadden's property from the ground, damp and cold. Unsuited as it is to the reception of human beings, many planters of great opulence have none better for their plantation people. It is about ten feet high, seven broad, and eleven long.

"Have a dandy time on't in here to−night," says Mr. M'Fadden, addressing himself to Harry, as one of the waiters unlocks the door and ushers the human property into its dreary abode. Mr. M'Fadden will step inside, to take a bird's−eye view of the security of the place. He entertains some doubts about the faith of his preacher, however, and has half an inclination to turn round as he is about making his exit. He will. Approaches Harry a second time; he feels his pockets carefully, and suggests that he has some mischievous weapon of liberty stowed away somewhere. He presses and presses his hands to his skirts and bosom. And now he knew he was not mistaken, for he feels something solid in the bosom of his shirt, which is not his heart, although that thing makes a deuce of a fluttering. Mr. M'Fadden's anxiety increases as he squeezes his hands over its shapes, and watches the changes of Harry's countenance. "Book, ha'h!" he exclaims, drawing the osnaburg tight over the square with his left hand, while, with his right, he suddenly grasps Harry firmly by the hair of the head, as if he has discovered an infernal machine. "Book, ha'h!"

"Pull it out, old buck. That's the worst o' learned niggers; puts the very seven devils in their black heads, and makes 'em carry their conceit right into nigger stubbornness, so ye have t' bring it out by lashin' and botherin'. Can't stand such nigger nonsense nohow."

Harry has borne all very peaceably; but there is a time when even the worm will turn. He draws forth the book,—it is the Bible, his hope and comforter; he has treasured it near his heart−that heart that beats loudly against the rocks of oppression. "What man can he be who feareth the word of God, and says he is of his chosen? Master, that's my Bible: can it do evil against righteousness? It is the light my burdened spirit loves, my guide—"

"Your spirit?" inquires M'Fadden, sullenly, interrupting Harry. "A black spirit, ye' mean, ye' nigger of a preacher. I didn't buy that, nor don't want it. 'Taint worth seven coppers in picking time. But I tell ye, cuff, wouldn't mind lettin' on ye preach, if a feller can make a spec good profit on't." The gentleman concludes, contracting his eyebrows, and scowling at his property forbiddingly.

"You'll let me have it again when I gets on the plantation, won't ye, master?" inquires Harry, calmly.

"Let you have it on the plantation?"−Mr. M'Fadden gives his preacher a piercingly fierce look−"that's just where ye won't have 't. Have any kind o' song−book ye' wants; only larn 'em to other niggers, so they can put in the chorus once in a while. Now, old buck (I'm a man o' genius, ye know), when niggers get larnin' the Bible out o' ther' own heads, 't makes 'em sassy'r than ther's any calculatin' on. It just puts the very d−l into property. Why, deacon," he addresses himself to Harry with more complacency, "my old father−he was as good a father as ever came from Dublin−said it was just the spilin' on his children to larn 'em to read. See me, now! what larnin' I'ze got; got it all don't know how: cum as nat'ral as daylight. I've got the allfired'st sense ye ever did see; and it's common sense what makes money. Yer don't think a feller what's got sense like me would bother his head with larnin' in this ar' down south?" Mr. M'Fadden exhibits great confidence in himself, and seems quite playful with his preacher, whom he pats on the shoulder and shakes by the hand. "I never read three chapters in that ar' book in my whole life−wouldn't neither. Really, deacon, two−thirds of the people of our State can't read a word out o' that book. As for larnin', I just put me mind on the thing, and got the meanin' out on't sudden."

Mr. M'Fadden's soothing consolation, that, as he has become such a wonderful specimen of mankind without

learning, Harry must be a very dangerous implement of progress if allowed to go about the plantation with a Bible in his pocket, seems strange in this our Christian land. "Can fiddle just as much as yer mind t'," concludes Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden, as he again shakes the hand of his preacher, and proceeds to mingle with the political gathering, the Bible in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXIII. HOW WE MANUFACTURE POLITICAL FAITH.

MR. M'FADDEN enters the tavern, which presents one of those grotesque scenes so peculiarly southern, almost impossible for the reader to imagine, and scarcely less for pen to describe. In and around the verandas are numerous armchairs, occupied by the fashionable portion of the political material, who, dressed in extreme profuseness, are displaying their extraordinary distinctions in jewellery of heavy seals and long dangling chains. Some are young men who have enjoyed the advantage of a liberal education, which they now turn into the more genial duty of ornamenting themselves. They have spent much time and many valuable cosmetics on their heads, all of which is very satisfactorily repaid by the smoothness of their hair. Their pleasure never penetrated beyond this; they ask no more.

They ask but little of the world, and are discussing the all−important question, whether Colonel Mophany or General Vandart will get the more votes at the polls. So they smoke and harangue, and drink and swear, and with inimitable provincialisms fill up the clattering music. There is a fascinating piquancy in the strange slang and conversational intermixture. It is a great day at the crossing; the political sediment has reduced all men to one grade, one harmonious whole, niggers excepted. Spirits that cannot flow one way must flow another.

In an adjoining room sit the two candidates−gentlemen of high distinction−for the votes of the sovereign people. Through those sovereign rights they will satisfy their yearning desire to reach the very high position of member of the general assembly. Anxiety is pictured on their very countenances; it is the fruit of care when men travel the road to distinction without finding it. They are well dressed, and would be modest, if modesty were worth its having in such an atmosphere. Indeed, they might have been taken for men with other motives than those of gaining office by wallowing in a political quagmire reeking with democratic filth. Courteous to each other, they sit at a large table containing long slips of paper, each candidate's sentiments printed thereon. As each voter—good fellow that he is—enters the room, one or the other candidate reaches out his hand to welcome him, and, as a sequel, hands him his slip, making the politest bow. Much is said about the prospects of the South, and much more that is very acceptable to those about to do the drinking part of the scene.

Both candidates are very ambitious men; both profess to be the people's champion−the sovereign people−the dear people−the noble−hearted people−the iron−handed, unbribable, unterrified democracy−the people from whom all power springs. The never−flinching, unterrified, irresistible democracy are smothered with encomiums of praise, sounding from all parts of the room. Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden is ushered into the room to the great joy of his friends: being a very great man among the loyal voters, his appearance produces great excitement.

Several friends of the candidates, working for their favourites, are making themselves very humble in their behalf. Although there is little care for maintaining any fundamental principle of government that does not serve his own pocket, Mr. M'Fadden can and will control a large number of votes, do a deal of knocking down at the polls, and bring up first−rate fighting men to do the keeping away the opposite's constituents. Thus our man, who has lately been bought as preacher, is most useful in this our little democratic world.

Some two or three hundred persons have collected near a clump of trees on the lawn, and are divided into knots intermixed with ruffian−looking desperadoes, dressed most coarsely and fantastically. They are pitting their men, after the fashion of good horses; then they boldly draw forth and expose the minor delinquencies of opposing candidates. Among them are the "Saw− piters," who affect an air of dignity, and scout the planter's offer of work so long as a herring runs the river; the "piny woods−man," of great independence while rabbits are found in the woods, and he can wander over the barren unrestrained; and the "Wire−Grass−Men;" and the Crackers,

Singular species of gypsies, found throughout the State. who live anywhere and everywhere, and whom the government delights to keep in ignorance, while declaring it much better they were enslaved. The State possesses many thousands of these people; but few of them can read, while never having written a stroke in their lives is a boast. Continually armed with double−barrel guns, to hunt the panting buck is one of their sports; to torture a runaway negro is another; to make free with a planter's corn field is the very best. The reader may imagine this picture of lean, craven faces−unshaven and made fiercely repulsive by their small, treacherous eyes, if he can. It

can only be seen in these our happy slave states of our happy Union.

The time draws near when the candidates will come forward, address the sovereign constituency, and declare their free and open principles−their love of liberal governments, and their undying affection for the great truths of democracy. The scene, as the time approaches, becomes more and more animated. All are armed to the teeth, with the symbol of honour—something so called—beneath their coarse doublets, or in the waistbands of their pantaloons. The group evinces so much excitement that belligerents are well nigh coming to blows; in fact, peace is only preserved by the timely appearance of the landlord, who proclaims that unless order be preserved until after the candidates have addressed them, the next barrel of whiskey will positively "not be tapped." He could not use a more effectual argument. Mr. M'Fadden, who exercises great authority over the minions under him, at this announcement mounts the top of an empty whiskey barrel, and declares he will whip the "whole crowd," if they do not cease to wage their political arguments.

While the above cursory remarks and party sparrings are going on, some forty negroes are seen busily employed preparing the indispensable adjuncts of the occasion−the meats. Here, beneath the clump of trees, a few yards from the grocery and justices' office, the candidates' tables are being spread with cold meats, crackers, bread and cheese, cigars, As soon as the gentlemen candidates have delivered themselves of their sentiments, two barrels of real "straight−back" whiskey will be added.

"This is the way we puts our candidate through, down south, ye see, fellers, voters: it's we what's the bone and siners o' the rights o' the south. It's we what's got t' take the slow−coach politics out o' the hands o' them ar' old harristocrats what don't think them ar' northern abolitionists han't goin to do nothin. It's we, fellow citizens, what puts southern−rights principles clean through; it's we what puts them ar' old Union haristocrats, what spiles all the nigger property, into the straight up way o' doing things! Now, feller voters, free and independent citizens−freemen who have fought for freedom,—you, whose old, grey−headed fathers died for freedom! it takes you t' know what sort a thing freedom is; and how to enjoy it so niggers can't take it away from you! I'ze lived north way, know how it is! Yer jist the chaps to put niggers straight,—to vote for my man, Colonel Mohpany," Mr. M'Fadden cries out at the very top of his voice, as he comes rushing out of the tavern, edging his way through the crowd, followed by the two candidates. The gentlemen look anxiously good−natured; they walk together to the rostrum, followed by a crowd, measuring their way to the assembly through the darling affections of our free and independent voters. Gossamer citizenship, this!

As they reach the rostrum, a carriage is seen in the distance, approaching in great haste. All attention being directed to it, the first candidate, Colonel Mohpany, mounts the stump, places his right hand in his bosom, and pauses as if to learn who it brings. To the happy consolation of Mr. M'Fadden and his friends, it bears Mr. Scranton the philosopher. Poor Mr. Scranton looks quite worn out with anxiety; he has come all the way from the city, prepared with the very best kind of a southern−rights speech, to relieve his friend, General Vardant, who is not accustomed to public declamation. The General is a cunning fellow, fears the stump accomplishments of his antagonist, and has secured the valuable services of philosopher Scranton. Mr. S. will tell the constituency, in very logical phraseology,—making the language suit the sentiments of his friends,—what principles must be maintained; how the General depends upon the soundness of their judgment to sustain him; how they are the bone and sinews of the great political power of the South; how their hard, uncontrastable appearance, and their garments of similar primitiveness, are emblematic of the iron firmness of their democracy. Mr. Scranton will further assure them that their democracy is founded on that very accommodating sort of freedom which will be sure to keep all persons of doubtful colour in slavery.

Mr. Scranton arrives, receives the congratulations of his friends, gets the negroes to brush him down,—for it is difficult to distinguish him from a pillar of dust, save that we have his modest eyes for assurances−takes a few glasses of moderate mixture, and coolly collects his ideas. The mixture will bring out Mr. Scranton's philosophical facts: and, now that he has got his face and beard cleanly washed, he will proceed to the stand. Here he is received with loud cheering; the gentleman is a great man, all the way from the city. Sitting on a chair he is sorry was made at the north, he exhibits a deal of method in taking from his pocket a long cedar pencil, with which he will make notes of all Colonel Mohpany's loose points.

The reader, we feel assured, will excuse us for not following Colonel Mohpany through his speech, so laudatory of the patriotism of his friends, so much interrupted by applause. The warm manner in which his conclusion is received assures him that he now is the most popular man in the State. Mr. Scranton, armed with his

usually melancholy countenance, rises to the stump, makes his modestly political bow, offers many impressive apologies for the unprepared state in which he finds himself, informs his hearers that he appears before them only as a substitute for his very intimate and particular friend, General Vardant. He, too, has a wonderful prolixity of compliments to bestow upon the free, the patriotic, the independent voters of the very independent district. He tries to be facetious; but his temperament will not admit of any inconsistencies, not even in a political contest. No! he must be serious; because the election of a candidate to so high an office is a serious affair. So he will tell the "Saw−pit men" a great deal about their noble sires; how they lived and died for liberty; how the tombstones of immortality are emblazoned with the fame of their glorious deeds. And he will tell these glorious squatters what inalienable rights they possess; how they must be maintained; and how they have always been first to maintain the principle of keeping "niggers" in their places, and resisting those mischievous propagators of northern villainy−abolitionists. He will tell the deep−thinking saw−pit voters how it has been charged against them that they were only independent once a year, and that was when herrings run up the Santee river. Such a gross slander Mr. Scranton declares to be the most impious. They were always independent; and, if they were poor, and preferred to habit themselves in primitive garbs, it was only because they preferred to be honest! This, Mr. Scranton, the northern philosopher, asserts with great emphasis. Yes! they are honest; and honest patriots are always better than rich traitors. From the san−pit men, Mr. Scranton, his face distended with eloquence, turns to his cracker and "wire−grass" friends, upon whom he bestows most piercing compliments. Their lean mules−the speaker laughs at his own wit−and pioneer waggons always remind him of the good old times, when he was a boy, and everybody was so honest it was unnecessary even to have such useless finery as people put on at the present day. A word or two, very derogatory of the anti−slavery people, is received with deafening applause. Of the descendants of the Huguenots he says but little; they are few, rich, and very unpopular in this part of the little sovereign state. And he quite forgot to tell this unlettered mass of a sovereign constituency the true cause of their poverty and degradation. Mr. Scranton, however, in one particular point, which is a vital one to the slave−ocracy, differs with the ungovernable Romescos,—he would not burn all common schools, nor scout all such trash as schoolmasters.

In another part of Mr. Scranton's speech he enjoins them to be staunch supporters of men known to be firm to the south, and who would blow up every yankee who came south, and refused to declare his sentiments to be for concession. "You!"−he points round him to the grotesque crowd−"were first to take a stand and keep niggers down; to keep them where they can't turn round and enslave you! Great Britain, fell ercitizens,"−Mr. Scranton begins to wax warm; he adjusts his coat sleeves, and draws himself into a tragic attitude as he takes his tobacco from his mouth, seemingly unconscious of his own enthusiasm−I say Great Britain−" A sudden interruption is caused. Mr. Scranton's muddled quid, thrown with such violence, has bedaubed the cheek of an admiring saw−pitter, whose mind was completely absorbed in his eloquence. He was listening with breathless suspense, and only saved its admission in his capacious mouth by closing it a few seconds before.

"Sarved him just right; keep on, Colonel!" exclaims Mr. M'Fadden. He takes the man by the arm, pushes him aside, and makes a slight bow to Mr. Scranton. He would have him go on.

"Great Britain−feller citizens, I say−was first to commence the warfare against nigger slavery; and now she is joining the north to seek its permanent overthrow. She is a monster tyrant wherever she sets her foot−I say! (Three cheers for that.) She contributed to fasten the curse upon us; and now she wants to destroy us by taking it away according to the measures of the northern abolitionists−fanaticism! Whatever the old school southerner neglects to do for the preservation of the peculiar institution, we must do for him! And we, who have lived at the north, can, with your independent support, put the whole thing through a course of political crooks." Again Mr. Scranton pauses; surveys his assembly of free and independent citizens.

"That we can: I knows what fanatics down east be!" rejoins Mr. M'Fadden, shaking his head very knowingly. He laughs with an air of great satisfaction, as much as to say that, with such northern philosophers to do the championism of slavery in the south, all the commercial relations for which northern merchants are under so many obligations to slave−labour, will be perfectly safe. But Mr. Scranton has drawn out his speech to such an uncommon length, that the loquacious M'Fadden is becoming decidedly wearied. His eyes begin to glow languid, and the lids to close,—and now he nods assent to all Mr. Scranton's sayings, which singularly attracts the attention of that orator's hearers. The orator becomes very much annoyed at this, suddenly stops−begs Mr. M'Fadden will postpone his repose. This, from so great a man as Mr. Scranton, is accepted as provokingly witty. Mr. M'Fadden

laughs; and they all laugh. The gentleman will continue his speech.

"The South must come out; must establish free trade, direct trade,—trade that will free her from her disreputable association with the North. She can do it!" Mr. Scranton wipes his forehead with his white pocket−handkerchief.

"Ain't we deeply indebted to the North?" a voice in the crowd cries out.

"Well! what if we are? Can't we offset the debts on the principles of war? Let it go against the injury of abolition excitements!" Mr. Scranton makes a theatrical flourish with his right hand, and runs the fingers of his left through his crispy hair, setting it on end like quills on a porcupine's back. Three long and loud cheers follow, and the gentleman is involuntarily compelled to laugh at his own singular sayings. "The South must hold conventions; she must enforce constitutional guarantees; she must plant herself in the federal capital, and plead her cause at the bar of the world. She will get a hearing there! And she must supplant that dangerous engine of abolition, now waging war against our property, our rights, our social system." Thus concluding, Mr. Scranton sits down, very much fatigued from his mental effervescence, yet much lighter from having relieved himself of his speech, amidst a storm of applause. Such a throwing up of hats and slouches, such jostling, abetting, and haranguing upon the merits of the candidates, their speeches and their sentiments, never was heard or seen before.

Mine host now mounts the stand to make the welcome announcement, that, the speeches being over, the eating entertainments are ready. He hopes the friends of the candidates will repair to the tables, and help themselves without stint or restraint. As they are on the point of rushing upon the tables, Colonel Mohpany suddenly jumps up, and arrests the progress of the group by intimating that he has one word more to say. That word is, his desire to inform the bone and sinew of the constituency that his opponent belongs to a party which once declared in the Assembly that they−the very men who stand before him now−were a dangerous class unless reduced to slavery! The Colonel has scarcely delivered himself of this very clever charge, when the tables, a few yards distant, are surrounded by promiscuous friends and foes, who help themselves after the fashion most advantageous. All rules of etiquette are unceremoniously dispensed with,—he who can secure most is the best diplomatist. Many find their mouths so inadequate to the temptation of the feast, that they improve on Mr. Scranton's philosophy by making good use of their ample pockets. Believe us, reader, the entertainment is the essential part of the candidate's political virtue, which must be measured according to the extent of his cold meats and very bad whiskey.

To carry out the strength of General Vardant's principles, several of his opponent's friends are busily employed in circulating a report that his barrel of whiskey has been "brought on" only half full. A grosser slander could not have been invented. But the report gains circulation so fast, that his meats and drinks are mischievously absorbed, and the demonstration of his unpopular position begins to be manifest. The candidates, unflinching in their efforts, mix with the medley, have the benefit of the full exercise of free thought and action, hear various opinions upon "the Squire's chances," and listen to the chiming of high−sounding compliments. While this clanging of merry jargon is at its highest, as if by some magic influence Romescos makes his appearance, and immediately commences to pit sides with Mr. M'Fadden. With all Romescos' outlawry, he is tenacious of his southern origin; and he will assert its rights against Mr. M'Fadden, whom he declares to be no better than a northern humbug, taking advantage of southern institutions. To him all northerners are great vagabonds, having neither principles nor humanity in their composition; he makes the assertion emphatically, without fear or trembling; and he calls upon his friends to sustain him, that he may maintain the rights of the South. Those rights Romescos asserts, and re−asserts, can only be preserved by southern men−not by sneaking northerners, who, with their trade, pocket their souls. Northerners are great men for whitewashing their faces with pretence! Romescos is received with considerable ,clat. He declares, independently, that Mr. Scranton too is no less a sheer humbug of the same stripe, and whose humbugging propensities make him the humble servant of the south so long as he can make a dollar by the bemeaning operation. His full and unmeasured appreciation of all this northern−southern independence is here given to the world for the world's good. And he wants the world to particularly understand, that the old southerner is the only independent man, the only true protector of humanity!

Romescos' sudden appearance, and the bold stand he takes against Mr. M'Fadden and his candidate, produce the utmost confusion; he being unpopular with the saw−pit men, with whom he once exhibited considerable dexterity in carrying off one of their number and putting the seal of slavery on him, they take sides against him. It is the Saw−pitters against Romescos and the Crackers. The spirits have flowed, and now the gods of our political

power sway to and fro under most violent shocks. Many, being unable to keep a perpendicular, are accusing each other of all sorts of misdeeds−of the misdeeds of their ancestors−of the specific crimes they committed−the punishments they suffered. From personalities of their own time they descend forth into jeering each other on matters of family frailty, setting what their just deserts would have entitled them to receive. They continue in this strain of jargon for some time, until at length it becomes evident the storm of war is fast approaching a crisis. Mr. M'Fadden is mentally unprepared to meet this crisis, which Romescos will make to suit himself; and to this end the comical and somewhat tragical finale seems pretty well understood by the candidates and a few of the "swell−ocracy," who have assembled more to see the grand representation of physical power on the part of these free and enlightened citizens, than to partake of the feast or listen to the rhetoric of the speeches. In order to get a good view of the scene they have ascended trees, where, perched among their branches like so many jackals, they cheer and urge on the sport, as the nobility of Spain applaud a favourite champion of the ring. At length the opposing parties doff their hats and coats, draw knives, make threatening grimaces, and twirl their steel in the air: their desperation is earnest; they make an onset, charging with the bravado of men determined to sacrifice life. The very air resounds with their shouts of blasphemy; blood flows from deep incisions of bowie−knives, garments are rent into shreds; and men seem to have betaken themselves to personating the demons.

Would that they were rational beings! would that they were men capable of constituting a power to protect the liberty of principle and the justice of law! Shout after shout goes up; tumult is triumphant. Two fatal rencontres are announced, and Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden is dangerously wounded; he has a cut in the abdomen. The poor victims attract but little attention; such little trifling affairs are very common, scarcely worth a word of commiseration. One gentleman insinuates that the affair has been a desperately amusing one; another very coolly adds, that this political feed has had much more interest in it than any preceding one.

The victims are rolled in blankets, and laid away in the corn−shed; they will await the arrival of the coroner, who, the landlord says, it will be no more than right to send for. They are only two dead Crackers, however, and nobody doubts what the verdict will be. In truth−and it must be told once in a while, even in our atmosphere−the only loss is the two votes, which the candidate had already secured with his meat and drink, and which have now, he regrets, been returned to the box of death instead of his ballot. Poor voters, now only fit to serve the vilest purpose! how degraded in the scale of human nature is the being, only worth a suffrance at elections, where votes cast from impulse control the balance of power. Such beings are worth just nothing; they would not sell in the market. The negro waiters say, "It don't make a bit of matter how much white rubbish like this is killed, it won't fetch a bid in the market; and when you sell it, it won't stay sold."

"Lose I dat way, Cato, might jist as well take tousand dollar straight out o' mas'r's pocket; but dese critters b'nt notin' nohow," says old Daniel, one of the servants, who knows the value of his own body quite well. Daniel exults as he looks upon the dead bodies he is assisting to deposit in the corn−shed.

Mr. M'Fadden is carefully borne into the tavern, where, after much difficulty, he is got up stairs and laid on a very nice bed, spread with snowy white linen. A physician is called, and his wound dressed with all possible skill and attention. He is in great pain, however; begs his friends to bestow all care upon him, and save no expense.

Thus ends our political day. The process of making power to shape the social and political weal of our State, closes.

CHAPTER XXIV. MR. M'FADDEN SEES SHADOWS IN THE FUTURE.

NIGHT has quickly drawn its curtain over the scene. Mr. M'Fadden lies on his bed, writhing under the pain of the poisoned wound. He left his preacher locked up for the night in a cold hovel, and he has secured the dangerous Bible, lest it lessen his value. Mr. M'Fadden, however, feels that now his earthly career is fast closing he must seek redemption. Hie has called in the aid of a physician, who tells him there is great danger, and little hope unless his case takes a favourable turn about midnight. The professional gentleman merely suggests this, but the suggestion conveys an awful warning. All the misdeeds of the past cloud before his eyes; they summon him to make his peace with his Maker. He remembers what has been told him about the quality of mercy,—the duration of hope in redemption,—which he may secure by rendering justice to those he has wronged. But now conscience wars with him; he sees the fierce elements of retribution gathering their poisoned shafts about him; he quails lest their points pierce his heart; and he sees the God of right arraigning him at the bar of justice. There, that Dispenser of all Good sits in his glory and omnipotence, listening while the oppressed recites his sufferings: the oppressed there meets him face to face, robed in that same garb of submission which he has inflicted upon him on earth. His fevered brain gives out strange warnings,—warnings in which he sees the angel of light unfolding the long list of his injustice to his fellow man, and an angry God passing the awful sentence. Writhing, turning, and contorting his face, his very soul burns with the agony of despair. He grasps the hand of his physician, who leans over his wounded body, and with eyes distorted and glassy, stares wildly and frantically round the room. Again, as if suffering inward torture, he springs from his pillow, utters fierce imprecations against the visions that surround him, grasps at them with his out−stretched fingers, motions his hand backward and forward, and breaks out into violent paroxysms of passion, as if struggling in the unyielding grasp of death.

That physical power which has so long borne him up in his daily pursuits yields to the wanderings of his haunted mind. He lays his hand upon the physician's shoulder as his struggles now subside, looks mournfully in his face, and rather mutters than speaks: "Bring−bring−bring him here: I'll see him,—I must see him! I−I−I took away the book; there's what makes the sting worse! And when I close my eyes I see it burning fiercely−"

"Who shall I bring?" interrupts the physician, mildly, endeavouring to soothe his feelings by assuring him there is no danger, if he will but remain calm.

"Heaven is casting its thick vengeance round me; heaven is consuming me with the fire of my own heart! How can I be calm, and my past life vaulted with a glow of fire? The finger of Almighty God points to that deed I did today. I deprived a wretch of his only hope: that wretch can forgive me before heaven. Y−e−s, he can,—can speak for me,—can intercede for me; he can sign my repentance, and save me from the just vengeance of heaven. His−his−his−"

"What?" the physician whispers, putting his ear to his mouth. "Be calm."

"Calm!" he mutters in return.

"Neither fear death nor be frightened at its shadows−"

"It's life, life, life I fear—not death!" he gurgles out. "Bring him to me; there is the Bible. Oh! how could I have robbed him of it! 'Twas our folly—all folly—my folly!" Mr. M'Fadden had forgotten that the bustle of current life was no excuse for his folly; that it would be summed up against him in the day of trouble. He never for once thought that the Bible and its teachings were as dear to slave as master, and that its truths were equally consoling in the hour of death. In life it strengthens man's hopes; could it have been thus with M'Fadden before death placed its troubled sea before his eyes, how happy he would have died in the Lord!

The emphatic language, uttered in such supplicating tones, and so at variance with his habits of life, naturally excited the feelings of his physician, whose only solicitude had been evinced in his efforts to save life,—to heal the wound. Never had he watched at a patient's bed−side who had exhibited such convulsions of passion,—such fears of death.

Now struggling against a storm of convulsions, then subsiding into sluggish writhings, accompanied with low moans, indicating more mental disquietude than bodily pain. Again he is quiet; points to his coat.

The physician brings it forward and lays it upon the bed, where Mr. M'Fadden can put his hand upon it. "It is there—in there!" he says, turning on his left side, and with a solicitous look pointing to the pockets of his coat. The professional gentleman does not understand him.

He half raises himself on his pillow, but sinks back fatigued, and faintly whispers, "Oh, take it to him—to him! Give him the comforter: bring him, poor fellow, to me, that his spirit may be my comforter!"

The physician understands, puts his hand into the pocket; draws forth the little boon companion. It is the Bible, book of books; its great truths have borne Harry through many trials,—he hopes it will be his shield and buckler to carry him through many more. Its associations are as dear to him as its teachings are consoling in the days of tribulation. It is dear to him, because the promptings of a noble−hearted woman secretly entrusted it to his care, in violation of slavery's statutes. Its well−worn pages bear testimony of the good service it has done. It was Franconia's gift−Franconia, whose tender emotions made her the friend of the slave−made in the kindness of woman's generous nature. The good example, when contrasted with the fierce tenor of slavery's fears, is worthy many followers.

But men seldom profit by small examples, especially when great fears are paramount.

The physician, holding the good book in his hand, enquires if Mr. M'Fadden would have him read from it? He has no answer to make, turns his feverish face from it, closes his eyes, and compressing his forehead with his hands, mutely shakes his head. A minute or two passes in silence; he has re−considered the point,—answers, no! He wants Harry brought to him, that he may acknowledge his crimes; that he may quench the fire of unhappiness burning within him. "How seldom we think of death while in life,—and how painful to see death while gathering together the dross of this worldly chaos! Great, great, great is the reward of the good, and mighty is the hand of Omnipotence that, holding the record of our sins, warns us to prepare." As Mr. M'Fadden utters these words, a coloured woman enters the room to enquire if the patient wants nourishment. She will wait at the door.

The physician looks at the patient; the patient shakes his head and whispers, "Only the boy. The boy I bought to−day." The Bible lays at his side on the sheet. He points to it, again whispering, "The boy I took it from!"

The boy, the preacher, Mr. M'Fadden's purchase, can read; she will know him by that; she must bring him from the shed, from his cold bed of earth. That crime of slavery man wastes his energies to make right, is wrong in the sight of heaven; our patient reads the glaring testimony as the demons of his morbid fancy haunt him with their damning terrors, their ghastly visages.

"Go, woman, bring him!" he whispers again.

Almost motionless the woman stands. She has seen the little book−she knows it, and her eyes wander over the inscription on the cover. A deep blush shadows her countenance; she fixes her piercing black eyes upon it until they seem melting into sadness; with a delicacy and reserve at variance with her menial condition, she approaches the bed, lays her hand upon the book, and, while the physician's attention is attracted in another direction, closes its pages, and is about to depart.

"Can you tell which one he wants, girl?" enquires the physician, in a stern voice.

"His name, I think, is Harry; and they say the poor thing can preach; forgive me what I have done to him, oh Lord! It is the weakness of man grasping the things of this world, to leave behind for the world's nothingness," says Mr. M'Fadden, as the woman leaves the room giving an affirmative reply.

The presence of the Bible surprised the woman; she knew it as the one much used by Harry, on Marston's plantation. It was Franconia's gift! The associations of the name touched the chord upon which hung the happiest incidents of her life. Retracing her steps down the stairs, she seeks mine host of the tavern, makes known the demand, and receives the keys of this man−pen of our land of liberty. Lantern in hand, she soon reaches the door, unlocks it gently, as if she expects the approach of some strange object, and fears a sudden surprise.

There the poor dejected wretches lay; nothing but earth's surface for a bed,—no blanket to cover them. They have eaten their measure of corn, and are sleeping; they sleep while chivalry revels! Harry has drawn his hat partly over his face, and made a pillow of the little bundle he carried under his arm.

Passing from one to the other, the woman approaches him, as if to see if she can recognise any familiar feature. She stoops over him, passes the light along his body, from head to foot, and from foot to head. "Can it be our Harry?" she mutters. "It can't be; master wouldn't sell him." Her eyes glare with anxiety as they wander up and down his sleeping figure.

"Harry,—Harry,—Harry! which is Harry?" she demands.

Scarcely has she lisped the words, when the sleeper starts to his feet, and sets his eyes on the woman with a stare of wonderment. His mind wanders−bewildered; is he back on the old plantation? That cannot be; they would not thus provide for him there. "Back at the old home! Oh, how glad I am: yes, my home is there, with good old master. My poor old woman; I've nothing for her, nothing," he says, extending his hand to the woman, and again, as his mind regains itself, their glances become mutual; the sympathy of two old associates gushes forth from the purest of fountains,—the oppressed heart.

"Harry−oh, Harry! is it you?"

"Ellen! my good Ellen, my friend, and old master's friend!" is the simultaneous salutation.

"Sold you, too?" enquires Harry, embracing her with all the fervour of a father who has regained his long−lost child. She throws her arms about his neck, and clings to him, as he kisses, and kisses, and kisses her olive brow.

"My sale, Harry, was of little consequence; but why did they sell you? (Her emotions have swollen into tears). You must tell me all, to−night! You must tell me of my child, my Nicholas,—if master cares for him, and how he looks, grows, and acts. Oh, how my heart beats to have him at my side;—when, when will that day come! I would have him with me, even if sold for the purpose." Tears gush down her cheeks, as Harry, encircling her with his arm, whispers words of consolation in her ear.

"If we were always for this world, Ellen, our lot could not be borne. But heaven has a recompense, which awaits us in the world to come. Ellen!"−he holds her from him and looks intently in her face−"masters are not to blame for our sufferings,—the law is the sinner! Hope not, seek not for common justice, rights, privileges, or anything else while we are merchandise among men who, to please themselves, gamble with our souls and bodies. Take away that injustice, Ellen, and men who now plead our unprofitableness would hide their heads with shame. Make us men, and we will plead our own cause; we will show to the world that we are men; black men, who can be made men when they are not made merchandise." Ellen must tell him what has brought her here, first! He notices sad changes in her countenance, and feels anxious to listen to the recital of her troubles.

She cannot tell him now, and begs that he will not ask her, as the recollection of them fills her heart with sorrow. She discloses the object of her mission, will guide him to his new master, who, they say, is going to die, and feels very bad about it. He was a desperate man on his plantation, and has become the more contrite at death's call. "I hope God will forgive him!"

"He will!−He will! He is forgiving," interrupts Harry, hurriedly.

Ellen reconnoitres the wearied bodies of the others as they lie around. "Poor wretches! what can I do for them?" she says, holding the lamp over them. She can do but little for them, poor girl. The will is good, but the wherewith she hath not. Necessity is a hard master; none know it better than the slave woman. She will take Harry by the hand, and, retracing her steps, usher him into the presence of the wounded man. Pressing his hand as she opens the door, she bids him good night, and retires to her cabin. "Poor Harry!" she says, with a sigh.

The kind woman is Ellen Juvarna. She has passed another eventful stage of her eventful life. Mine host, good fellow, bought her of Mr. O'Brodereque, that's all!

CHAPTER XXV. HOW THEY STOLE THE PREACHER.

THE scenes we have described in the foregoing chapter have not yet been brought to a close. In and about the tavern may be seen groups of men, in the last stage of muddled mellowness, the rank fumes of bad liquor making the very air morbid. Conclaves of grotesque figures are seated in the veranda and drinking−room, breaking the midnight stillness with their stifled songs, their frenzied congratulations, their political jargon; nothing of fatal consequence would seem to have happened.

"Did master send for me? You've risen from a rag shop, my man!" interrupts the physician.

"Master there−sorry to see him sick−owns me." Harry cast a subdued look on the bed where lay his late purchaser.

Harry's appearance is not the most prepossessing,—he might have been taken for anything else but a minister of the gospel; though the quick eye of the southerner readily detected those frank and manly features which belong to a class of very dark men who exhibit uncommon natural genius.

At the sound of Harry's voice, M'Fadden makes an effort to raise himself on his elbow. The loss of blood has so reduced his physical power that his effort is unsuccessful. He sinks back, prostrate,—requests the physician to assist him in turning over. He will face his preacher. Putting out his hand, he embraces him cordially,—motions him to be seated.

The black preacher, that article of men merchandise, takes a seat at the bed−side, while the man of medicine withdraws to the table. The summons is as acceptable to Harry as it is strange to the physician, who has never before witnessed so strange a scene of familiarity between slave and master. All is silent for several minutes. Harry looks at his master, as if questioning the motive for which he is summoned into his presence; and still he can read the deep anxiety playing upon M'Fadden's distorted countenance. At length, Harry, feeling that his presence may be intrusive, breaks the silence by enquiring if there is anything he can do for master. Mr. M'Fadden whispers something, lays his trembling hand on Harry's, casts a meaning glance at the physician, and seems to swoon. Returning to his bed−side, the physician lays his hand upon the sick man's brow; he will ascertain the state of his system.

"Give−him−his−Bible," mutters the wounded man, pointing languidly to the table. "Give it to him that he may ask God's blessing for me−for me−for me,—"

The doctor obeys his commands, and the wretch, heart bounding with joy, receives back his inspiring companion. It is dear to him, and with a smile of gratitude invading his countenance he returns thanks. There is pleasure in that little book. "And now, Harry, my boy," says M'Fadden, raising his hand to Harry's shoulder, and looking imploringly in his face as he regains strength; "forgive what I have done. I took from you that which was most dear to your feelings; I took it from you when the wounds of your heart were gushing with grief−" He makes an effort to say more, but his voice fails; he will wait a few moments.

The kind words touch Harry's feelings; tears glistening in his eyes tell how he struggles to suppress the emotions of his heart. "Did you mean my wife and children, master?" he enquires.

M'Fadden, somewhat regaining strength, replies in the affirmative. He acknowledges to have seen that the thing "warn't just right." His imagination has been wandering through the regions of heaven, where, he is fully satisfied, there is no objection to a black face. God has made a great opening in his eyes and heart just now. He sees and believes such things as he neither saw nor believed before; they pass like clouds before his eyes, never, never to be erased from his memory. Never before has he thought much about repentance; but now that he sees heaven on one side and hell on the other, all that once seemed right in bartering and selling the bodies and souls of men, vanishes. There, high above all, is the vengeance of heaven written in letters of blood, execrating such acts, and pointing to the retribution. It is a burning consciousness of all the suffering he has inflicted upon his negroes. Death, awful monitor! stares him in the face; it holds the stern realities of truth and justice before him; it tells him of the wrong,—points him to the right. The unbending mandates of slave law, giving to man power to debase himself with crimes the judicious dare not punish, are being consumed before Omnipotence, the warning voice of

which is calling him to his last account.

And now the wounded man is all condescension, hoping forgiveness! His spirit has yielded to Almighty power; he no longer craves for property in man; no, his coarse voice is subdued into softest accents. He whispers "coloured man," as if the merchandise changed as his thoughts are brought in contact with revelations of the future.

"Take the Bible, my good boy−take it, read it to me, before I die. Read it, that it may convert my soul. If I have neglected myself on earth, forgive me; receive my repentance, and let me be saved from eternal misery. Read, my dear good boy,"−M'Fadden grasps his hand tighter and tighter−"and let your voice be a warning to those who never look beyond earth and earth's enjoyments." The physician thinks his patient will get along until morning, and giving directions to the attendants, leaves him.

Harry has recovered from the surprise which so sudden a change of circumstances produced, and has drawn from the patient the cause of his suffering. He opens the restored Bible, and reads from it, to Mr. M'Fadden's satisfaction. He reads from Job; the words producing a deep effect upon the patient's mind.

The wretched preacher, whose white soul is concealed beneath black skin, has finished his reading. He will now address himself to his master, in the following simple manner.

"Master, it is one thing to die, and another to die happy. It is one thing to be prepared to die, another to forget that we have to die, to leave the world and its nothingness behind us. But you are not going to die, not now. Master, the Lord will forgive you if you, make your repentance durable. 'Tis only the fear of death that has produced the change on your mind. Do, master! learn the Lord; be just to we poor creatures, for the Lord now tells you it is not right to buy and sell us."

"Buy and sell you!" interrupts the frightened man, making an effort to rise from his pillow; "that I never will, man nor woman. If God spares my life, my people shall be liberated; I feel different on that subject, now! The difference between the commerce of this world and the glory of heaven brightens before me. I was an ignorant man on all religious matters; I only wanted to be set right in the way of the Lord,—that's all." Again he draws his face under the sheet, writhing with the pain of his wound.

"I wish everybody could see us as master does, about this time; for surely God can touch the heart of the most hardened. But master ain't going to die so soon as he thinks," mutters Harry, wiping the sweat from his face, as he lays his left hand softly upon master's arm. "God guide us in all coming time, and make us forget the retribution that awaits our sins!" he concludes, with a smile glowing on his countenance.

The half spoken words catch upon the patient's ear. He starts suddenly from his pillow, as if eager to receive some favourable intelligence. "Don't you think my case dangerous, my boy? Do you know how deep is the wound?" he enquires, his glassy eyes staring intently at Harry.

"It is all the same, master!" is the reply.

"Give me your hand again"−M'Fadden grasps his hand and seems to revive−"pray for me now; your prayers will be received into heaven, they will serve me there!"

"Ah, master," says Harry, kindly, interrupting him at this juncture, "I feel more than ever like a christian. It does my heart good to hear you talk so true, so kind. How different from yesterday! then I was a poor slave, forced from my children, with nobody to speak a kind word for me; everybody to reckon me as a good piece of property only. I forgive you, master−I forgive you; God is a loving God, and will forgive you also." The sick man is consoled; and, while his preacher kneels at his bed−side, offering up a prayer imploring forgiveness, he listens to the words as they fall like cooling drops on his burning soul. The earnestness—the fervency and pathos of the words, as they gush forth from the lips of a wretch, produce a still deeper effect upon the wounded man. Nay, there is even a chord loosened in his heart; he sobs audibly. "Live on earth so as to be prepared for heaven; that when death knocks at the door you may receive him as a welcome guest. But, master! you cannot meet our Father in heaven while the sin of selling men clings to your garments. Let your hair grow grey with justice, and God will reward you," he concludes.

"True, Harry; true!"—he lays his hand on the black man's shoulder, is about to rise—"it is the truth plainly told, and nothing more." He will have a glass of water to quench his thirst; Harry must bring it to him, for there is consolation in his touch. Seized with another pain, he grasps with his left hand the arm of his consoler, works his fingers through his matted hair, breathes violently, contorts his face haggardly, as if suffering acutely. Harry waits till the spasm has subsided, then calls an attendant to watch the patient while he goes to the well. This done he

proceeds into the kitchen to enquire for a vessel. Having entered that department as the clock strikes two, he finds Ellen busily engaged preparing food for Mr. M'Fadden's property, which is yet fast secured in the pen. Feeling himself a little more at liberty to move about unrestrained, he procures a vessel, fills it at the well, carries it to his master's bed−side, sees him comfortably cared for, and returns to the kitchen, where he will assist Ellen in her mission of goodness.

The little pen is situated a few yards from the tavern, on the edge of a clump of tall pines.

Ellen has got ready the corn and bacon, and with Harry she proceeds to the pen, where the property are still enjoying that inestimable boon,—a deep sleep.

"Always sleeping," he says, waking them one by one at the announcement of corn and bacon. "Start up and get something good my girl has prepared for you." He shakes them, while Ellen holds the lantern. There is something piercing in the summons−meats are strong arguments with the slave−they start from their slumbers, seize upon the food, and swallow it with great relish. Harry and Ellen stand smiling over the gusto with which they swallow their coarse meal.

"You must be good boys to−night. Old master's sick; flat down on e' back, and 'spects he's going to die, he does." Harry shakes his head as he tells it to the astonished merchandise. "Had a great time at the crossing to−day; killed two or three certain, and almost put master on the plank."

"'Twarn't no matter, nohow: nobody lose nofin if old Boss do die: nigger on e' plantation don' put e' hat in mournin'," mutters the negro woman, with an air of hatred. She has eaten her share of the meal, shrugs her shoulders, and again stretches her valuable body on the ground.

"Uncle Sparton know'd old Boss warn't gwine t' be whar de debil couldn't cotch 'em, so long as 'e tink. If dat old mas'r debil, what white man talk 'bout so much, don' gib 'em big roasting win 'e git 'e dah, better hab no place wid fireins fo' such folks," speaks up old Uncle Sparton, one of the negroes, whose face shines like a black−balled boot.

"Neber mind dat, Uncle Sparton; 'taint what ye say 'bout he. Ven mas'r debil cotch old Boss 'e don't cotch no fool. Mas'r debil down yander find old Boss too tuf fo' he business; he jus' like old hoss what neber die," rejoins another.

In a word, M'Fadden had told his negroes what a great democrat he was−how he loved freedom and a free country−until their ideas of freedom became strangely mystified; and they ventured to assert that he would not find so free a country when the devil became his keeper. "Mas'r tink 'e carry 'e plantation t' t'oder world wid him, reckon," Uncle Sparton grumblingly concludes, joining the motley conclave of property about to resume its repose.

Ellen returns to the house. Harry will remain, and have a few words more with the boys. A few minutes pass, and Ellen returns with an armful of blankets, with which she covers the people carefully and kindly. How full of goodness−how touching is the act! She has done her part, and she returns to the house in advance of Harry, who stops to take a parting good−night, and whisper a word of consolation in their ears. He looks upon them as dear brothers in distress, objects for whom he has a fellow sympathy. He leaves them for the night; closes the door after him; locks it. He will return to Ellen, and enjoy a mutual exchange of feeling.

Scarcely has he left the door, when three persons, disguised, rush upon him, muffle his head with a blanket, bind his hands and feet, throw him bodily into a waggon, and drive away at a rapid speed.

CHAPTER XXVI. COMPETITION IN HUMAN THINGS.

IT is enough to inform the reader that Romescos and Mr. M'Fadden were not only rival bidders for this very desirable piece of preaching property, but, being near neighbours, had become inveterate enemies and fierce political opponents. The former, a reckless trader in men, women, and children, was a daring, unprincipled, and revengeful man, whose occupation seldom called him to his plantation; while the latter was notorious as a hard master and a cruel tyrant, who exacted a larger amount of labour from his negroes than his fellow planters, and gave them less to eat. His opinion was, that a peck of corn a week was quite enough for a negro; and this was his systematic allowance;—but he otherwise tempted the appetites of his property, by driving them, famished, to the utmost verge of necessity. Thus driven to predatory acts in order to sustain life, the advantages offered by Romescos' swamp−generally well sprinkled with swine−were readily appropriated to a very good use.

Under covert of Romescos' absence, Mr. M'Fadden had no very scrupulous objection to his negroes foraging the amply provided swamp,—provided, however, they did the thing on the sly, were careful whose porker they dispatched, and said nothing to him about the eating. In fact, it was simply a matter of economy with Mr. M'Fadden; and as Romescos had a great number of the obstinate brutes, it saved the trouble of raising such undignified stock. Finding, however, that neighbour M'Fadden, or his predatory negroes−such they were called−were laying claim to more than a generous share of their porkships, Romescos thought it high time to put the thing down by a summary process. But what particularly "riled" Romescos in this affair of the hogs was, that M'Fadden's negroes were not content with catching them in an honourable way, but would do it through the agency of nasty cur−dogs, which he always had despised, and held as unfit even to hunt niggers with. Several times had he expressed his willingness to permit a small number of his grunters to be captured for the benefit of his neighbour's half−starved negroes, provided, always, they were hunted with honourable hound−dogs. He held such animals in high esteem, while curs he looked upon with utter contempt; he likened the one to the chivalrous old rice−planter, the other to a pettifogging schoolmaster fit for nothing but to be despised and shot. With these feelings he (Romescos) declared his intention to kill the very first negro he caught in his swamp with cur−dogs; and he kept his word. Lying in ambush, he would await their approach, and, when most engaged in appropriating the porkers, rush from his hiding−place, shoot the dogs, and then take a turn at the more exhilarating business of shooting the negroes. He would, with all possible calmness, command the frightened property to approach and partake of his peculiar mixture, administered from his double−barrel gun.

That the reader may better understand Romescos' process of curing this malady of his neighbour's negroes, we will give it as related by himself. It is a curious mode of dispatching negro property; the reader, however, cannot fail to comprehend it. "Plantin' didn't suit my notions o' gittin' rich, ye see, so I spec'lates in nigger property, and makes a better thing on't. But there's philosophy about the thing, and a body's got t' know the hang on't afore he can twist it out profitably; so I keeps a sort of a plantation just to make a swell; cos ye got to make a splash to be anybody down south. Can't be a gentleman, ye see, 'cept ye plants cotton and rice; and then a feller what's got a plantation in this kind of a way can be a gentleman, and do so many other bits of trade to advantage. The thing works like the handle of a pump; and then it makes a right good place for raising young niggers, and gettin' old uns trimmed up. With me, the worst thing is that old screwdriver, M'Fadden, what don't care no more for the wear and tear of a nigger than nothin', and drives 'em like as many steam−engines he thinks he can keep going by feeding on saw−dust. He han't no conception o' nigger constitution, and is just the worst sort of a chap that ever cum south to get a fortune. Why, look right at his niggers: they look like crows after corn−shuckin. Don't give 'em no meat, and the critters must steal somethin' t' keep out o' the bone−yard. Well, I argers the case with Mack, tells him how t'll be atween he and me on this thing, and warns him that if he don't chunk more corn and grease into his niggers, there 'll be a ruptous fuss. But he don't stand on honour, as I does, especially when his property makes a haul on my swamp of shoats. I an't home often; so the hogs suffer; and Mack's niggers get the pork. This 'ere kind o' business"—Romescos maintains the serious dignity of himself the while—"don't go down nohow with me; so Mack and me just has a bit of a good−natured quarrel; and from that we gets at daggers' points, and I swears

how I'll kill the first nigger o' his'n what steals hogs o' mine. Wouldn't a cared a sous, mark ye, but it cum crossways on a feller's feelins to think how the 'tarnal niggers had no more sense than t' hunt hogs o' mine with cur−dogs: bin hounds, honourable dogs, or respectable dogs what 'll do to hunt niggers with, wouldn't a cared a toss about it; but−when−I−hears−a cur−dog yelp, oh! hang me if it don't set my sensations all on pins, just as somethin' was crucifyin' a feller. I warns and talks, and then pleads like a lawyer what's got a bad case; but all to no end o' reformin' Mack's morals,—feller han't got no sense o' reform in him. So I sets my niggers on the scent−it gives 'em some fun−and swears I'll kill a nigger for every hog he steals. This I concludes on; and I never backs out when once I fixes a conclusion.

"Hears the infernal cur−dog's yelp, yelp, yelp, down in the swamp; then I creeps through the jungle so sly, lays low till the fellers cum up, all jumpin'−pig ahead, then dogs, niggers follerin', puffin' and blowin', eyes poppin' out, 'most out o' breath, just as if they tasted the sparerib afore they'd got the critter.

"Well, ye see, I know'd all the ins and outs of the law,—keeps mighty shy about all the judicial quibbles on't,—never takes nobody with me whose swearin' would stand muster in a court of law. All right on that score (Romescos exults in his law proficiency). I makes sure o' the dogs fust, ollers keepin' the double−barrel on the right eye for the best nigger in the lot. It would make the longest−faced deacon in the district laugh to see the fire flash out o' the nigger's big black eyes, when he sees the cur drop, knowin' how he'll get the next plugs souced into him. It's only natural, cos it would frighten a feller what warn't used to it just to see what a thunder−cloud of agitation the nigger screws his black face into. And then he starts to run, and puts it like streaks o' cannon−balls chased by express lightnin'.

"'Stand still, ye thievin' varmint! hold up,—bring to a mooring: take the mixture according to Gunter!' I shouts. The way the nigger pulls up, begs, pleads, and says things what'll touch a feller's tender feelins, aint no small kind of an institution. 'Twould just make a man what had stretchy conscience think there was somethin' crooked somewhere. 'Well, boys,' says I, feeling a little soft about the stomach, 'seeing how it's yer Boss what don't feed ye, I'll be kind o' good, and give ye a dose of the mixture in an honourable way.' Then I loads t'other barrel, the feller's eyes flashin' streaks of blue lightnin' all the time, lookin' at how I rams it down, chunk! 'Now, boys,' says I, when the plugs shot is all ready, 'there's system 'bout this ere thing a' mine—t'aint killin' ye I wants,—don't care a copper about that (there an't no music in that), but must make it bring the finances out a' yer master's pocket. That's the place where he keeps all his morals. Now, run twenty paces and I'll gin ye a fair chance! The nigger understands me, ye see, and moves off, as if he expected a thunderbolt at his heel, lookin' back and whining like a puppy what's lost his mother. Just when he gets to an honourable distance,—say twenty paces, according to fighting rule,—I draws up, takes aim, and plumps the plugs into him. The way the critter jumps reminds me of a circus rider vaultin' and turnin' sumersets. You'd think he was inginrubber 'lectrified. A'ter all, I finds these playin' doses don't do; they don't settle things on the square. So I tries a little stronger mixture, which ends in killin' three o' Mack's niggers right up smooth. But the best on't is that Mack finds he han't no proof, goes right into it and kills three o' my prime fat niggers: that makes us bad friends on every score. But he got a nigger ahead o' me a'ter awhile, and I ware detarmined to straighten accounts, if it was by stealin' the odds. Them ar's my principles, and that's just the way I settles accounts with folks what don't do the square thing in the way o' nigger property."

Thus the two gentlemen lived in the terror of internal war; and Romescos, seeing such a fine piece of property pass into the hands of his antagonist, resolved on squaring accounts by stealing the preacher,—an act Mr. M'Fadden least expected.

The candidates' festival offered every facility for carrying this singular coup−d',tat into effect. Hence, with the skilful assistance of Nath. Nimrod, and Dan Bengal, Harry was very precipitately and dexterously passed over to the chances of a new phase of slave life.

Ellen waited patiently for Harry's return until it became evident some ill−luck had befallen him. Lantern in hand, she proceeds to the pen in search. No Harry is to be found there; Mr. M'Fadden's common negroes only are there, and they sleep sweetly and soundly. What can have befallen him? She conjectures many things, none of which are the right. The lock is upon the door; all is still outside; no traces of kidnapping can be found. She knows his faithfulness,— knows he would not desert his master unless some foul means had been used to decoy him into trouble. She returns to the house and acquaints her master.

Straggling members, who had met to enjoy the generous political banquet, and who still remain to see the

night "through" with appropriate honour, are apprised of the sudden disappearance of this very valuable piece of property. They are ready for any turn of excitement,—anything for "topping off" with a little amusement; and to this end they immediately gather round mine host in a party of pursuit. Romescos−he must make his innocence more imposing−has been conspicuous during the night, at times expressing sympathy for Mr. M'Fadden, and again assuring the company that he has known fifty worse cases cured. In order to make this better understood, he will pay the doctor's bill if M'Fadden dies. Mine host has no sooner given the alarm than Romescos expresses superlative surprise. He was standing in the centre of a conclave of men, whom he harangues on the particular political points necessary for the candidates to support in order to maintain the honour of the State; now he listens to mine host as he recounts the strange absence of the preacher, pauses and combs his long red beard with his fingers, looks distrustfully, and then says, with a quaintness that disarmed suspicion, "Nigger−like!−preacher or angel, nigger will be nigger! The idea o' makin' the black rascals preachers, thinkin' they won't run away! Now, fellers, that ar' chap's skulkin' about, not far off, out among the pines; and here's my two dogs"−he points to his dogs, stretched on the floor−"what'll scent him and bring him out afore ten minutes! Don't say a word to Mack about it; don't let it 'scape yer fly−trap, cos they say he's got a notion o' dying, and suddenly changed his feelins 'bout nigger tradin'. There's no tellin' how it would affect the old democrat if he felt he warnt goin' to slip his breeze. This child"−Romescos refers to himself−"felt just as Mack does more nor a dozen times, when Davy Jones looked as if he was making slight advances: a feller soon gets straight again, nevertheless. It's only the difference atween one's feelings about makin' money when he's well, and thinkin' how he made it when he's about to bid his friends good morning and leave town for awhile. Anyhow, there aint no dodging now, fellers! We got to hunt up the nigger afore daylight, so let us take a drop more and be moving." He orders the landlord to set on the decanters,—they join in a social glass, touch glasses to the recovery of the nigger, and then rush out to the pursuit. Romescos heads the party. With dogs, horses, guns, and all sorts of negro−hunting apparatus, they scour the pinegrove, the swamp, and the heather. They make the pursuit of man full of interest to those who are fond of the chase; they allow their enthusiasm to bound in unison with the sharp baying of the dogs.

For more than two hours is this exhilarating sport kept up. It is sweet music to their ears; they have been trained (educated) to the fascination of a man−hunt, and dogs and men become wearied with the useless search.

Romescos declares the nigger is near at hand: he sees the dogs curl down their noses; he must be somewhere in a hole or jungle of the swamp, and, with more daylight and another dog or two, his apprehension is certain. He makes a halt on the brow of a hill, and addresses his fellow−hunters from the saddle. In his wisdom on nigger nature he will advise a return to the tavern−for it is now daylight−where they will spend another hour merrily, and then return brightened to the pursuit. Acting on this advice, friends and foes−both join as good fellows in the chase for a nigger−followed his retreat as they had his advance.

"No nigger preacher just about this circle, Major!" exclaims Romescos, addressing mine host, as he puts his head into the bar−room, on his return. "Feller's burrowed somewhere, like a coon: catch him on the broad end of morning, or I'll hang up my old double−barrel," he concludes, shaking his head, and ordering drink for the party at his expense.

The morning advanced, however, and nothing was to be seen of Romescos: he vanished as suddenly from among them as Harry had from the pen. Some little surprise is expressed by the knowing ones; they whisper among themselves, while mine host reaches over the counter, cants his head solicitously, and says:—"What's that, gentlemen?"

In this dilemma they cannot inform mine host; they must continue the useless chase without Romescos' valuable services. And here we must leave mine host preparing further necessaries for capturing the lost property, that he may restore it to its owner so soon as he shall become convalescent, and turn to Harry.

Like a well−stowed bale of merchandise, to be delivered at a stated place within a specified time, he was rolled in bagging, and not permitted to see the direction in which he was being driven. When the pursuing party started from the crossing, Romescos took the lead in order to draw it in an opposite direction, and keep the dogs from the trail. This would allow the stolen clergyman to get beyond their reach. When daylight broke upon the capturers they were nearly twenty miles beyond the reach of the pursuers, approaching an inn by the road side. The waggon suddenly stopped, and Harry found himself being unrolled from his winding sheet by the hands of two strangers. Lifting him to his feet, they took him from the waggon, loosed the chains from his legs, led him into the house, and placed him in a dark back room. Here, his head being uncovered, he looks upon his captors

with an air of confusion and distrust. "Ye know me too, I reckon, old feller, don't ye?" enquires one of the men, with a sardonic grin, as he lifts his hat with his left hand, and scratches his head with his right.

"Yes, mas'r; there's no mistakin on ye!" returns Harry, shaking his head, as they release the chains from his hands. He at length recognises the familiar faces of Dan Bengal and Nath. Nimrod. Both have figured about Marston's plantation, in the purchase and sale of negroes.

"Ye had a jolly good ride, old feller, had'nt ye?" says Bengal, exultingly, looking Harry in the face, shrugging his shoulders, and putting out his hand to make his friendship.

Harry has no reply to make; but rubs his face as if he is not quite satisfied with his new apartment, and wants to know a little more of the motive of the expedition. "Mas'r! I don't seem to know myself, nor nothin'. Please tell me where I am going to, and who is to be my master? It will relieve my double troubles," he says, casting an enquiring look at Nimrod.

"Shook up yer parson−thinkin' some, I reckon, did'nt it, old chap?" returns Nimrod, laughing heartily, but making no further reply. He thinks it was very much like riding in a railroad backwards.

"Did my sick mas'r sell me to you?" again he enquires.

"No business o' yourn, that ain't; yer nigger−knowin ought to tell you how ye'd got into safe hands. We'll push along down south as soon as ye gets some feed. Put on a straight face, and face the music like a clever deacon, and we'll do the square in selling ye to a Boss what 'll let ye preach now and then. (Nimrod becomes very affectionate). Do the thing up righteous, and when yer sold there 'll be a five−dollar shiner for yerself. (He pats him on the head, and puts his arm over his shoulder.) Best t' have a little shot in a body's own pocket; now, shut up yer black bread−trap, and don't go makin a fuss about where yer goin' to: that's my business!"

Harry pauses as if in contemplation; he is struggling against his indignation excited by such remarks. He knew his old master's weaknesses, enjoyed his indulgences; but he had never been made to feel so acutely how degraded he could be as a mere article of trade. It would have been some consolation to know which way he was proceeding, and why he had been so suddenly snatched from his new owner. Fate had not ordained this for him; oh no! He must resign himself without making any further enquiries; he must be nothing more than a nigger—happy nigger happily subdued! Seating himself upon the floor, in a recumbent position, he drops his face on his knees,—is humbled among the humblest. He is left alone for some time, while his captors, retiring into an adjoining room, hold a consultation.

Breakfast is being prepared, and much conversation is kept up in an inaudible tone of voice. Harry has an instinctive knowledge that it is about him, for he hears the words, "Peter! Peter!" his name must be transmogrified into "Peter!" In another minute he hears dishes rattling on the table, and Bengal distinctly complimenting the adjuncts, as he orders some for the nigger preacher. This excites his anxiety; he feels like placing his ear at the keyhole,—doing a little evesdropping. He is happily disappointed, however, for the door opens, and a black boy bearing a dish of homony enters, and, placing it before him, begs that he will help himself. Harry takes the plate and sets it beside him, as the strange boy watches him with an air of commiseration that enlists his confidence. "Ain't da'h somefin mo' dat I can bring ye?" enquires the boy, pausing for an answer.

"Nothing,—nothing more!"

Harry will venture to make some enquiries about the locality. "Do you belong to master what live here?" He puts out his hand, takes the other by the arm.

"Hard tellin who I belongs to. Buckra man own 'em to−day; ain't sartin if he own 'em to−morrow, dough. What country−born nigger is you?"

"Down country! My poor old master's gone, and now I'm goin'; but God only knows where to. White man sell all old Boss's folks in a string,—my old woman and children among the rest. My heart is with them, God bless them!"

"Reckon how ya' had a right good old Boss what larn ye somethin." The boy listens to Harry with surprise. "Don't talk like dat down dis a way; no country−born nigger put in larn'd wods so, nohow," returns the boy, with a look of curious admiration.

"But you harn't told me what place this is?"

"Dis 'ouse! e' ant nowhare when Buckra bring nigger what he want to sell, and don' want nobody to know whar e' bring him from. Dat man what bring ye here be great Buckra. De 'h way he lash nigger whin e' don do jist so!" The boy shakes his head with a warning air.

"How did you get here? There must be roads leading in some directions?"

"Roads runnin' every which way, yand'r; and trou de woods anyway, but mighty hard tellin whar he going to, he is. Mas'r Boss don lef 'e nigger know how 'e bring'um, nor how he takes 'um way. Guess da 'h gwine to run ye down country, so God bless you," says the boy, shaking him by the hand, and taking leave.

"Well! if I only knew which way I was going I should feel happy; because I could then write to my old master, somewhere or somehow. And I know my good friend Missus Rosebrook will buy me for her plantation,—I know she will. She knows my feelings, and in her heart wouldn't see me abused, she wouldn't! I wish I knew who my master is, where I am, and to whom I'm going to be sold next. I think new master has stolen me, thinking old master was going to die," Harry mutters to himself, commencing his breakfast, but still applying his listening faculties to the conversation in the next room. At length, after a long pause, they seem to have finished breakfast and taken up the further consideration of his sale.

"I don't fear anything of the kind! Romescos is just the keenest fellow that can be scared up this side of Baltimore. He never takes a thing o' this stamp in hand but what he puts it through," says Bengal, in a whispering tone.

"True! the trouble's in his infernal preaching; that's the devil of niggers having intelligence. Can do anything in our way with common niggers what don't know nothin'; but when the critters can do clergy, and preach, they'll be sending notes to somebody they know as acquaintances. An intelligent nigger's a bad article when ye want to play off in this way," replies the other, curtly.

"Never mind," returns Bengal, "can't ollers transpose a nigger, as easy as turnin' over a sixpence, specially when he don't have his ideas brightened. Can't steer clar on't. Larnin's mighty dangerous to our business, Nath.−better knock him on the head at once; better end him and save a sight of trouble. It'll put a stopper on his preaching, this pesks exercisin' his ideas."

A third interrupts. "Thinks such a set of chicken−hearted fellows won't do when it comes to cases of 'mergency like this. He will just make clergyman Peter Somebody the deacon; and with this honorary title he'll put him through to Major Wiley's plantation, when he'll be all right down in old Mississippi. The Colonel and he, understanding the thing, can settle it just as smooth as sunrise. The curate is what we call a right clever fellow, would make the tallest kind of a preacher, and pay first−rate per centage on himself." Bengal refers to Harry. His remarks are, indeed, quite applicable. "I've got the dockerment, ye see, all prepared; and we'll put him through without a wink," he concludes, in a measured tone of voice.

The door of Harry's room opens, and the three enter together. "Had a good breakfast, old feller, hain't ye?" says Nimrod, approaching with hand extended, and patting him on the head with a child's playfulness. "I kind o' likes the looks on ye" (a congratulatory smile curls over his countenance), "old feller; and means to do the square thing in the way o' gettin' on ye a good Boss. Put on the Lazarus, and no nigger tricks on the road. I'm sorry to leave ye on the excursion, but here's the gentleman what'll see ye through,—will put ye through to old Mississip just as safe as if ye were a nugget of gold." Nimrod introduces Harry to a short gentleman with a bald head, and very smooth, red face. His dress is of brown homespun, a garb which would seem peculiar to those who do the villainy of the peculiar institution. The gentleman has a pair of handcuffs in his left hand, with which he will make his pious merchandise safe. Stepping forward, he places the forefinger of his right hand on the preacher's forehead, and reads him a lesson which he must get firm into his thinking shell. It is this. "Now, at this very time, yer any kind of a nigger; but a'ter this ar' ye got to be a Tennessee nigger, raised in a pious Tennessee family. And yer name is Peter−Peter−Peter!−don't forget the Peter: yer a parson, and ought t' keep the old apostle what preached in the marketplace in yer noddle. Peter, ye see, is a pious name, and Harry isn't; so ye must think Peter and sink Harry."

"What do I want to change my name for? Old master give me that name long time ago!"

"None o' yer business; niggers ain't t' know the philosophy of such things. No nigger tricks, now!" interrupts Bengal, quickly, drawing his face into savage contortions. At this the gentleman in whose charge he will proceed steps forward and places the manacles on Harry's hands with the coolness and indifference of one executing the commonest branch of his profession. Thus packed and baled for export, he is hurried from the house into a two−horse waggon, and driven off at full speed. Bengal watches the waggon as it rolls down the highway and is lost in the distance. He laughs heartily, thinks how safe he has got the preacher, and how much hard cash he will bring. God speed the slave on his journey downward, we might add.

It will be needless for us to trace them through the many incidents of their journey; our purpose will be served when we state that his new guardian landed him safely at the plantation of Major Wiley, on the Tallahatchee River, Mississippi, on the evening of the fourth day after their departure, having made a portion of their passage on the steamer Ohio. By some process unknown to Harry he finds himself duly ingratiated among the major's field hands, as nothing more than plain Peter. He is far from the high−road, far from his friends, without any prospect of communicating with his old master. The major, in his way, seems a well−disposed sort of man, inclined to "do right" by his negroes, and willing to afford them an opportunity of employing their time after task, for their own benefit. And yet it is evident that he must in some way be connected with Graspum and his party, for there is a continual interchange of negroes to and from his plantation. This, however, we must not analyse too closely, but leave to the reader's own conjectures, inasmuch as Major Wiley is a very distinguished gentleman, and confidently expects a very prominent diplomatic appointment under the next administration.

Harry, in a very quiet way, sets himself about gaining a knowledge of his master's opinions on religion, as well as obtaining his confidence by strict fidelity to his interests. So far does he succeed, that in a short time he finds himself holding the respectable and confidential office of master of stores. Then he succeeds in inducing his master to hear him preach a sermon to his negroes. The major is perfectly willing to allow him the full exercise of his talents, and is moved to admiration at his fervency, his aptitude, his knowledge of the Bible, and the worth there must be in such a piece of clergy property. Master Wiley makes his man the offer of purchasing his time, which Harry, under the alias of Peter, accepts, and commences his mission of preaching on the neighbouring plantations.

Ardently and devoutedly does he pursue his mission of Christianity among his fellow−bondmen; but he has reaped little of the harvest to himself, his master having so increased the demand for his time that he can scarcely save money enough to purchase clothes. At first he was only required to pay six dollars a week; now, nothing less than ten is received. It is a happy premium on profitable human nature; and through it swings the strongest hinge of that cursed institution which blasts alike master and slave. Major Wiley is very chivalrous, very hospitable, and very eminent for his many distinguished qualifications; but his very pious piece of property must pay forty−seven per cent. annual tribute for the very hospitable privilege of administering the Word of God to his brother bondmen. Speak not of robed bishops robbing Christianity in a foreign land, ye men who deal in men, and would rob nature of its tombstone! Ye would rob the angels did their garments give forth gold.

The poor fellow's income, depending, in some measure, upon small presents bestowed by the negroes to whom he preached, was scarcely enough to bring him out at the end of the week, and to be thus deprived of it seemed more than his spirits could bear. Again and again had he appealed to his master for justice; but there was no justice for him,—his appeals proved as fruitless as the wind, on his master's callous sensibilities. Instead of exciting compassion, he only drew upon him his master's prejudices; he was threatened with being sold, if he resisted for a day the payment of wages for his own body. Hence he saw but one alternative left−one hope, one smile from a good woman, who might, and he felt would, deliver him; that was in writing to his good friend, Mrs. Rosebrook, whose generous heart he might touch through his appeals for mercy. And yet there was another obstacle; the post−office might be ten miles off, and his master having compelled him to take the name of Peter Wiley, how was he to get a letter to her without the knowledge of his master? Should his letter be intercepted, his master, a strict disciplinarian, would not only sell him farther south, but inflict the severest punishment. Nevertheless, there was one consolation left; his exertions on behalf of the slaves, and his earnestness in promoting the interests of their masters, had not passed unnoticed with the daughter of a neighbouring planter (this lady has since distinguished herself for sympathy with the slave), who became much interested in his welfare. She had listened to his exhortations with admiration; she had listened to his advice on religion, and become his friend and confidant. She would invite him to her father's house, sit for hours at his side, and listen with breathless attention to his pathos, his display of natural genius. To her he unfolded his deep and painful troubles; to her he looked for consolation; she was the angel of light guiding him on his weary way, cheering his drooping soul on its journey to heaven. To her he disclosed how he had been called to the bedside of his dying master; how, previously, he had been sold from his good old master, Marston, his wife, his children; how he was mysteriously carried off and left in the charge of his present master, who exacts all he can earn.

The simple recital of his story excites the genial feelings of the young lady; she knows some foul transaction is associated with his transition, and at once tenders her services to release him. But she must move cautiously, for

even Harry's preaching is in direct violation of the statutes; and were she found aiding in that which would unfavourably affect the interests of his master she would be subjected to serious consequences−perhaps be invited to spend a short season at the sheriff's hotel, commonly called the county gaol. However, there was virtue in the object to be served, and feeling that whatever else she could do to relieve him would be conferring a lasting benefit on a suffering mortal, she will brave the attempt.

"Tell me he is not a man, but a slave! tell me a being with such faculties should be thus sunken beneath the amenities of freedom! that man may barter almighty gifts for gold! trample his religion into dust, and turn it into dollars and cents! What a mockery is this against the justice of heaven! When this is done in this our happy land of happy freedom, scoffers may make it their foot−ball, and kings in their tyranny may point the finger of scorn at us, and ask us for our honest men, our cherished freedom!

"Woman can do something, if she will; let me see what I can do to relieve this poor oppressed," she exclaims one day, after he has consulted her on the best means of relief. "I will try."

Woman knows the beatings of the heart; she can respond more quickly to its pains and sorrows. Our youthful missionary will sit down and write a letter to Mrs. Rosebrook−she will do something, the atmosphere of slavery will hear of her yet−it will!

CHAPTER XXVII. THE PRETTY CHILDREN ARE TO BE SOLD.

HOW varied are the sources of human nature−how changing its tints and glows−how immeasurable its uncertainties, and how obdurate the will that can turn its tenderest threads into profitable degradation! But what democrat can know himself a freeman when the whitest blood makes good merchandise in the market? When the only lineal stain on a mother's name for ever binds the chains, let no man boast of liberty. The very voice re−echoes, oh, man, why be a hypocrite! cans't thou not see the scorner looking from above? But the oligarchy asks in tones so modest, so full of chivalrous fascination, what hast thou to do with that? be no longer a fanatic. So we will bear the warning−pass from it for the present.

More than two years have passed; writs of error have been filed and argued; the children have dragged out time in a prison−house. Is it in freedom's land a prison was made for the innocent to waste in? So it is, and may Heaven one day change the tenour! Excuse, reader, this digression, and let us proceed with our narrative.

The morning is clear and bright; Mrs. Rosebrook sits at the window of her cheerful villa, watching the approach of the post−rider seen in the distance, near a cluster of oaks that surround the entrance of the arbour, at the north side of the garden. The scene spread out before her is full of rural beauty, softened by the dew−decked foliage, clothing the landscape with its clumps. As if some fairy hand had spread a crystal mist about the calm of morning, and angels were bedecking it with the richest tints of a rising sun at morn, the picture sparkles with silvery life. There she sits, her soft glowing eyes scanning the reposing scene, as her graceful form seems infusing spirit into its silent loveliness. And then she speaks, as if whispering a secret to the wafting air: "our happy union!" It falls upon the ear like some angel voice speaking of things too pure, too holy for the caprices of earth. She would be a type of that calmness pervading the scene−that sweetness and repose which seem mingling to work out some holy purpose; and yet there is a touching sadness depicted in her face.

"Two years have passed; how changed!" she exclaims, as if rousing from a reverie: "I would not be surprised if he brought bad tidings."

The postman has reached the gate and delivered a letter, which the servant quickly bears to her hand. She grasps it anxiously, as if recognising the superscription; opens it nervously; reads the contents. It is from Franconia, interceding with her in behalf of her uncle and the two children, in the following manner:—"My dearest Friend,

"Can I appeal to one whose feelings are more ready to be enlisted in a good cause? I think not. I wish now to enlist your feelings in something that concerns myself. It is to save two interesting children−who, though our eyes may at times be blinded to facts, I cannot forget are nearly allied to me by birth and association−from the grasp of slavery. Misfortune never comes alone; nor, in this instance, need I recount ours to you. Of my own I will say but little; the least is best. Into wedlock I have been sold to one it were impossible for me to love; he cannot cherish the respect due to my feelings. His associations are of the coarsest, and his heartless treatment beyond my endurance. He subjects me to the meanest grievances; makes my position more degraded than that of the slave upon whom he gratifies his lusts. Had my parents saved me from such a monster−I cannot call him less−they would have saved me many a painful reflection. As for his riches−I know not whether they really exist−they are destined only to serve his lowest passions. With him misfortune is a crime; and I am made to suffer under his taunts about the disappearance of my brother, the poverty of my parents.

"You are well aware of the verdict of the jury, and the affirmation of the Court of Appeal, upon those dear children. The decree orders them to be sold in the market, for the benefit of my uncle's creditors: this is the day, the fatal day, the sale takes place. Let me beseech of you, as you have it in your power, to induce the deacon to purchase them. O, save them from the fate that awaits them! You know my uncle's errors; you know also his goodness of heart; you can sympathise with him in his sudden downfall. Then the affection he has for Annette is unbounded. No father could be more dotingly fond of his legitimate child. But you know what our laws are−what they force us to do against our better inclinations. Annette's mother, poor wretch, has fled, and M'Carstrow charges me with being accessory to her escape: I cannot, nor will I, deny it, while my most ardent prayer invokes

her future happiness. That she has saved herself from a life of shame I cannot doubt; and if I have failed to carry out a promise I made her before her departure−that of rescuing her child−the satisfaction of knowing that she at least is enjoying the reward of freedom partially repays my feelings. Let me entreat you to repair to the city, and, at least, rescue Annette from that life of shame and disgrace now pending over her−a shame and disgrace no less black in the sight of heaven because society tolerates it as among the common things of social life.

"I am now almost heart−broken, and fear it will soon be my lot to be driven from under the roof of Colonel M'Carstrow, which is no longer a home, but a mere place of durance to me. It would be needless for me here to recount his conduct. Were I differently constituted I might tolerate his abuse, and accept a ruffian's recompense in consideration of his wealth.

"Go, my dear friend, save that child,

"Is the prayer of your affectionate

"FRANCONIA."

Mrs. Rosebrook reads and re−reads the letter; then heaves a sigh as she lays it upon the table at her side. As if discussing the matter in her mind, her face resumes a contemplative seriousness.

"And those children are to be sold in the market! Who won't they sell, and sanctify the act? How can I relieve them? how can I be their friend, for Franconia's sake? My husband is away on the plantation, and I cannot brave the coarse slang of a slave mart; I cannot mingle with those who there congregate.

"And, too, there are so many such cases−bearing on their front the fallacy of this our democracy−that however much one may have claims over another, it were impossible to take one into consideration without inciting a hundred to press their demands. In this sense, then, the whole accursed system would have to be uprooted before the remedy could be applied effectually. Notwithstanding, I will go; I will go: I'll see what can be done in the city," says Mrs. Rosebrook, bristling with animation. "Our ladies must have something to arouse their energies; they all have a deep interest to serve, and can do much:" she will summon resolution and brave all. Rising from her seat, she paces the room several times, and then orders a servant to command Uncle Bradshaw to get the carriage ready, and be prepared for a drive into the city.

Soon Bradshaw has got the carriage ready, and our good lady is on the road, rolling away toward the city. As they approach a curvature that winds round a wooded hill, Bradshaw intimates to "missus" that he sees signs of a camp a short distance ahead. He sees smoke curling upwards among the trees, and very soon the notes of a long−metre tune fall softly on the ear, like the tinkling of distant bells in the desert. Louder and louder, as they approach, the sounds become more and more distinct. Then our good lady recognises the familiar voice of Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy. This worthy christian of the Southern Church is straining his musical organ to its utmost capacity, in the hope there will be no doubt left on the minds of those congregated around him as to his very sound piety. The carriage rounds the curvature, and there, encamped in a grove of pines by the road side, is our pious Elder, administering consolation to his infirm property. Such people! they present one of the most grotesque and indiscriminate spectacles ever eyes beheld. The cholera has subsided; the Elder's greatest harvest time is gone; few victims are to be found for the Elder's present purposes. Now he is constrained to resort to the refuse of human property (those afflicted with what are called ordinary diseases), to keep alive the Christian motive of his unctuous business. To speak plainly, he must content himself with the purchase of such infirmity as can be picked up here and there about the country.

A fire of pine knots blazes in the centre of a mound, and over it hangs an iron kettle, on a straddle, filled with corn−grits. Around this, and anxiously watching its boiling, are the lean figures of negroes, with haggard and sickly faces, telling but too forcibly the tale of their troubles. They watch and watch, mutter in grumbling accents, stir the homony, and sit down again. Two large mule carts stand in the shade of a pine tree, a few yards from the fire. A few paces further on are the mules tethered, quietly grazing; while, seated on a whiskey−keg, is the Elder, book in hand, giving out the hymn to some ten or a dozen infirm negroes seated round him on the ground. They have enjoyed much consolation by listening with wondrous astonishment to the Elder's exhortations, and are now ready to join their musical jargon to the words of a Watts's hymn.

On arriving opposite the spot, our good lady requests Bradshaw to stop; which done, the Elder recognises her, and suddenly adjourning his spiritual exercises, advances to meet her, his emotions expanding with enthusiastic joy. In his eagerness, with outstretched hand, he comes sailing along, trips his toe in a vine, and plunges head foremost into a broad ditch that separates the road from the rising ground.

The accident is very unfortunate at this moment; the Elder's enthusiasm is somewhat cooled, nevertheless; but, as there is seldom a large loss without a small gain, he finds himself strangely bespattered from head to foot with the ingredients of a quagmire.

"U'h! u'h! u'h! my dear madam, pardon me, I pray;—strange moment to meet with a misfortune of this kind. But I was so glad to see you!" he ejaculates, sensitively, making the best of his way out, brushing his sleeves, and wiping his face with his never−failing India handkerchief. He approaches the carriage, apologising for his appearance.

He hopes our lady will excuse him, having so far lost himself in his enthusiasm, which, together with the fervency and devotion of the spiritual exercises he was enjoying with his poor, helpless property, made him quite careless of himself. Begging a thousand pardons for presenting himself in such a predicament (his gallantry is proverbially southern), he forgets that his hat and spectacles have been dislodged by his precipitation into the ditch.

The good lady reaches out her hand, as a smile curls over her face; but Bradshaw must grin; and grin he does, in right good earnest.

"Bless me, my dear Elder! what trade are you now engaged in?" she enquires.

"A little devotional exercises, my dear madam! We were enjoying them with so much christian feeling that I was quite carried away, indeed I was!" He rubs his fingers through his bristly hair, and then downwards to his nasal organ, feeling for his devoted glasses. He is surprised at their absence−makes another apology. He affirms, adding his sacred honour, as all real southerners do, that he had begun to feel justified in the belief that there never was a religion like that preached by the good apostles, when such rural spots as this (he points to his encampment) were chosen for its administration. Everything round him made him feel so good, so much like the purest christian of the olden time. He tells her, with great seriousness, that we must serve God, and not forget poor human nature, never! To the world he would seem labouring under the influence of those inert convictions by which we strive to conceal our natural inclinations, while drawing the flimsy curtain of "to do good" over the real object.

He winks and blinks, rubs his eyes, works his face into all the angles and contortions it is capable of, and commences searching for his hat and spectacles. Both are necessary adjuncts to his pious appearance; without them there is that in the expression of his countenance from which none can fail to draw an unfavourable opinion of his real character. The haggard, care−worn face, browned to the darkest tropical tints; the ceaseless leer of that small, piercing eye, anxiety and agitation pervading the tout ensemble of the man, will not be dissembled. Nay; those acute promontories of the face, narrow and sharp, and that low, reclining forehead, and head covered with bristly iron−grey hair, standing erect in rugged tufts, are too strong an index of character for all the disguises Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy can invent.

"One minute, my dear madam," he exclaims, in his eagerness for the lost ornaments of his face.

"Never mind them, Elder; never mind them! In my eyes you are just as well without them," she rejoins, an ironical smile invading her countenance, and a curl of contempt on her lip. "But,—tell me what are you doing here?"

"Here! my dear madam? Doing good for mankind and the truth of religion. I claim merit of the parish, for my pursuit is laudable, and saves the parish much trouble," says the Elder, beginning to wax warm in the goodness of his pursuit, before anyone has undertaken to dispute him, or question the purity of his purpose.

"Still speculating in infirmity; making a resurrection man of yourself! You are death's strongest opponent; you fight the great slayer for small dollars and cents."

"Well, now," interrupts the Elder, with a serious smile, "I'd rather face a Mexican army than a woman's insinuating questions,—in matters of this kind! But it's business, ye see! according to law; and ye can't get over that. There's no getting over the law; and he that serveth the Lord, no matter how, deserveth recompense; my recompense is in the amount of life I saves for the nigger."

"That is not what I asked; you evade my questions, Elder! better acknowledge honestly, for the sake of the country, where did you pick up these poor wretches?"

"I goes round the district, madam, and picks up a cripple here, and a cancer case there, and a dropsy doubtful yonder; and then, some on em's got diseases what don't get out until one comes to apply medical skill. Shan't make much on these sort o' cases,—"

The lady interrupts him, by bidding him good morning, and advising him, whenever he affects to serve the Lord, to serve him honestly, without a selfish motive. She leaves the Elder to his own reflections, to carry his victim property to his charnel−house, where, if he save life for the enjoyment of liberty, he may serve the Lord to a good purpose. She leaves him to the care of the christian church of the South,—the church of christian slavery, the rules of which he so strictly follows.

As our good lady moves quickly away toward the city, the Elder looks up, imploringly, as if invoking the praise of heaven on his good deeds. He is, indeed, astonished, that his dear friend, the lady, should have made such a declaration so closely applied, so insinuating. That such should have escaped her lips when she must know that his very soul and intention are purity! "I never felt like making a wish before now; and now I wishes I was, or that my father had made me, a lawyer. I would defend my position in a legal sense then! I don't like lawyers generally, I confess; the profession's not as honourable as ours, and its members are a set of sharpers, who would upset gospel and everything else for a small fee, they would!" He concludes, as his eyes regrettingly wander after the carriage. The words have moved him; there is something he wishes to say, but can't just get the point he would arrive at. He turns away, sad at heart, to his sadder scenes. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," he sings.

In the city a different piece is in progress of performance. Papers, and all necessary preparations for procuring the smooth transfer of the youthful property, are completed; customers have begun to gather round the mart. Some are searching among the negroes sent to the warehouse; others are inquiring where this property, advertised in the morning journals, and so strongly commented upon, may be found. They have been incited to examine, in consequence of the many attractions set forth in the conditions of sale.

There the two children sit, on a little seat near the vender's tribune. Old Aunt Dina, at the prison, has dressed Annette so neatly! Her white pinafore shines so brightly, is so neatly arranged, and her silky auburn locks curl so prettily, in tiny ringlets, over her shoulders; and then her round fair face looks so sweetly, glows with such innocent curiosity, as her soft blue eyes, deep with sparkling vivacity, wander over the strange scene. She instinctively feels that she is the special object of some important event. Laying her little hand gently upon the arm of an old slave that sits by her side, she casts shy glances at those admirers who stand round her and view her as a marketable article only.

"Auntie, where are they going to take me?" the child inquires, with a solicitous look, as she straightens the folds of her dress with her little hands.

"Gwine t' sell 'um," mumbles the old slave. "Lor', child, a'h wishes ye wa'h mine; reckon da'h wouldn't sell ye. T'ant much to sell nigger like I, nohow; but e' hurt my feelins just so 'twarnt right t' sell de likes o' ye." The old slave, in return, lays her hand upon Annette's head, and smooths her hair, as if solicitous of her fate. "Sell ye, child−sell ye?" she concludes, shaking her head.

"And what will they do with me and Nicholas when they get us sold?" continues the child, turning to Nicholas and taking him by the arm.

"Don' kno': perhaps save ye fo'h sinnin' agin de Lor'," is the old slave's quick reply. She shakes her head doubtingly, and bursts into tears, as she takes Annette in her arms, presses her to her bosom, kisses and kisses her pure cheek. How heavenly is the affection of that old slave—how it rebukes our Christian mockery!

"Will they sell us where we can't see mother, auntie? I do want to see mother so," says the child, looking up in the old slave's face. There seemed something too pure, too holy, in the child's simplicity, as it prattled about its mother, for such purposes as it is about to be consigned to. "They do not sell white folks, auntie, do they? My face is as white as anybody's; and Nicholas's aint black. I do want to see mother so! when will she come back and take care of me, auntie?"

"Lor', child," interrupts the old negro, suppressing her emotions, "no use to ax dem questions ven ye gwine t' market. Buckra right smart at makin' nigger what bring cash."

The child expresses a wish that auntie would take her back to the old plantation, where master, as mother used to call him, wouldn't let them sell her away off. And she shakes her head with an air of unconscious pertness; tells the old negro not to cry for her.

The cryer's bell sounds forth its muddling peals to summon the customers; a grotesque mixture of men close round the stand. The old slave, as if from instinct, again takes Annette in her arms, presses and presses her to her bosom, looks compassionately in her face, and smiles while a tear glistens in her eyes. She is inspired by the beauty of the child; her heart bounds with affection for her tender years; she loves her because she is lovely; and

she smiles upon her as a beautiful image of God's creation. But the old slave grieves over her fate; her grief flows from the purity of the heart; she knows not the rules of the slave church.

Annette is born a child of sorrow in this our land of love and liberty; she is a democrat's daughter, cursed by the inconsistencies of that ever−praised democratic goodness. A child! nothing more than an item of common trade. It is even so; but let not happy democracy blush, for the child, being merchandise, has no claims to that law of the soul which looks above the frigidity of slave statutes. What generosity is there in this generous land? what impulses of nature not quenched by force of public opinion, when the associations of a child like this (we are picturing a true story), her birth and blood, her clear complexion, the bright carnatic of her cheek, will not save her from the mercenary grasp of dollars and cents? It was the law; the law had made men demons, craving the bodies and souls of their fellow men. It was the white man's charge to protect the law and the constitution; and any manifestation of sympathy for this child would be in violation of a system which cannot be ameliorated without endangering the whole structure: hence the comments escaping from purchasers are only such as might have been expressed by the sporting man in his admiration of a finely proportioned animal.

"What a sweet child!" says one, as they close round.

"Make a woman when she grows up!" rejoins another, twirling his cane, and giving his hat an extra set on the side of his head.

"Take too long to keep it afore its valuable is developed; but it's a picture of beauty. Face would do to take drawings from, it's so full of delicate outlines," interposes a third.

An old gentleman, with something of the ministerial in his countenance, and who has been very earnestly watching them for some time, thinks a great deal about the subject of slavery, and the strange laws by which it is governed just at this moment. He says, "One is inspired with a sort of admiration that unlocks the heart, while gazing at such delicacy and child−like sweetness as is expressed in the face of that child." He points his cane coldly at Annette. "It causes a sort of reaction in one's sense of right, socially and politically, when we see it mixed up with niggers and black ruffians to be sold."

"Must abide the laws, though," says a gentleman in black, on his left.

"Yes," returns our friend, quickly, "if such property could be saved the hands of speculators"—

"Speculators! speculators!" rejoins the gentleman in black, knitting his brows.

"Yes; it's always the case in our society. The beauty of such property makes it dangerous about a well−ordained man's house. Our ladies, generally, have no sympathy with, and rather dislike its ill−gotten tendencies. The piety of the south amounts to but little in its influence on the slave population. The slave population generates its own piety. There is black piety and white piety; but the white piety effects little when it can dispose of poor black piety just as it pleases; and there's no use in clipping the branches off the tree while the root is diseased," concludes our ministerial−looking gentleman, who might have been persuaded himself to advance a bid, were he not so well versed in the tenour of society that surrounded him.

During the above ad interim at the shambles, our good lady, Mrs. Rosebrook, is straining every nerve to induce a gentleman of her acquaintance to repair to the mart, and purchase the children on her account.

CHAPTER XXVIII. NATURE SHAMES ITSELF.

MRS. ROSEBROOK sits in Mrs. Pringle's parlour. Mrs. Pringle is thought well of in the city of Charleston, where she resides, and has done something towards establishing a church union for the protection of orphan females. They must, however, be purely white, and without slave or base blood in their veins, to entitle them to admittance into its charitable precincts. This is upon the principle that slave blood is not acceptable in the sight of Heaven; and that allowing its admittance into this charitable earthly union would only be a sad waste of time and Christian love. Mrs. Pringle, however, feels a little softened to the good cause, and does hope Mrs. Rosebrook may succeed at least in rescuing the little girl. She has counselled Mr. Seabrook, commonly called Colonel Seabrook, a very distinguished gentleman, who has a very distinguished opinion of himself, having studied law to distinguish himself, and now and then merely practises it for his own amusement. Mr. Seabrook never gives an opinion, nor acts for his friends, unless every thing he does be considered distinguished, and gratuitously rendered.

"What will you do with such property, madam?" inquires the gentleman, having listened profoundly to her request.

"To save them from being sold into the hands of such men as Graspum and Romescos; it's the only motive I have" she speaks, gently: "I love the child; and her mother still loves her: I am a mother."

"Remember, my dear lady, they are adjudged property by law; and all that you can do for them won't save them, nor change the odour of negro with which it has stamped them."

"Of that I am already too well aware, Mr. Seabrook; and I know, too, when once enslaved, how hard it is to unslave. Public sentiment is the worst slave we have; unslave that, and the righteousness of heaven will give us hearts to save ourselves from the unrighteousness of our laws.

"Go, Mr. Seabrook, purchase the children for me, and you will soon see what ornaments of society I will make them!"

"Ornaments to our society!" interrupts Mr. Seabrook, pausing for a moment, as he places the fore−finger of his right hand upon his upper lip. "That would be a pretty consummation−at the south! Make ornaments of our society!" Mr. Seabrook turns the matter over and over and over in his mind. "Of such things as have been pronounced property by law! A pretty fix it would get our society into!" he rejoins, with emphasis. Mr. Seabrook shakes his head doubtingly, and then, taking three or four strides across the room, his hands well down in his nether pockets, relieves himself of his positive opinion. "Ah! ah! hem! my dear madam," he says, "if you undertake the purchase of all that delicate kind of property−I mean the amount total, as it is mixed up−your head'll grow grey afore you get all the bills of sale paid up,—my word for it! That's my undisguised opinion, backed up by all the pale−faced property about the city."

"We will omit the opinion, Mr. Seabrook; such have kept our society where it now is. I am resolved to have those children. If you hesitate to act for me, I'll brave−"

"Don't say that, my dear lady. Let me remind you that it ill becomes a lady of the south to be seen at a slave−mart; more especially when such delicate property is for sale. Persons might be present who did not understand your motive, and would not only make rude advances, but question the propriety of your proceedings. You would lose caste, most surely."

Mrs. Rosebrook cares little for Mr. Seabrook's very learned opinion, knowing that learned opinions are not always the most sensible ones, and is seen arranging her bonnet hastily in a manner betokening her intention to make a bold front of it at the slave−mart. This is rather too much for Mr. Seabrook, who sets great value on his chivalrous virtues, and fearing they may suffer in the esteem of the softer sex, suddenly proffers his kind interposition, becomes extremely courteous, begs she will remain quiet, assuring her that no stone that can further her wishes shall be left unturned. Mr. Seabrook (frequently called the gallant colonel) makes one of his very best bows, adjusts his hat with exquisite grace, and leaves to exercise the wisest judgment and strictest faith at the man−market.

"Such matters are exceedingly annoying to gentlemen of my standing," says Mr. Seabrook, as deliberately he proceeds to the fulfilment of his promise. He is a methodical gentleman, and having weighed the matter well over in his legal mind, is deeply indebted to it for the conclusion that Mrs. Rosebrook has got a very unsystematised crotchet into her brain. "The exhibition of sympathy for 'niggers'−they're nothing else" says Mr. Seabrook−"much adds to that popular prejudice which is already placing her in an extremely delicate position." He will call to his aid some very nice legal tact, and by that never−failing unction satisfy the good lady.

When Mr. Seabrook enters the mart (our readers will remember that we have already described it) he finds the children undergoing a very minute examination at the hands of several slave−dealers. As Mr. Forshou, the very polite man−seller, is despatching the rougher quality of human merchandise, our hero advances to the children, about whose father he asks them unanswerable questions. How interesting the children look!−how like a picture of beauty Annette's cherub face glows forth! Being seriously concerned about the child, his countenance wears an air of deep thought. "Colonel, what's your legal opinion of such pretty property?" enquires Romescos, who advances to Mr. Seabrook, and, after a minute's hesitation, takes the little girl in his arms, rudely kissing her as she presses his face from her with her left hand, and poutingly wipes her mouth with her right.

"Pretty as a picture"−Romescos has set the child down−"but I wouldn't give seven coppers for both; for, by my faith, such property never does well." The gentleman shakes his head in return. "It's a pity they're made it out nigger, though,—it's so handsome. Sweet little creature, that child, I declare: her beauty would be worth a fortune on the stage, when she grows up."

Romescos touches Mr. Seabrook on the arm; remarks that such things are only good for certain purposes; although one can make them pay if they know how to trade in them. But it wants a man with a capable conscience to do the business up profitably. "No chance o' your biddin' on 'um, is there, colonel?" he enquires, with a significant leer, folding his arms with the indifference of a field−marshal. After a few minutes' pause, during which Mr. Seabrook seems manufacturing an answer, he shrugs his shoulders, and takes a few pleasing steps, as if moved to a waltzing humour. "Don't scare up the like o' that gal−nigger every day," he adds. Again, as if moved by some sudden idea, he approaches Annette, and placing his hand on her head, continues: "If this ain't tumbling down a man's affairs by the run! Why, colonel, 'taint more nor three years since old Hugh Marston war looked on as the tallest planter on the Ashley; and he thought just as much o' these young 'uns as if their mother had belonged to one of the first families. Now−I pity the poor fellow!−because he tried to save 'em from being sold as slaves, they−his creditors−think he has got more property stowed away somewhere. They're going to cell him, just to try his talent at putting away things."

The "prime fellows" and wenches of the darker and coarser quality have all been disposed of; and the vender (the same gentlemanly man we have described selling Marston's undisputed property) now orders the children to be brought forward. Romescos, eagerly seizing them by the arms, brings them forward through the crowd, places them upon the stand, before the eager gaze of those assembled. Strangely placed upon the strange block, the spectators close in again, anxious to gain the best position for inspection: but little children cannot stand the gaze of such an assemblage: no; Annette turns toward Nicholas, and with a childish embrace throws her tiny arms about his neck, buries her face on his bosom. The child of misfortune seeks shelter from that shame of her condition, the evidence of which is strengthened by the eager glances of those who stand round the shambles, ready to purchase her fate. Even the vender,—distinguished gentleman that he is, and very respectably allied by marriage to one of the "first families,"−is moved with a strange sense of wrong at finding himself in a position somewhat repugnant to his feelings. He cannot suppress a blush that indicates an innate sense of shame.

"Here they are, gentlemen! let no man say I have not done my duty. You have, surely, all seen the pedigree of these children set forth in the morning papers; and, now that you have them before you, the living specimen of their beauty will fully authenticate anything therein set forth," the vender exclaims, affecting an appearance in keeping with his trade. Notwithstanding this, there is a faltering nervousness in his manner, betraying all his efforts at dissimulation. He reads the invoice of human property to the listening crowd, dilates on its specific qualities with powers of elucidation that would do credit to any member of the learned profession. This opinion is confirmed by Romescos, the associations of whose trade have gained for him a very intimate acquaintance with numerous gentlemen of that very honourable profession.

"Now, gentlemen," continues the vender, "the honourable high sheriff is anxious, and so am I−and it's no more than a feelin' of deserving humanity, which every southern gentleman is proud to exercise−that these

children be sold to good, kind, and respectable owners; and that they do not fall into the hands, as is generally the case, of men who raise them up for infamous purposes. Gentlemen, I am decidedly opposed to making licentiousness a means of profit."

"That neither means you nor me," mutters Romescos, touching Mr. Seabrook on the arm, shaking his head knowingly, and stepping aside to Graspum, in whose ear he whispers a word. The very distinguished Mr. Graspum has been intently listening to the outpouring of the vender's simplicity. What sublime nonsense it seems to him! He suggests that it would be much more effectual if it came from the pulpit,—the southern pulpit!

"Better sell 'um to some deacon's family," mutters a voice in the crowd.

"That's precisely what we should like, gentlemen; any bidder of that description would get them on more favourable terms than a trader, he would," he returns, quickly. The man of feeling, now wealthy from the sale of human beings, hopes gentlemen will pardon his nervousness on this occasion. He never felt the delicacy of his profession so forcibly−never, until now! His countenance changes with the emotions of his heart; he blushes as he looks upon the human invoice, glances slily over the corner at the children, and again at his customers. The culminating point of his profession has arrived; its unholy character is making war upon his better feelings. "I am not speaking ironically, gentlemen: any bidder of the description I have named will get these children at a satisfactory figure. Remember that, and that I am only acting in my office for the honourable sheriff and the creditors," he concludes.

"If that be the case," Mr. Seabrook thinks to himself, "it's quite as well. Our good lady friend will be fully satisfied. She only wants to see them in good hands: deacons are just the fellows." He very politely steps aside, lights his choice habanero, and sends forth its curling fumes as the bidding goes on.

A person having the appearance of a country gentleman, who has been some time watching the proceedings, is seen to approach Graspum: this dignitary whispers something in his ear, and he leaves the mart.

"I say, squire!" exclaims Romescos, addressing himself to the auctioneer, "do you assume the responsibility of making special purchasers? perhaps you had better keep an eye to the law and the creditors, you had!" (Romescos's little red face fires with excitement.) "No objection t' yer sellin' the gal to deacons and elders,—even to old Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy, who's always singing, 'I know that my Redeemer cometh!' But the statutes give me just as good a right to buy her, as any first−class deacon. I knows law, and got lots o' lawyer friends."

"The issue is painful enough, without any interposition from you, my friend," rejoins the vender, interrupting Romescos in his conversation. After a few minutes pause, during which time he has been watching the faces of his customers, he adds: "Perhaps, seeing how well mated they are, gentlemen will not let them be separated. They have been raised together."

"Certainly!" again interrupts Romescos, "it would be a pity to separate them, 'cos it might touch somebody's heart."

"Ah, that comes from Romescos; we may judge of its motive as we please," rejoins the man of feeling, taking Annette by the arm and leading her to the extreme edge of the stand. "Make us a bid, gentlemen, for the pair. I can see in the looks of my customers that nobody will be so hard−hearted as to separate them. What do you offer? say it! Start them; don't be bashful, gentlemen!"

"Rather cool for a hard−faced nigger−seller! Well, squire, say four hundred dollars and the treats,—that is, sposin' ye don't double my bid cos I isn't a deacon. Wants the boy t' make a general on when he grows up; don't want the gal at all. Let the deacon here (he points to the man who was seen whispering to Graspum) have her, if he wants." The deacon, as Romescos calls him, edges his way through the crowd up to the stand, and looks first at the vender and then at the children. Turning his head aside, as if it may catch the ears of several bystanders, Romescos whispers, "That's deacon Staggers, from Pineville."

"Like your bid; but I'm frank enough to say I don't want you to have them, Romescos," interposes the auctioneer, with a smile.

"Four hundred and fifty dollars!" is sounded by a second bidder. The vender enquires, "For the two?"

"Yes! the pair on 'em," is the quick reply.

"Four hundred and fifty dollars!" re−echoes the man of feeling. "What good democrats you are! Why, gentlemen, it's not half the value of them. You must look upon this property in a social light; then you will see its immense value. It's intelligent, civil, and promisingly handsome; sold for no fault, and here you are hesitating on a small bid.

"Only four hundred and fifty dollars for such property, in this enlightened nineteenth century!"

"Trade will out, like murder. Squire wouldn't sell 'em to nobody but a deacon a few minutes ago!" is heard coming from a voice in the crowd. The vender again pauses, blushes, and contorts his face: he cannot suppress the zest of his profession; it is uppermost in his feelings.

Romescos says it is one of the squire's unconscious mistakes. There is no use of humbugging; why not let them run off to the highest bidder?

"The deacon has bid upon them; why not continue his advance?" says Mr. Seabrook, who has been smoking his cigar the while.

"Oh, well! seein' how it's the deacon, I won't stand agin his bid. It's Deacon Staggers of Pineville; nobody doubts his generosity," ejaculates Romescos, in a growling tone. The bids quicken,—soon reach six hundred dollars.

"Getting up pretty well, gentlemen! You must not estimate this property upon their age: it's the likeliness and the promise."

"Six hundred and twenty−five!" mutters the strange gentleman they call Deacon Staggers from Pineville.

"All right," rejoins Romescos; "just the man what ought to have 'em. I motion every other bidder withdraw in deference to the deacon's claim," rejoins Romescos, laughing.

The clever vender gets down from the stand, views the young property from every advantageous angle, dwells upon the bid, makes further comments on its choiceness, and after considerable bantering, knocks them down to−"What name, sir?" he enquires, staring at the stranger vacantly.

"Deacon Staggers," replies the man, with a broad grin. Romescos motions him aside,—slips a piece of gold into his hand; it is the price of his pretensions.

The clerk enters his name in the sales book: "Deacon Staggers, of Pineville, bought May 18th, 18−.

"Two children, very likely: boy, prime child, darkish hair, round figure, intelligent face, not downcast, and well outlined in limb. Girl, very pretty, bluish eyes, flaxen hair, very fair and very delicate. Price 625 dollars. Property of Hugh Marston, and sold per order of the sheriff of the county, to satisfy two fi fas issued from the Court of Common Pleas,

An attendant now steps forward, takes the children into his charge, and leads them away. To where? The reader may surmise to the gaol. No, reader, not to the gaol; to Marco Graspum's slave−pen,—to that pent−up hell where the living are tortured unto death, and where yearning souls are sold to sink!

Thus are the beauties of this our democratic system illustrated in two innocent children being consigned to the miseries of slave life because a mother is supposed a slave: a father has acknowledged them, and yet they are sold before his eyes. It is the majesty of slave law, before which good men prostrate their love of independence. Democracy says the majesty of that law must be carried out; creditors must be satisfied, even though all that is generous and noble in man should be crushed out, and the rights of free men consigned to oblivion. A stout arm may yet rise up in a good cause; democrats may stand ashamed of the inhuman traffic, and seek to cover its poisoning head with artifices and pretences; but they write only an obituary for the curse.

"A quaint−faced, good−looking country deacon has bought them. Very good; I can now go home, and relieve Mrs. Rosebrook's very generous feelings," says the very distinguished Mr. Seabrook, shrugging his shoulders, lighting a fresh cigar, and turning toward home with a deliberate step, full of good tidings.

CHAPTER XXX. THE VISION OF DEATH HAS PAST.

MR. SEABROOK returns to the mansion, and consoles the anxious lady by assuring her the children have been saved from the hands of obnoxious traders−sold to a good, country deacon. He was so delighted with their appearance that he could not keep from admiring them, and does not wonder the good lady took so great an interest in their welfare. He knows the ministerial−looking gentleman who bought them is a kind master; he has an acute knowledge of human nature, and judges from his looks. And he will further assure the good lady that the auctioneer proved himself a gentleman−every inch of him! He wouldn't take a single bid from a trader, not even from old Graspum (he dreads to come in contact with such a brute as he is, when he gets his eye on a good piece o' nigger property), with all his money. As soon as he heard the name of a deacon among the bidders, something in his heart forbade his bidding against him.

"You were not as good as your word, Mr. Seabrook," says the good lady, still holding Mr. Seabrook by the hand. "But, are you sure there was no disguise about the sale?"

"Not the least, madam!" interrupts Mr. Seabrook, emphatically. "Bless me, madam, our people are too sensitive not to detect anything of that kind; and too generous to allow it if they did discover it. The children−my heart feels for them−are in the very best hands; will be brought up just as pious and morally. Can't go astray in the hands of a deacon−that's certain!" Mr. Seabrook rubs his hands, twists his fingers in various ways, and gives utterance to words of consolation, most blandly. The anxious lady seems disappointed, but is forced to accept the assurance.

We need scarcely tell the reader how intentionally Mr. Seabrook contented himself with the deception practised at the mart, nor with what freedom he made use of that blandest essence of southern assurance,—extreme politeness, to deceive the lady. She, however, had long been laudably engaged in behalf of a down−trodden race; and her knowledge of the secret workings of an institution which could only cover its monstrosity with sophistry and fraud impressed her with the idea of some deception having been practised. She well knew that Mr. Seabrook was one of those very contented gentlemen who have strong faith in the present, and are willing to sacrifice the future, if peace and plenty be secured to their hands. He had many times been known to listen to the advice of his confidential slaves, and even to yield to their caprices. And, too, he had been known to decry the ill−treatment of slaves by brutal and inconsiderate masters; but he never thinks it worth while to go beyond expressing a sort of rain−water sympathy for the maltreated. With those traits most prominent in his character, Annette and Nicholas were to him mere merchandise; and whatever claims to freedom they might have, through the acknowledgments of a father, he could give them no consideration, inasmuch as the law was paramount, and the great conservator of the south.

Our worthy benefactress felt the force of the above, in his reluctance to execute her commands, and the manner in which he faltered when questioned about the purchase. Returning to her home, weighing the circumstances, she resolves to devise some method of ascertaining the true position of the children. "Women are not to be outdone," she says to herself.

We must again beg the reader's indulgence while accompanying us in a retrograde necessary to the connection of our narrative. When we left Mr. M'Fadden at the crossing, more than two years ago, he was labouring under the excitement of a wound he greatly feared would close the account of his mortal speculations.

On the morning following that great political gathering, and during the night Harry had so singularly disappeared, the tavern was rife with conjectures. On the piazza and about the "bar−room" were a few stupefied and half−insensible figures stretched upon benches, or reclining in chairs, their coarse garments rent into tatters, and their besotted faces resembling as many florid masks grouped together to represent some demoniacal scene among the infernals; others were sleeping soundly beside the tables, or on the lawn. With filthy limbs bared, they snored with painful discord, in superlative contempt of everything around. Another party, reeking with the fumes of that poisonous drug upon which candidates for a people's favours had built their high expectations, were leaning carelessly against the rude counter of the "bar−room," casting wistful glances at the fascinating bottles so

securely locked within the lattice−work in the corner. Oaths of touching horror are mingling with loud calls for slave attendants, whose presence they wait to quench their burning thirst. Reader! digest the moral. In this human menagerie−in this sink of besotted degradation−lay the nucleus of a power by which the greatest interests of state are controlled.

A bedusted party of mounted men have returned from a second ineffectual attempt to recover the lost preacher: the appearance of responsibility haunts mine host. He assured Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden that his property would be perfectly secure under the lock of the corn−shed. And now his anxiety exhibits itself in the readiness with which he supplies dogs, horses, guns, and such implements as are necessary to hunt down an unfortunate minister of the gospel. What makes the whole thing worse, was the report of M'Fadden having had a good sleep and awaking much more comfortable; that there was little chance of the fortunate issue of his death. In this, mine host saw the liability increasing two−fold.

He stands his important person, (hat off, face red with expectancy, and hands thrust well down into his breeches pocket), on the top step of the stairs leading to the veranda, and hears the unfavourable report with sad discomfiture. "That's what comes of making a preacher of a slave! Well! I've done all I can. It puts all kinds of deviltry about runnin' away into their heads," he ventures to assert, as he turns away, re−enters the "bar−room," and invites all his friends to drink at his expense.

"Mark what I say, now, Squire Jones. The quickest way to catch that ar' nigger 's just to lay low and keep whist. He's a pious nigger; and a nigger can't keep his pious a'tween his teeth, no more nor a blackbird can his chattering. The feller 'll feel as if he wants to redeem somebody; and seeing how 'tis so, if ye just watch close some Sunday ye'll nab the fellow with his own pious bait. Can catch a pious runaway nigger 'most any time; the brute never knows enough to keep it to himself," says a flashily dressed gentleman, as he leaned against the counter, squinted his eye with an air of ponderous satisfaction, and twirled his tumbler round and round on the counter. "'Pears to me," he continues, quizzically, "Squire, you've got a lot o' mixed cracker material here, what it'll be hard to manufactor to make dependable voters on, 'lection day:" he casts a look at the medley of sleepers.

"I wish the whole pack on 'em was sold into slavery, I do! They form six−tenths of the voters in our state, and are more ignorant, and a great deal worse citizens, than our slaves. Bl−'em, there is'nt one in fifty can read or write, and they're impudenter than the Governor."

"Hush! hush! squire. 'Twon't do to talk so. There ain't men nowhere stand on dignity like them fellers; they are the very bone−and−siners of the unwashed, hard−fisted democracy. The way they'd pull this old tavern down, if they heard reflections on their honour, would be a caution to storms. But how's old iron−sided M'Fadden this morning? Begins to think of his niggers, I reckon," interrupts the gentleman; to which mine host shakes his head, despondingly. Mine host wishes M'Fadden, nigger, candidates and all, a very long distance from his place.

"I s'pose he thinks old Death, with his grim visage, ain't going to call for him just now. That's ollers the way with northerners, who lives atween the hope of something above, and the love of makin' money below: they never feel bad about the conscience, until old Davy Jones, Esq., the gentleman with the horns and tail, takes them by the nose, and says−'come!'"

"I have struck an idea," says our worthy host, suddenly striking his hand on the counter. "I will put up a poster. I will offer a big reward. T'other property's all safe; there's only the preacher missing."

"Just the strike! Give us yer hand, squire!" The gentleman reaches his hand across the counter, and smiles, while cordially embracing mine host. "Make the reward about two hundred, so I can make a good week's work for the dogs and me. Got the best pack in the parish; one on 'em knows as much as most clergymen, he does!" he very deliberately concludes, displaying a wonderful opinion of his own nigger−catching philosophy.

And Mr. Jones, such is mine host's name, immediately commenced exercising his skill in composition on a large, poster, which with a good hour's labour he completes, and posts upon the ceiling of the "bar−room," just below an enormously illustrated Circus bill.

"There! now's a chance of some enterprise and some sense. There's a deuced nice sum to be made at that!" says Mr. Jones, emphatically, as he stands a few steps back, and reads aloud the following sublime outline of his genius:—

"GREAT INDUCEMENT FOR SPORTSMEN. Two Hundred Dollars Reward.

"The above reward will be given anybody for the apprehension of the nigger−boy, Harry, the property of Mr. M'Fadden. Said Harry suddenly disappeared from these premises last night, while his master was supposed to be

dying. The boy's a well−developed nigger, 'ant sassy, got fine bold head and round face, and intelligent eye, and 's about five feet eleven inches high, and equally proportionate elsewhere. He's much giv'n to preachin', and most likely is secreted in some of the surrounding swamps, where he will remain until tempted to make his appearance on some plantation for the purpose of exortin his feller niggers. He is well disposed, and is said to have a good disposition, so that no person need fear to approach him for capture. The above reward will be paid upon his delivery at any gaol in the State, and a hundred and fifty dollars if delivered at any gaol out of the State.

"JETHRO JONES."

"Just the instrument to bring him, Jethro!" intimates our fashionable gent, quizzically, as he stands a few feet behind Mr. Jones, making grimaces. Then, gazing intently at the bill for some minutes, he runs his hands deep into his pockets, affects an air of greatest satisfaction, and commences whistling a tune to aid in suppressing a smile that is invading his countenance. "Wouldn't be in that nigger's skin for a thousand or more dollars, I wouldn't!" he continues, screeching in the loudest manner, and then shaking, kicking, and rousing the half−animate occupants of the floor and benches. "Come! get up here! Prize money ahead! Fine fun for a week. Prize money ahead! wake up, ye jolly sleepers, loyal citizens, independent voters−wake up, I say. Here's fun and frolic, plenty of whiskey, and two hundred dollars reward for every mother's son of ye what wants to hunt a nigger; and he's a preachin nigger at that! Come; whose in for the frolic, ye hard−faced democracy that love to vote for your country's good and a good cause?" After exerting himself for some time, they begin to scramble up like so many bewildered spectres of blackness, troubled to get light through the means of their blurred faculties.

"Who's dragging the life out o' me?" exclaims one, straining his mottled eyes, extending his wearied limbs, gasping as if for breath; then staggering to the counter. Finally, after much struggling, staggering, expressing consternation, obscene jeering, blasphemous oaths and filthy slang, they stand upright, and huddle around the notice. The picture presented by their ragged garments, their woebegone faces, and their drenched faculties, would, indeed, be difficult to transfer to canvas.

"Now, stare! stare! with all yer fire−stained eyes, ye clan of motley vagrants−ye sovereign citizens of a sovereign state. Two hundred dollars! aye, two hundred dollars for ye. Make plenty o' work for yer dogs; knowin brutes they are. And ye'll get whiskey enough to last the whole district more nor a year," says our worthy Jones, standing before them, and pointing his finger at the notice. They, as if doubting their own perceptibilities, draw nearer and nearer, straining their eyes, while their bodies oscillate against each other.

Mine host tells them to consider the matter, and be prepared for action, while he will proceed to M'Fadden's chamber and learn the state of his health.

He opens the sick man's chamber, and there, to his surprise, is the invalid gentleman, deliberately taking his tea and toast. Mine host congratulates him upon his appearance, extends his hand, takes a seat by his bed−side. "I had fearful apprehensions about you, my friend," he says.

"So had I about myself. I thought I was going to slip it in right earnest. My thoughts and feelins−how they wandered!" M'Fadden raises his hand to his forehead, and slowly shakes his head. "I would'nt a' given much for the chances, at one time; but the wound isn't so bad, after all. My nigger property gets along all straight, I suppose?" he enquires, coolly, rolling his eyes upwards with a look of serious reflection. "Boy preacher never returned last night. It's all right, though, I suppose?" again he enquired, looking mine host right in the eye, as if he discovered some misgiving. His seriousness soon begins to give place to anxiety.

"That boy was a bad nigger," says mine host, in a half−whisper; "but you must not let your property worry you, my friend."

"Bad nigger!" interrupts the invalid. Mine host pauses for a moment, while M'Fadden sets his eyes upon him with a piercing stare.

"Not been cutting up nigger tricks?" he ejaculates, enquiringly, about to spring from his couch with his usual nimbleness. Mine host places his left hand upon his shoulder, and assures him there is no cause of alarm.

"Tell me if any thing's wrong about my property. Now do,—be candid:" his eyes roll, anxiously.

"All right−except the preacher; he's run away," mine host answers, suggesting how much better it will be to take the matter cool, as he is sure to be captured.

"What! who−how? you don't say! My very choicest piece of property. Well−well! who will believe in religion, after that? He came to my sick chamber, the black vagabond did, and prayed as piously as a white man. And it went right to my heart; and I felt that if I died it would a' been the means o' savin my soul from all sorts of

things infernal," says the recovering M'Fadden. He, the black preacher, is only a nigger after all; and his owner will have him back, or he'll have his black hide−that he will! The sick man makes another effort to rise, but is calmed into resignation through mine host's further assurance that the property will be "all right" by the time he gets well.

"How cunning it was in the black vagrant! I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he cleared straight for Massachusetts−Massachusetts hates our State. Her abolitionists will ruin us yet, sure as the world. We men of the South must do something on a grand scale to protect our rights and our property. The merchants of the North will help us; they are all interested in slave labour. Cotton is king; and cotton can rule, if it will. Cotton can make friendship strong, and political power great.

"There's my cousin John, ye see; he lives north, but is married to a woman south. He got her with seventeen mules and twenty−three niggers. And there's brother Jake's daughter was married to a planter out south what owns lots o' niggers. And there's good old uncle Richard; he traded a long time with down south folks, made heaps a money tradin niggers in a sly way, and never heard a word said about slavery not being right, that he did'nt get into a deuce of a fuss, and feel like fightin? Two of Simon Wattler's gals were married down south, and all the family connections became down−south in principle. And here's Judge Brooks out here, the very best down−south Judge on the bench; he come from cousin Ephraim's neighbourhood, down east. It's just this way things is snarled up a'tween us and them ar' fellers down New England way. It keeps up the strength of our peculiar institution, though. And southern Editors! just look at them; why, Lord love yer soul! two thirds on' em are imported from down−north way; and they make the very best southern−principled men. I thought of that last night, when Mr. Jones with the horns looked as if he would go with him. But, I'll have that preachin vagrant, I'll have him!" says Mr. M'Fadden, emphatically, seeming much more at rest about his departing affairs. As the shadows of death fade from his sight into their proper distance, worldly figures and property justice resume their wonted possession of his thoughts.

Again, as if suddenly seized with pain, he contorts his face, and enquires in a half−whisper—"What if this wound should mortify? would death follow quickly? I'm dubious yet!"

Mine host approaches nearer his bed−side, takes his hand. M'Fadden, with much apparent meekness, would know what he thought of his case?

He is assured by the kind gentleman that he is entirely out of danger−worth a whole parish of dead men. At the same time, mine host insinuates that he will never do to fight duels until he learns to die fashionably.

M'Fadden smiles,—remembers how many men have been nearly killed and yet escaped the undertaker,—seems to have regained strength, and calls for a glass of whiskey and water. Not too strong! but, reminding mine host of the excellent quality of his bitters, he suggests that a little may better his case.

"I didn't mean the wound," resuming his anxiety for the lost preacher: "I meant the case of the runaway?"

"Oh! oh! bless me! he will forget he is a runaway piece of property in his anxiousness to put forth his spiritual inclinations. That's what'll betray the scamp;—nigger will be nigger, you know! They can't play the lawyer, nohow," mine host replies, with an assurance of his ability to judge negro character. This is a new idea, coming like the dew−drops of heaven to relieve his anxiety. The consoling intelligence makes him feel more comfortable.

The whiskey−and−bitters−most unpoetic drink−is brought to his bed−side. He tremblingly carries it to his lips, sips and sips; then, with one gulp, empties the glass. At this moment the pedantic physician makes his appearance, scents the whiskey, gives a favourable opinion of its application as a remedy in certain cases. The prescription is not a bad one. Climate, and such a rusty constitution as Mr. M'Fadden is blest with, renders a little stimulant very necessary to keep up the one thing needful−courage! The patient complains bitterly to the man of pills and powders; tells a great many things about pains and fears. What a dreadful thing if the consequence had proved fatal! He further thinks that it was by the merest act of Providence, in such a desperate affray, he had not been killed outright. A great many bad visions have haunted him in his dreams, and he is very desirous of knowing what the man of salts and senna thinks about the true interpretation of such. About the time he was dreaming such dreams he was extremely anxious to know how the spiritual character of slave−holders stood on the records of heaven, and whether the fact of slave−owning would cause the insertion of an item in the mortal warrant forming the exception to a peaceful conclusion with the Father's forgiveness. He felt as if he would surely die during the night past, and his mind became so abstracted about what he had done in his life,—what was to come, how negro property had been treated, how it should be treated,—that, although he had opinions now and

then widely−different, it had left a problem which would take him all his life−time to solve,—if he should live ever so long. And, too, there were these poor wretches accidentally shot down at his side; his feelings couldn't withstand the ghostly appearance of their corpses as he was carried past them, perhaps to be buried n the same forlorn grave, the very next day. All these things reflected their results through the morbidity of Mr. M'Fadden's mind; but his last observation, showing how slender is the cord between life and death, proved what was uppermost in his mind. "You'll allow I'm an honest man? I have great faith in your opinion, Doctor! And if I have been rather go−ahead with my niggers, my virtue in business matters can't be sprung," he mutters. The physician endeavours to calm his anxiety, by telling him he is a perfect model of goodness,—a just, honest, fearless, and enterprising planter; and that these attributes of our better nature constitute such a balance in the scale as will give any gentleman slaveholder very large claims to that spiritual proficiency necessary for the world to come.

Mr. M'Fadden acquiesces in the correctness of this remark, but desires to inform the practitioner what a sad loss he has met with. He is sure the gentleman will scarcely believe his word when he tells him what it is. "I saw how ye felt downright affected when that nigger o' mine prayed with so much that seemed like honesty and christianity, last night," he says.

"Yes," interrupts the man of medicine, "he was a wonderful nigger that. I never heard such natural eloquence nor such pathos; he is a wonder among niggers, he is! Extraordinary fellow for one raised up on a plantation. Pity, almost, that such a clergyman should be a slave."

"You don't say so, Doctor, do you? Well! I've lost him just when I wanted him most."

"He is not dead?" enquires the physician, suddenly interrupting. He had seen Mr. M'Fadden's courage fail at the approach of death, and again recover quickly when the distance widened between that monitor and himself, and could not suppress the smile stealing over his countenance.

"Dead! no indeed. Worse−he has run away!" Mr. M'Fadden quickly retorted, clenching his right hand, and scowling. In another minute he turns back the sheets, and, with returned strength, makes a successful attempt to sit up in bed. "I don't know whether I'm better or worse; but I think it would be all right if I warn't worried so much about the loss of that preacher. I paid a tremendous sum for him. And the worst of it is, my cousin deacon Stoner, of a down−east church, holds a mortgage on my nigger stock, and he may feel streaked when he hears of the loss;" Mr. M'Fadden concludes, holding his side to the physician, who commences examining the wound, which the enfeebled man says is very sore and must be dressed cautiously, so that he may be enabled to get out and see to his property.

To the great surprise of all, the wound turns out to be merely a slight cut, with no appearance of inflammation, and every prospect of being cured through a further application of a very small bit of dressing plaster.

The physician smiled, mine host smiled; it was impossible to suppress the risible faculties. The poor invalid is overpowered with disappointment. His imagination had betrayed him into one of those desperate, fearful, and indubitable brinks of death, upon which it seems the first law of nature reminds us what is necessary to die by. They laughed, and laughed, and laughed, till Mr. M'Fadden suddenly changed countenance, and said it was no laughing affair,—such things were not to be trifled with; men should be thinking of more important matters. And he looked at the wound, run his fingers over it gently, and rubbed it as if doubting the depth.

"A little more whiskey would'nt hurt me, Doctor?" he enquires, complacently, looking round the room distrustfully at those who were enjoying the joke, more at his expense than he held to be in accordance with strict rules of etiquette.

"I'll admit, my worthy citizen, your case seemed to baffle my skill, last night," the physician replies, jocosely. "Had I taken your political enthusiasm into consideration,—and your readiness to instruct an assemblage in the holy democracy of our south,—and your hopes of making strong draughts do strong political work, I might have saved my opiate, and administered to your case more in accordance with the skilfully administered prescriptions of our politicians. Notwithstanding, I am glad you are all right, and trust that whenever you get your enthusiasm fired with bad brandy, or the candidates' bad whiskey, you will not tax other people's feelings with your own dying affairs; nor send for a 'nigger' preacher to redeem your soul, who will run away when he thinks the job completed."

Mr. M'Fadden seemed not to comprehend the nature of his physician's language, and after a few minutes pause he must needs enquire about the weather? if a coroner's inquest has been held over the dead men? what was its decision? was there any decision at all? and have they been buried? Satisfied on all these points, he gets up,

himself again, complaining only of a little muddled giddiness about the head, and a hip so sore that he scarcely could reconcile his mind to place confidence in it.

"Good by! good by!" says the physician, shaking him by the hand. "Measure the stimulant carefully; and take good care of dumplin dep“t No. 1, and you'll be all right very soon. You're a good democrat, and you'll make as good a stump orator as ever took the field."

The man of medicine, laughing heartily within himself, descends the stairs and reaches the bar−room, where are concentrated sundry of the party we have before described. They make anxious enquiries about Mr. M'Fadden,—how he seemed to "take it;" did he evince want of pluck? had he courage enough to fight a duel? and could his vote be taken afore he died? These, and many other questions of a like nature, were put to the physician so fast, and with so many invitations to drink "somethin'," that he gave a sweeping answer by saying Mac had been more frightened than hurt; that the fear of death having passed from before his eyes his mind had now centered on the loss of his nigger preacher−a valuable piece of property that had cost him no less than fifteen hundred dollars. And the worst of it was, that the nigger had aggravatingly prayed for him when he thought he was going to sink out into the arms of father death.

So pressing were the invitations to drink, that our man of medicine advanced to the counter, like a true gentleman of the south, and with his glass filled with an aristocratic mixture, made one of his politest bows, toasted the health of all free citizens, adding his hope for the success of the favourite candidate.

"Drink it with three cheers, standin'!" shouted a formidably mustached figure, leaning against the counter with his left hand, while his right was grasping the jug from which he was attempting in vain to water his whiskey. To this the physic gentleman bows assent; and they are given to the very echo. Taking his departure for the city, as the sounds of cheering die away, he emerged from the front door, as Mr. M'Fadden, unexpectedly as a ghost rising from the tomb, made his entrance from the old staircase in the back. The citizens−for of such is our assembly composed−are astonished and perplexed. "Such a set of scapegoats as you are!" grumbles out the debutant, as he stands before them like a disentombed spectre. With open arms they approach him, congratulate him on his recovery, and shower upon him many good wishes, and long and strong drinks.

A few drinks more, and our hero is quite satisfied with his welcome. His desire being intimated, mine host conducts himself to the corn−shed, where he satisfies himself that his faithful property (the preacher excepted) is all snugly safe. Happy property in the hands of a prodigious democrat! happy republicanism that makes freedom but a privilege! that makes a mockery of itself, and enslaves the noblest blood of noble freemen! They were happy, the victims of ignorance, contented with the freedom their country had given them, bowing beneath the enslaving yoke of justice−boasting democracy, and ready to be sold and shipped, with an invoice of freight, at the beckon of an owner.

Mr. M'Fadden questions the people concerning Harry's departure; but they are as ignorant of his whereabouts as himself. They only remember that he came to the shed at midnight, whispered some words of consolation, and of his plain fare gave them to eat;—nothing more.

"Poor recompense for my goodness!" says Mr. M'Fadden, muttering some indistinct words as he returns to the tavern, followed by a humorous negro, making grimaces in satisfaction of "mas'r's" disappointment. Now friends are gathered together, chuckling in great glee over the large reward offered for the lost parson, for the capture of which absconding article they have numerous horses, dogs, confidential negroes, and a large supply of whiskey, with which very necessary liquid they will themselves become dogs of one kine. The game to be played is purely a democratic one; hence the clansmen are ready to loosen their souls' love for the service. M'Fadden never before witnessed such satisfactory proofs of his popularity; his tenderest emotions are excited; he cannot express the fullness of his heart; he bows, puts his hand to his heart, orders the balance of his invoice sent to his plantation, mounts his horse, and rides off at full gallop, followed by his friends.

CHAPTER XXXI. A FRIEND IS WOMAN.

THE reader will again accompany us to the time when we find Annette and Nicholas in the hands of Graspum, who will nurture them for their increasing value.

Merciless creditors have driven Marston from that home of so many happy and hospitable associations, to seek shelter in the obscure and humble chamber of a wretched building in the outskirts of the city. Fortune can afford him but a small cot, two or three broken chairs, an ordinary deal table, a large chest, which stands near the fire−place, and a dressing−stand, for furniture. Here, obscured from the society he had so long mingled with, he spends most of his time, seldom venturing in public lest he may encounter those indomitable gentlemen who would seem to love the following misfortune into its last stage of distress. His worst enemy, however, is that source of his misfortunes he cannot disclose; over it hangs the mystery he must not solve! It enshrines him with guilt before public opinion; by it his integrity lies dead; it is that which gives to mother rumour the weapons with which to wield her keenest slanders.

Having seized Marston's real estate, Graspum had no scruples about swearing to the equity of his claim; nor were any of the creditors willing to challenge an investigation; and thus, through fear of such a formidable abettor, Marston laboured under the strongest, and perhaps the most unjust imputations. But there was no limit to Graspum's mercenary proceedings; for beyond involving Marston through Lorenzo, he had secretly purchased many claims of the creditors, and secured his money by a dexterous movement, with which he reduced the innocent children to slavery.

Reports have spread among the professedly knowing that Marston can never have made away with all his property in so few years. And the manner being so invisible, the charge becomes stronger. Thus, labouring between the pain of misfortune and the want of means to resent suspicion, his cheerless chamber is all he can now call his home. But he has two good friends left−Franconia, and the old negro Bob. Franconia has procured a municipal badge for Daddy; and, through it (disguised) he seeks and obtains work at stowing cotton on the wharfs. His earnings are small, but his soul is large, and embued with attachment for his old master, with whom he will share them. Day by day the old slave seems to share the feelings of his master,—to exhibit a solicitous concern for his comfort. Earning his dollars and twenty−five cents a day, he will return when the week has ended, full of exultation, spread out his earnings with childlike simplicity, take thirty cents a day for himself, and slip the remainder into Marston's pocket. How happy he seems, as he watches the changes of Marston's countenance, and restrains the gushing forth of his feelings!

It was on one of those nights upon which Daddy had received his earnings, that Marston sat in his cheerless chamber, crouched over the faint blaze of a few pieces of wood burning on the bricks of his narrow fire−place, contemplating the eventful scenes of the few years just passed. The more he contemplated the more it seemed like a dream; his very head wearied with the interminable maze of his difficulties. Further and further, as he contemplated, did it open to his thoughts the strange social and political mystery of that more strange institution for reducing mankind to the level of brutes. And yet, democracy, apparently honest, held such inviolable and just to its creed; which creed it would defend with a cordon of steel. The dejected gentleman sighs, rests his head on his left hand, and his elbow on the little table at his side. Without, the weather is cold and damp; an incessant rain had pattered upon the roof throughout the day, wild and murky clouds hang their dreary festoons along the heavens, and swift scudding fleeces, driven by fierce, murmuring winds, bespread the prospect with gloom that finds its way into the recesses of the heart.

"Who is worse than a slave!" sighs the rejected man, getting up and looking out of his window into the dreary recesses of the narrow lane. "If it be not a ruined planter I mistake the policy by which we govern our institution! As the slave is born a subject being, so is the planter a dependent being. We planters live in disappointment, in fear, in unhappy uncertainty; and yet we make no preparations for the result. Nay, we even content ourselves with pleasantly contemplating what may come through the eventful issue of political discord; and when it comes in earnest, we find ourselves the most hapless of unfortunates. For myself, bereft of all I had once,—even friends, I

am but a forlorn object in the scale of weak mankind! No man will trust me with his confidence,—scarce one knows me but to harass me; I can give them no more, and yet I am suspected of having more. It is so, and ever will be so. Such are the phases of man's downfall, that few follow them to the facts, while rumour rules supreme over misfortune. There may be a fountain of human pain concealed beneath it; but few extend the hand to stay its quickening. Nay, when all is gone, mammon cries, more! until body and soul are crushed beneath the "more" of relentless self.

"Few know the intricacies of our system; perhaps 'twere well, lest our souls should not be safe within us. But, ah! my conscience chides me here. And betwixt those feelings which once saw all things right, but now through necessity beholds their grossest wrongs, comes the pain of self−condemnation. It is a condemnation haunting me unto death. Had I been ignorant of Clotilda's history, the fiendish deed of those who wronged her in her childhood had not now hung like a loathsome pestilence around my very garments. That which the heart rebukes cannot be concealed; but we must be obedient to the will that directs all things;—and if it be that we remain blind in despotism until misfortune opens our eyes, let the cause of the calamity be charged to those it belongs to," he concludes; and then, after a few minutes' silence, he lights his taper, and sets it upon the table. His care−worn countenance pales with melancholy; his hair has whitened with tribulation; his demeanour denotes a man of tender sensibility fast sinking into a physical wreck. A well−soiled book lies on the table, beside which he takes his seat; he turns its pages over and over carelessly, as if it were an indifferent amusement to wile away the time. "They cannot enslave affection, nor can they confine it within prison walls," he mutters. He has proof in the faithfulness of Daddy, his old slave. And as he contemplates, the words "she will be more than welcome to−night," escape his lips. Simultaneously a gentle tapping is heard at the door. Slowly it opens, and the figure of an old negro, bearing a basket on his arm, enters. He is followed by the slender and graceful form of Franconia, who approaches her uncle, hand extended, salutes him with a kiss, seats herself at his side, says he must not be sad. Then she silently gazes upon him for a few moments, as if touched by his troubles, while the negro, having spread the contents of the basket upon the chest, makes a humble bow, wishes mas'r and missus good night, and withdraws. "There, uncle," she says, laying her hand gently on his arm, "I didn't forget you, did I?" She couples the word with a smile−a smile so sweet, so expressive of her soul's goodness. "You are dear to me, uncle; yes, as dear as a father. How could I forget that you have been a father to me? I have brought these little things to make you comfortable,"−she points to the edibles on the chest−"and I wish I were not tied to a slave, uncle, for then I could do more. Twice, since my marriage to M'Carstrow, have I had to protect myself from his ruffianism."

"From his ruffianism!" interrupts Marston, quickly: "Can it be, my child, that even a ruffian would dare exhibit his vileness toward you?"

"Even toward me, uncle. With reluctance I married him, and my only regret is, that a slave's fate had not been mine ere the fruits of that day fell upon me. Women like me make a feeble defence in the world; and bad husbands are the shame of their sex," she returns, her eyes brightening with animation, as she endeavours to calm the excitement her remarks have given rise to: "Don't, pray don't mind it, uncle," she concludes.

"Such news had been anticipated; but I was cautious not to"—

"Never mind," she interrupts, suddenly coiling her delicate arm round his neck, and impressing a kiss on his care−worn cheek. "Let us forget these things; they are but the fruits of weak nature. It were better to bear up under trouble than yield to trouble's burdens: better far. Who knows but that it is all for the best?" She rises, and, with seeming cheerfulness, proceeds to spread the little table with the refreshing tokens of her friendship. Yielding to necessity, the table is spread, and they sit down, with an appearance of domestic quietness touchingly humble.

"There is some pleasure, after all, in having a quiet spot where we can sit down and forget our cares. Perhaps (all said and done) a man may call himself prince of his own garret, when he can forget all beyond it," says Marston affected to tears by Franconia's womanly resignation.

"Yes," returns Franconia, joyously, "it's a consolation to know that we have people among us much worse off than we are. I confess, though, I feel uneasy about our old slaves. Slavery's wrong, uncle; and it's when one's reduced to such extremes as are presented in this uninviting garret that we realise it the more forcibly. It gives the poor wretches no chance of bettering their condition; and if one exhibits ever so much talent over the other, there is no chance left him to improve it. It is no recompense to the slave that his talent only increases the price of the article to be sold. Look what Harry would have been had he enjoyed freedom. Uncle, we forget our best interests while pondering over the security of a bad system. Would it not be better to cultivate the slave's affections, rather

than oppress his feelings?" Franconia has their cause at heart−forgets her own. She is far removed from the cold speculations of the south; she is free from mercenary motives; unstained by that principle of logic which recognises only the man merchandise. No will hath she to contrive ingenious apologies for the wrongs inflicted upon a fallen race. Her words spring from the purest sentiment of the soul; they contain a smarting rebuke of Marston's former misdoings: but he cannot resent it, nor can he turn the tide of his troubles against her noble generosity.

They had eaten their humble supper of meats and bread, and coffee, when Franconia hears a rap at the lower entrance, leading into the street. Bearing the taper in her hand, she descends the stairs quickly, and, opening the door, recognises the smiling face of Daddy Bob. Daddy greets her as if he were surcharged with the very best news for old mas'r and missus. He laughs in the exuberance of his simplicity, and, with an air of fondness that would better become a child, says, "Lor', young missus, how glad old Bob is to see ye! Seems like long time since old man see'd Miss Frankone look so spry. Got dat badge." The old man shows her his badge, exultingly. "Missus, nobody know whose nigger I'm's, and old Bob arns a right smart heap o' money to make mas'r comfortable." The old slave never for once thinks of his own infirmities; no, his attachment for master soars above every thing else; he thinks only in what way he can relieve his necessities. Honest, faithful, and affectionate, the associations of the past are uppermost in his mind; he forgets his slavery in his love for master and the old plantation. Readily would he lay down his life, could he, by so doing, lighten the troubles he instinctively sees in the changes of master's position. The old plantation and its people have been sold; and he, being among the separated from earth's chosen, must save his infirm body lest some man sell him for the worth thereof. Bob's face is white with beard, and his coarse garments are much worn and ragged; but there is something pleasing in the familiarity with which Franconia accepts his brawny hand. How free from that cold advance, that measured welcome, and that religious indifference, with which the would−be friend of the slave, at the north, too often accepts the black man's hand! There is something in the fervency with which she shakes his wrinkled hand that speaks of the goodness of the heart; something that touches the old slave's childlike nature. He smiles bashfully, and says, "Glad t' see ye, missus; dat I is: 'spishilly ven ye takes care on old mas'r." After receiving her salutation he follows her to the chamber, across which he hastens to receive a welcome from old mas'r. Marston warmly receives his hand, and motions him to be seated on the chest near the fire−place. Bob takes his seat, keeping his eye on mas'r the while. "Neber mind, mas'r," he says, "Big Mas'r above be better dan Buckra. Da'h is somefin' what Buckra no sell from ye, dat's a good heart. If old mas'r on'y keeps up he spirit, de Lor' 'll carry un throu' 'e triblation," he continues; and, after watching his master a few minutes, returns to Franconia, and resumes his jargon.

Franconia is the same fair creature Bob watched over when she visited the plantation: her countenance wears the same air of freshness and frankness; her words are of the same gentleness; she seems as solicitous of his comfort as before. And yet a shadow of sadness shrouds that vivacity which had made her the welcome guest of the old slaves. He cannot resist those expressions which are ever ready to lisp forth from the negro when his feelings are excited. "Lor, missus, how old Bob's heart feels! Hah, ah! yah, yah! Looks so good, and reminds old Bob how e' look down on dah Astley, yander. But, dah somefin in dat ar face what make old nigger like I know missus don't feel just right," he exclaims.

The kind woman reads his thoughts in the glowing simplicity of his wrinkled face. "It has been said that a dog was our last friend, Bob: I now think a slave should have been added. Don't you think so, uncle?" she enquires, looking at Marston, and, again taking the old slave by the hand, awaits the reply.

"We rarely appreciate their friendship until it be too late to reward it," he replies, with an attempt to smile.

"True, true! but the world is full of ingratitude,—very amiable ingratitude. Never mind, Daddy; you must now tell me all about your affairs, and what has happened since the night you surprised me at our house; and you must tell me how you escaped M'Carstrow on the morning of the disturbance," she enjoins. And while Bob relates his story Franconia prepares his supper. Some cold ham, bread, and coffee, are soon spread out before him. He will remove them to the chest, near the fire−place. "Why, Missus Frankone," he says, "ye sees how I'se so old now dat nobody tink I'se werf ownin; and so nobody axes old Bob whose nigger he is. An't prime nigger, now; but den a' good fo' work some, and get cash, so t' help old mas'r yander (Bob points to old master). Likes t' make old master feel not so bad."

"Yes," rejoins Marston, "Bob's good to me. He makes his sleeping apartments, when he comes, at the foot of my bed, and shares his earnings with me every Saturday night. He's like an old clock that can keep time as well as

a new one, only wind it up with care."

"Dat I is!" says Daddy, with an exulting nod of the head, as he, to his own surprise, lets fall his cup. It was only the negro's forgetfulness in the moment of excitement. Giving a wistful look at Franconia, he commences picking up the pieces, and drawing his week's earnings from a side pocket of his jacket.

"Eat your supper, Daddy; never mind your money now" says Franconia, laughing heartily: at which Bob regains confidence and resumes his supper, keeping a watchful eye upon his old master the while. Every now and then he will pause, cant his ear, and shake his head, as if drinking in the tenour of the conversation between Franconia and her uncle. Having concluded, he pulls out his money and spreads it upon the chest. "Old Bob work hard fo' dat!" he says, with emphasis, spreading a five−dollar bill and two dollars and fifty cents in silver into divisions. "Dah!" he ejaculates, "dat old mas'r share, and dis is dis child's." The old man looks proudly upon the coin, and feels he is not so worthless, after all. "Now! who say old Bob aint werf nofin?" he concludes, getting up, putting his share into his pocket, and then, as if unobserved, slipping the balance into Marston's. This done, he goes to the window, affects to be looking out, and then resuming his seat upon the chest, commences humming a familiar plantation tune, as if his pious feelings had been superseded by the recollection of past scenes.

"What, Daddy,—singing songs?" interrupts Franconia, looking at him enquiringly. He stops as suddenly as he commenced, exchanges an expressive look, and fain would question her sincerity.

"Didn't mean 'um, missus," he returns, after a moment's hesitation, "didn't mean 'um. Was thinkin 'bout somefin back'ards; down old plantation times."

"You had better forget them times, Bob."

"Buckra won't sell dis old nigger,—will he, Miss Frankone?" he enquires, resuming his wonted simplicity.

"Sell you, Bob? You're a funny old man. Don't think your old half−worn−out bones are going to save you. Money's the word: they'll sell anything that will produce it,—dried up of age are no exceptions. Keep out of Elder Pemberton Praiseworthy's way: whenever you hear him singing, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall come,' as he always does,—run! He lives on the sale of infirmity, and your old age would be a capital thing for the exercise of his genius. He will put you through a course of regeneration, take the wrinkles smooth out of your face, dye those old grey whiskers, and get a profit for his magic power of transposing the age of negro property," she replied, gravely, while Bob stares at her as if doubting his own security.

"Why, missus!" he interposes, his face glowing with astonishment; "Buckra don't be so smart dat he make old nigger young, be he?"

"Traders can do anything with niggers that have got money in them, as they say. Our distinguished people are sensitive of the crime, but excuse themselves with apologies they cannot make cover the shame."

"Franke!" interrupts Marston, "spare the negro's feelings,—it may have a bad effect." He touches her on the arm, and knits his brows in caution.

"How strange, to think that bad influence could come of such an inoffensive old man! Truth, I know and feel, is powerfully painful when brought home to the doors of our best people,—it cuts deep when told in broad letters; but they make the matter worse by attempting to enshrine the stains with their chivalry. We are a wondrous people, uncle, and the world is just finding it out, to our shame. We may find it out ourselves, by and by; perhaps pay the penalty with sorrow. We look upon negroes as if they were dropped down from some unaccountable origin,—intended to raise the world's cotton, rice, and sugar, but never to get above the menial sphere we have conditioned for them. Uncle, there is a mistake somewhere,—a mistake sadly at variance with our democratic professions. Democracy needs to reclaim its all−claiming principles of right and justice for the down−trodden. And yet, while the negro generously submits to serve us, we look upon him as an auspicious innovator, who never could have been born to enjoy manhood, and was subjected to bear a black face because God had marked him for servitude. Did God found an aristocracy of colour, or make men to be governed by their distinctive qualifications of colour relationship?" says Franconia, her face resuming a flush of agitation. Touching Marston on the arm with the fore−finger of her right hand, and giving a glance at Bob, who listens attentively to the theme of conversation, she continues: "Say no more of bad influence coming of slaves, when the corruptest examples are set by those who hold them as such,—who crash their hopes, blot out their mental faculties, and turn their bodies into licentious merchandise that they may profit by its degradation! Show me the humblest slave on your plantation, and, in comparison with the slave−dealer, I will prove him a nobleman of God's kind,—of God's image: his simple nature will be his clean passport into heaven. The Father of Mercy will receive him there; he will forgive

the crimes enforced upon him by man; and that dark body on earth will be recompensed in a world of light,—it will shine with the brighter spirits of that realm of justice and love. Earth may bring the slavetrader bounties; but heaven will reject the foul offering." The good woman unfolds the tender emotions of her heart, as only woman can.

Bob listens, as if taking a deep interest in the force and earnestness of young missus's language. He is swayed by her pathos, and at length interposes his word.

"Nigger ain't so good as white man" (he shakes his head, philosophically). "White man sharp; puzzle nigger to find out what 'e don, know ven 'e mind t'." Thus saying, he takes a small hymn− book from his pocket, and, Franconia setting the light beside him, commences reading to himself by its dim glare.

"Well! now, uncle, it's getting late, and I've a good way to go, and the night's stormy; so I must prepare for home." Franconia gets up, and evinces signs of withdrawing. She walks across the little chamber three or four times, looks out of the window, strains her sight into the gloomy prospect, and then, as if reluctant to leave her uncle, again takes a seat by his side. Gently laying her left hand upon his shoulder, she makes an effort at pleasantry, tells him to keep up his resolution−to be of good cheer.

"Remember, uncle," she says, calmly, "they tell us it is no disgrace to be poor,—no shame to work to live; and yet poor people are treated as criminals. For my own part, I would rather be poor and happy than rich with a base husband; I have lived in New England, know how to appreciate its domestic happiness. It was there Puritanism founded true American liberty.—Puritanism yet lives, and may be driven to action; but we must resign ourselves to the will of an all−wise Providence." Thus concluding, she makes another attempt to withdraw.

"You must not leave me yet!" says Marston, grasping her hand firmly in his. "Franke, I cannot part with you until I have disclosed what I have been summoning resolution to suppress. I know your attachment, Franconia; you have been more than dear to me. You have known my feelings,—what they have already had to undergo." He pauses.

"Speak it, uncle, speak it! Keep nothing from me, nor make secrets in fear of my feelings. Speak out,—I may relieve you!" she interrupts, nervously: and again encircling her arm round his neck, waits his reply, in breathless suspense.

He falters for a moment, and then endeavours to regain his usual coolness. "To−morrow, Franconia," he half mutters out, "to−morrow, you may find me not so well situated," (here tears are seen trickling down his cheeks) "and in a place where it will not become your delicate nature to visit me."

"Nay, uncle!" she stops him there; "I will visit you wherever you may be−in a castle or a prison."

The word prison has touched the tender chord upon which all his troubles are strung. He sobs audibly; but they are only sobs of regret, for which there is no recompense in this late hour. "And would you follow me to a prison, Franconia?" he enquires, throwing his arms about her neck, kissing her pure cheek with the fondness of a father.

"Yea, and share your sorrows within its cold walls. Do not yield to melancholy, uncle,—you have friends left: if not, heaven will prepare a place of rest for you; heaven shields the unfortunate at last," rejoins the good woman, the pearly tears brightening in mutual sympathy.

"To−morrow, my child, you will find me the unhappy tenant of those walls where man's discomfiture is complete."

"Nay, uncle, nay! you are only allowing your melancholy forebodings to get the better of you. Such men as Graspum−men who have stripped families of their all−might take away your property, and leave you as they have left my poor parents; but no one would be so heartless as to drive you to the extreme of imprisonment. It is a foolish result at best." Franconia's voice falters; she looks more and more intently in her uncle's face, struggles to suppress her rising emotions. She knows his frankness, she feels the pain of his position; but, though the dreadful extreme seems scarcely possible, there is that in his face conveying strong evidence of the truth of his remark.

"Do not weep, Franconia; spare your tears for a more worthy object: such trials have been borne by better men than I. I am but the merchandise of my creditors. There is, however, one thing which haunts me to grief; could I have saved my children, the pain of my position had been slight indeed."

"Speak not of them, uncle," Franconia interrupts, "you cannot feel the bitterness of their lot more than myself. I have saved a mother, but have failed to execute my plan of saving them; and my heart throbs with pain when I think that now it is beyond my power. Let me not attempt to again excite in your bosom feelings which must ever

be harassing, for the evil only can work its destruction. To clip the poisoning branches and not uproot the succouring trunk, is like casting pearls into the waste of time. My heart will ever be with the destinies of those children, my feelings bound in unison with theirs; our hopes are the same, and if fortune should smile on me in times to come I will keep my word−I will snatch them from the devouring element of slavery."

"Stop, my child!" speaks Marston, earnestly: "Remember you can do little against the strong arm of the law, and still stronger arm of public opinion. Lay aside your hopes of rescuing those children, Franconia, and remember that while I am in prison I am the property of my creditors, subject to their falsely conceived notions of my affairs," he continues. "I cannot now make amends to the law of nature," he adds, burying his face in his hand, weeping a child's tears.

Franconia looks solicitously upon her uncle, as he sorrows. She would dry her tears to save his throbbing heart. Her noble generosity and disinterestedness have carried her through many trials since her marriage, but it fails to nerve her longer. Her's is a single−hearted sincerity, dispensing its goodness for the benefit of the needy; she suppresses her own troubles that she may administer consolation to others. "The affection that refuses to follow misfortune to its lowest step is weak indeed. If you go to prison, Franconia will follow you there," she says, with touching pathos, her musical voice adding strength to the resolution. Blended with that soft angelic expression her eyes give forth, her calm dignity and inspiring nobleness show how firm is that principle of her nature never to abandon her old friend.

The old negro, who had seemed absorbed in his sympathetic reflections, gazes steadfastly at his old master, until his emotions spring forth in kindest solicitude. Resistance is beyond his power. "Neber mind, old mas'r," (he speaks in a devoted tone) "dar's better days comin, bof fo' old Bob and mas'r. Tink 'um sees de day when de old plantation jus so 't was wid mas'r and da' old folks." Concluding in a subdued voice, he approaches Franconia, and seats himself, book in hand, on the floor at her feet. Moved by his earnestness, she lays her hand playfully upon his head, saying: "Here is our truest friend, uncle!"

"My own heart lubs Miss Frankone more den eber," he whispers in return. How pure, how holy, is the simple recompense! It is nature's only offering, all the slave can give; and he gives it in the bounty of his soul.

Marston's grief having subsided, he attempts to soothe Franconia's feelings, by affecting an air of indifference. "What need I care, after all? my resolution should be above it," he says, thrusting his right hand into his breast pocket, and drawing out a folded paper, which he throws upon the little table, and says, "There, Franconia, my child! that contains the climax of my unlamented misfortunes; read it: it will show you where my next abode will be−I may be at peace there; and there is consolation at being at peace, even in a cell." He passes the paper into her hand.

With an expression of surprise she opens it, and glances over its contents; then reads it word by word. "Do they expect to get something from nothing?" she says, sarcastically. "It is one of those soothsayers so valuable to men whose feelings are only with money−to men who forget they cannot carry money to the graves; and that no tribute is demanded on either road leading to the last abode of man."

"Stop there, my child! stop!" interrupts Marston. "I have given them all, 'tis true; but suspicion is my persecutor−suspicion, and trying to be a father to my own children!"

"It is, indeed, a misfortune to be a father under such circumstances, in such an atmosphere!" the good woman exclaims, clasping her hands and looking upward, as if imploring the forgiveness of Heaven. Tremblingly she held the paper in her hand, until it fell upon the floor, as she, overcome, swooned in her uncle's arms.

She swooned! yes, she swooned. That friend upon whom her affections had been concentrated was a prisoner. The paper was a bail writ, demanding the body of the accused. The officer serving had been kind enough to allow Marston his parole of honour until the next morning. He granted this in accordance with Marston's request, that by the lenity he might see Daddy Bob and Franconia once more.

Lifting Franconia in his arms, her hair falling loosely down, Marston lays her gently on the cot, and commences bathing her temples. He has nothing but water to bathe them with,—nothing but poverty's liquid. The old negro, frightened at the sudden change that has come over his young missus, falls to rubbing and kissing her hands,—he has no other aid to lend. Marston has drawn his chair beside her, sits down upon it, unbuttons her stomacher, and continues bathing and chafing her temples. How gently heaves that bosom so full of fondness, how marble−like those features, how pallid but touchingly beautiful that face! Love, affection, and tenderness, there repose so calmly! All that once gave out so much hope, so much joy, now withers before the blighting sting

of misfortune. "Poor child, how fondly she loves me!" says Marston, placing his right arm under her head, and raising it gently. The motion quickens her senses−she speaks; he kisses her pallid cheek−kisses and kisses it. "Is it you uncle?" she whispers. She has opened her eyes, stares at Marston, then wildly along the ceiling. "Yes, I'm in uncle's arms; how good!" she continues, as if fatigued. Reclining back on the pillow, she again rests her head upon his arm. "I am at the mansion−how pleasant; let me rest, uncle; let me rest. Send aunt Rachel to me." She raises her right hand and lays her arms about Marston's neck, as anxiously he leans over her. How dear are the associations of that old mansion! how sweet the thought of home! how uppermost in her wandering mind the remembrance of those happy days!

CHAPTER XXXII. MARSTON IN PRISON.

WHILE Franconia revives, let us beg the reader's indulgence for not recounting the details thereof. The night continues dark and stormy, but she must return to her own home,—she must soothe the excited feelings of a dissolute and disregarding husband, who, no doubt, is enjoying his night orgies, while she is administering consolation to the downcast. "Ah! uncle," she says, about to take leave of him for the night, "how with spirit the force of hope fortifies us; and yet how seldom are our expectations realised through what we look forward to! You now see the value of virtue; but when seen through necessity, how vain the repentance. Nevertheless, let us profit by the lesson before us; let us hope the issue may yet be favourable!" Bob will see his young missus safe home−he will be her guide and protector. So, preparing his cap, he buttons his jacket, laughs and grins with joy, goes to the door, then to the fire−place, and to the door again, where, keeping his left hand on the latch, and his right holding the casement, he bows and scrapes, for "Missus comin." Franconia arranges her dress as best she can, adjusts her bonnet, embraces Marston, imprints a fond kiss on his cheek, reluctantly relinquishes his hand, whispers a last word of consolation, and bids him good night,—a gentle good night−in sorrow.

She has gone, and the old slave is her guide, her human watch−dog. Slowly Marston paces the silent chamber alone, giving vent to his pent−up emotions. What may to−morrow bring forth? runs through his wearied mind. It is but the sudden downfall of life, so inseparable from the planter who rests his hopes on the abundance of his human property. But the slave returns, and relieves him of his musings. He has seen his young missus safe to her door; he has received her kind word, and her good, good night! Entering the chamber with a smile, he sets about clearing away the little things, and, when done, draws his seat close to Marston, at the fire−place. As if quite at home beside his old master, he eyes Marston intently for some time,—seems studying his thoughts and fears. At length the old slave commences disclosing his feelings. His well−worn bones are not worth a large sum; nor are the merits of his worthy age saleable;—no! there is nothing left but his feelings, those genuine virtues so happily illustrated. Daddy Bob will stand by mas'r, as he expresses it, in power or in prison. Kindness has excited all that vanity in Bob so peculiar to the negro, and by which he prides himself in the prime value of his person. There he sits−Marston's faithful friend, contemplating his silence with a steady gaze, and then, giving his jet−black face a double degree of seriousness, shrugs his shoulders, significantly nods his head, and intimates that it will soon be time to retire, by commencing to unboot master.

"You seem in a hurry to get rid of me, Daddy! Want to get your own cranium into a pine−knot sleep, eh?" says Marston, with an encouraging smile, pulling the old slave's whiskers in a playful manner.

"No, Boss; 'tant dat," returns Bob, keeping on tugging at Marston's boots until he has got them from his feet, and safely stowed away in a corner. A gentle hint that he is all ready to relieve Marston of his upper garments brings him to his feet, when Bob commences upon him in right good earnest, and soon has him stowed away between the sheets. "Bob neber likes to hurry old Boss, but den 'e kno' what's on old Mas'r's feelins, an 'e kno' dat sleep make 'um forget 'um!" rejoins Bob, in a half whisper that caught Marston's ear, as he patted and fussed about his pillow, in order to make him as comfortable as circumstances would admit. After this he extinguishes the light, and, accustomed to a slave's bed, lumbers himself down on the floor beside his master's cot. Thus, watchfully, he spends the night.

When morning dawned, Bob was in the full enjoyment of what the negro so pertinently calls a long and strong sleep. He cannot resist its soothing powers, nor will master disturb him in its enjoyment. Before breakfast−time arrives, however, he arouses with a loud guffaw, looks round the room vacantly, as if he were doubting the presence of things about him. Rising to his knees, he rubs his eyes languidly, yawns, and stretches his arms, scratches his head, and suddenly gets a glimpse of old master, who is already dressed, and sits by the window, his attention intently set upon some object without. The old slave recognises the same chamber from which he guided Franconia on the night before, and, after saluting mas'r, sets about arranging the domestic affairs of the apartment, and preparing the breakfast table, the breakfast being cooked at Aunt Beckie's cabin, in the yard. Aunt Beckie had the distinguished satisfaction of knowing Marston in his better days, and now esteems it an honour to serve him,

even in his poverty. Always happy to inform her friends that she was brought up a first−rate pastry−cook, she now adds, with great satisfaction, that she pays her owner, the very Reverend Mr. Thomas Tippletony, the ever−pious rector of St. Michael's, no end of money for her time, and makes a good profit at her business beside. Notwithstanding she has a large family of bright children to maintain in a respectable way, she hopes for a continuance of their patronage, and will give the best terms her limited means admit. She knows how very necessary it is for a southern gentleman who would be anybody to keep up appearances, and, with little means, to make a great display: hence she is very easy in matters of payment. In Marston's case, she is extremely proud to render him service,—to "do for him" as far as she can, and wait a change for the better concerning any balance outstanding.

Bob fetches the breakfast of coffee, fritters, homony, and bacon,—a very good breakfast it is, considering the circumstances,—and spreads the little rustic board with an air of comfort and neatness complimentary to the old slave's taste. And, withal, the old man cannot forego the inherent vanity of his nature, for he is, unconsciously, performing all the ceremonies of attendance he has seen Dandy and his satellites go through at the plantation mansion. He fusses and grins, and praises and laughs, as he sets the dishes down one by one, keeping a watchful eye on mas'r, as if to detect an approval in his countenance. "Reckon 'ow dis old nigger can fix old Boss up aristocratic breakfast like Dandy. Now, Boss−da'h he is!" he says, whisking round the table, setting the cups just so, and spreading himself with exultation. "Want to see master smile−laugh some−like 'e used down on da'h old plantation!" he ejaculates, emphatically, placing a chair at Marston's plate. This done, he accompanies his best bow with a scrape of his right foot, spreads his hands,—the gesture being the signal of readiness. Marston takes his chair, as Bob affects the compound dignity of the very best trained nigger, doing the distinguished in waiting.

"A little less ceremony, my old faithful! the small follies of etiquette ill become such a place as this. We must succumb to circumstances: come, sit down, Bob; draw your bench to the chest, and there eat your share, while I wait on myself," says Marston, touching Bob on the arm. The words were no sooner uttered, than Bob's countenance changed from the playful to the serious; he could see nothing but dignity in master, no matter in what sphere he might be placed. His simple nature recoils at the idea of dispensing with the attention due from slave to master. Master's fallen fortunes, and the cheerless character of the chamber, are nothing to Daddy− master must keep up his dignity.

"You need'nt look so serious, Daddy; it only gives an extra shade to your face, already black enough for any immediate purpose!" says Marston, turning round and smiling at the old slave's discomfiture. To make amends, master takes a plate from the table, and gives Bob a share of his homony and bacon. This is very pleasing to the old slave, who regains his wonted earnestness, takes the plate politely from his master's hand, retires with it to the chest, and keeps up a regular fire of chit−chat while dispensing its contents. In this humble apartment, master and slave−the former once opulent, and the latter still warm with attachment for his friend−are happily companioned. They finish their breakfast,—a long pause intervenes. "I would I were beyond the bounds of this our south," says Marston, breaking the silence, as he draws his chair and seats himself by the window, where he can look out upon the dingy little houses in the lane.

The unhappy man feels the burden of a misspent life; he cannot recall the past, nor make amends for its errors. But, withal, it is some relief that he can disclose his feelings to the old man, his slave.

"Mas'r," interrupts the old slave, looking complacently in his face, "Bob 'll fowler ye, and be de same old friend. I will walk behind Miss Frankone." His simple nature seems warming into fervency.

"Ah! old man," returns Marston, "if there be a wish (you may go before me, though) I have on earth, it is that when I die our graves may be side by side, with an epitaph to denote master, friend, and faithful servant lie here." He takes the old man by the hand again, as the tears drop from his cheeks. "A prison is but a grave to the man of honourable feelings," he concludes. Thus disclosing his feelings, a rap at the door announces a messenger. It is nine o'clock, and immediately the sheriff, a gentlemanly−looking man, wearing the insignia of office on his hat, walks in, and politely intimates that, painful as may be the duty, he must request his company to the county gaol, that place so accommodatingly prepared for the reception of unfortunates.

"Sorry for your misfortunes, sir! but we'll try to make you as comfortable as we can in our place." The servitor of the law seems to have some sympathy in him. "I have my duty to perform, you know, sir; nevertheless, I have my opinion about imprisoning honest men for debt: it's a poor satisfaction, sir. I'm only an officer, you see, sir, not a law−maker−never want to be, sir. I very much dislike to execute these kind of writs," says the man of the

law, as, with an expression of commiseration, he glances round the room, and then at Daddy, who has made preparations for a sudden dodge, should such an expedient be found necessary.

"Nay, sheriff, think nothing of it; it's but a thing of common life,—it may befall us all. I can be no exception to the rule, and may console myself with the knowledge of companionship," replies Marston, as coolly as if he were preparing for a journey of pleasure.

How true it is, that, concealed beneath the smallest things, there is a consolation which necessity may bring out: how Providence has suited it to our misfortunes!

"There are a few things here−a very few−I should like to take to my cell; perhaps I can send for them," he remarks, looking at the officer, enquiringly.

"My name is Martin−Captain Martin, they call me,"−returns that functionary, politely. "If you accept my word of honour, I pledge it they are taken care of, and sent to your apartments."

"You mean my new lodging−house, or my new grave, I suppose," interrupted Marston, jocosely, pointing out to Daddy the few articles of bedding, chairs, and a window−curtain he desired removed. Daddy has been pensively standing by the fire−place the while, contemplating the scene.

Marston soon announces his readiness to proceed; and, followed by the old slave, the officer leads the way down the ricketty old stairs to the street. "I's gwine t'see whar dey takes old mas'r, any how, reckon I is," says the old slave, giving his head a significant turn.

"Now, sir," interrupts the officer, as they arrive at the bottom of the stairs, "perhaps you have a delicacy about going through the street with a sheriff; many men have: therefore I shall confide in your honour, sir, and shall give you the privilege of proceeding to the gaol as best suits your feelings. I never allow myself to follow the will of creditors; if I did, my duties would be turned into a system of tyranny, to gratify their feelings only. Now, you may take a carriage, or walk; only meet me at the prison gate."

"Thanks, thanks!" returns Marston, grateful for the officer's kindness, "my crime is generosity; you need not fear me. My old faithful here will guide me along." The officer bows assent, and with a respectful wave of the hand they separate to pursue different routes.

Marston walks slowly along, Bob keeping pace close behind. He passes many of his old acquaintances, who, in better times, would have recognised him with a cordial embrace; at present they have scarcely a nod to spare. Marston, however, is firm in his resolution, looks not on one side nor the other, and reaches the prison−gate in good time. The officer has reached it in advance, and waits him there. They pause a few moments as Marston scans the frowning wall that encloses the gloomy−looking old prison. "I am ready to go in," says Marston; and just as they are about to enter the arched gate, the old slave touches him on the arm, and says, "Mas'r, dat's no place fo'h Bob. Can't stand seein' on ye locked up wid sich folks as in dah!" Solicitously he looks in his master's face. The man of trouble grasps firmly the old slave's hand, holds it in silence for some minutes−the officer, moved by the touching scene, turns his head away−as tears course down his cheeks. He has no words to speak the emotions of his heart; he shakes the old man's hand affectionately, attempts to whisper a word in his ear, but is too deeply affected.

"Good by, mas'r: may God bless 'um! Ther's a place fo'h old mas'r yet. I'll com t' see mas'r every night," says the old man, his words flowing from the bounty of his heart. He turns away reluctantly, draws his hand from Marston's, heaves a sigh, and repairs to his labour. How precious was that labour of love, wherein the old slave toils that he may share the proceeds with his master!

As Marston and the sheriff disappear through the gate, and are about to ascend the large stone steps leading to the portal in which is situated the inner iron gate opening into the debtors' ward, the sheriff made a halt, and, placing his arm in a friendly manner through Marston's, enquires, "Anything I can do for you? If there is, just name it. Pardon my remark, sir, but you will, in all probability, take the benefit of the act; and, as no person seems willing to sign your bail, I may do something to relieve your wants, in my humble way." Marston shakes his head; the kindness impedes an expression of his feelings. "A word of advice from me, however, may not be without its effect, and I will give it you; it is this:—Your earnestness to save those two children, and the singular manner in which those slave drudges of Graspum produced the documentary testimony showing them property, has created wondrous suspicion about your affairs. I will here say, Graspum's no friend of yours; in fact, he's a friend to nobody but himself; and even now, when questioned on the manner of possessing all your real estate, he gives out insinuations, which, instead of exonerating you, create a still worse impression against you. His conversation on

the matter leaves the inference with your creditors that you have still more property secreted. Hence, mark me! it behoves you to keep close lips. Don't let your right hand know what your left does," continues the officer, in a tone of friendliness. They ascend to the iron gate, look through the grating. The officer, giving a whistle, rings the bell by touching a spring in the right−hand wall. "My lot at last!" exclaims Marston. "How many poor unfortunates have passed this threshold−how many times the emotions of the heart have burst forth on this spot−how many have here found a gloomy rest from their importuners−how many have here whiled away precious time in a gloomy cell, provided for the punishment of poverty!" The disowned man, for such he is, struggles to retain his resolution; fain would he, knowing the price of that resolution, repress those sensations threatening to overwhelm him.

The brusque gaoler appears at the iron gate; stands his burly figure in the portal; nods recognition to the officer; swings back the iron frame, as a number of motley prisoners gather into a semicircle in the passage. "Go back, prisoners; don't stare so at every new comer," says the gaoler, clearing the way with his hands extended.

One or two of the locked−up recognise Marston. They lisp strange remarks, drawn forth by his appearance in charge of an officer. "Big as well as little fish bring up here," ejaculates one.

"Where are his worshippers and his hospitable friends?" whispers another.

"There's not much hospitality for poverty," rejoins a third, mutteringly. "Southern hospitality is unsound, shallow, and flimsy; a little dazzling of observances to cover very bad facts. You are sure to find a people who maintain the grossest errors in their political system laying the greatest claims to benevolence and principle−things to which they never had a right. The phantom of hospitality draws the curtain over many a vice−it is a well−told nothingness ornamenting the beggared system of your slavery; that's my honest opinion," says a third, in a gruff voice, which indicates that he has no very choice opinion of such generosity. "If they want a specimen of true hospitality, they must go to New England; there the poor man's offering stocks the garden of liberty, happiness, and justice; and from them spring the living good of all," he concludes; and folding his arms with an air of independence, walks up the long passage running at right angles with the entrance portal, and disappears in a cell on the left.

"I knew him when he was great on the turf. He was very distinguished then." "He'll be extinguished here," insinuates another, as he protrudes his eager face over the shoulders of those who are again crowding round the office−door, Marston and the officer having entered following the gaoler.

The sheriff passes the committimus to the man of keys; that functionary takes his seat at a small desk, while Marston stands by its side, watching the process of his prison reception, in silence. The gaoler reads the commitment, draws a book deliberately from off a side window, spreads it open on his desk, and commences humming an air. "Pootty smart sums, eh!" he says, looking up at the sheriff, as he holds a quill in his left hand, and feels with the fingers of his right for a knife, which, he observes, he always keeps in his right vest pocket. "We have a poor debtor's calendar for registering these things. I do these things different from other gaolers, and it loses me nothin'. I goes on the true principle, that 'tant right to put criminals and debtors together; and if the state hasn't made provision for keeping them in different cells, I makes a difference on the books, and that's somethin'. Helps the feelins over the smarting point," says the benevolent keeper of all such troublesome persons as won't pay their debts;—as if the monstrous concentration of his amiability, in keeping separate books for the criminal and poverty−stricken gentlemen of his establishment, must be duly appreciated. Marston, particularly, is requested to take the initiative, he being the most aristocratic fish the gaoler has caught in a long time. But the man has made his pen, and now he registers Marston's name among the state's forlorn gentlemen, commonly called poor debtors. They always confess themselves in dependent circumstances. Endorsing the commitment, he returns it to the sheriff, who will keep the original carefully filed away in his own well−stocked department. The sheriff will bid his prisoner good morning! having reminded the gaoler what good care it was desirable to take of his guest; and, extending his hand and shaking that of Marston warmly, takes his departure, whilst our gaoler leads Marston into an almost empty cell, where he hopes he will find things comfortable, and leaves him to contemplate upon the fallen fruit of poverty. "Come to this, at last!" said Marston, entering the cavern−like place.

CHAPTER XXXIII. VENDERS OF HUMAN PROPERTY ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS MENTAL CAPRICES.

READER! be patient with us, for our task is complex and tedious. We have but one great object in view−that of showing a large number of persons in the south, now held as slaves, who are by the laws of the land, as well as the laws of nature, entitled to their freedom. These people, for whom, in the name of justice and every offspring of human right, we plead, were consigned to the bondage they now endure through the unrighteous act of one whose name (instead of being execrated by a nation jealous of its honour), a singular species of southern historian has attempted to enshrine with fame. Posterity, ignorant of his character, will find his name clothed with a paragon's armour, while respecting the writer who so cleverly with a pen obliterated his crimes. We have only feelings of pity for the historian who discards truth thus to pollute paper with his kindness; such debts due to friendship are badly paid at the shrine of falsehood. No such debts do we owe; we shall perform our duty fearlessly, avoiding dramatic effect, or aught else that may tend to improperly excite the feelings of the benevolent. No one better knows the defects of our social system−no one feels more forcibly that much to be lamented fact of there being no human law extant not liable to be evaded or weakened by the intrigues of designing men;—we know of no power reposed in man the administration of which is not susceptible of abuse, or being turned to means of oppression: how much more exposed, then, must all these functions be where slavery in its popular sway rides triumphant over the common law of the land. Divine laws are with impunity disregarded and abused by anointed teachers of divinity. Peculation, in sumptuous garb, and with modern appliances, finds itself modestly−perhaps unconsciously−gathering dross at the sacred altar. How saint−like in semblance, and how unconscious of wrong, are ye bishops (holy ones, scarce of earth, in holy lawn) in that land of freedom where the slave's chains fall ere his foot pads its soil! how calmly resigned the freemen who yield to the necessity of making strong the altar with the sword of state! How, in the fulness of an expansive soul, these little ones, in lawn so white, spurn the unsanctified spoiler−themselves neck−deep in the very coffers of covetousness the while! How to their christian spirit it seems ordained they should see a people's ekeings serve their rolling in wealth and luxury! and, yet, let no man question their walking in the ways of a meek and lowly Saviour−that Redeemer of mankind whose seamless garb no man purchaseth with the rights of his fellow. Complacently innocent of themselves, they would have us join their flock and follow them,—their pious eyes seeing only heavenly objects to be gained, and their pure hearts beating in heavy throbs for the wicked turmoil of our common world. Pardon us, brother of the flesh, say they, in saintly whispers,—it is all for the Church and Christ. Boldly fortified with sanctimony, they hurl back the shafts of reform, and ask to live on sumptuously, as the only sought recompense for their christian love. Pious infallibility! how blind, to see not the crime!

Reader! excuse the diversion, and accompany us while we retrace our steps to where we left the loquacious Mr. M'Fadden, recovered from the fear of death, which had been produced by whiskey in draughts too strong. In company with a numerous party, he is just returning from an unsuccessful search for his lost preacher. They have scoured the lawns, delved the morasses, penetrated thick jungles of brakes, driven the cypress swamps, and sent the hounds through places seemingly impossible for human being to seclude himself, and where only the veteran rattlesnake would seek to lay his viperous head. No preacher have they found. They utter vile imprecations on his head, pit him "a common nigger," declare he has just learned enough, in his own crooked way, to be dubious property−good, if a man can keep him at minister business.

Mine host of the Inn feels assured, if he be hiding among the swamp jungle, the snakes and alligators will certainly drive him out: an indisputable fact this, inasmuch as alligators and snakes hate niggers. M'Fadden affirms solemnly, that the day he bought that clergyman was one of the unlucky days of his life; and he positively regrets ever having been a politician, or troubling his head about the southern−rights question. The party gather round the front stoop, and are what is termed in southern parlance "tuckered out." They are equally well satisfied of having done their duty to the state and a good cause. Dogs, their tails drooping, sneak to their kennels, horses reek with foam, the human dogs will "liquor" long and strong.

"Tisn't such prime stock, after all!" says M'Fadden, entering the veranda, reeking with mud and perspiration: "after a third attempt we had as well give it up." He shakes his head, and then strikes his whip on the floor. "I'll

stand shy about buying a preacher, another time," he continues; like a man, much against his will, forced to give up a prize.

The crackers and wire−grass men (rude sons of the sand hills), take the matter more philosophically,—probably under the impression that to keep quiet will be to "bring the nigger out" where he may be caught and the reward secured. Two hundred dollars is a sum for which they would not scruple to sacrifice life; but they have three gods−whiskey, ignorance, and idleness, any one of which can easily gain a mastery over their faculties.

Mr. M'Fadden requests that his friends will all come into the bar−room−all jolly fellows; which, when done, he orders mine host to supply as much "good strong stuff" as will warm up their spirits. He, however, will first take a glass himself, that he may drink all their very good healths. This compliment paid, he finds himself pacing up and down, and across the room, now and then casting suspicious glances at the notice of reward, as if questioning the policy of offering so large an amount. But sundown is close upon them, and as the bar−room begins to fill up again, each new−comer anxiously enquires the result of the last search,—which only serves to increase the disappointed gentleman's excitement. The affair has been unnecessarily expensive, for, in addition to the loss of his preacher, the price of whom is no very inconsiderable sum, he finds a vexatious bill running up against him at the bar. The friendship of those who have sympathised with him, and have joined him in the exhilarating sport of man−hunting, must be repaid with swimming drinks. Somewhat celebrated for economy, his friends are surprised to find him, on this occasion, rather inclined to extend the latitude of his liberality. His keen eye, however, soon detects, to his sudden surprise, that the hunters are not alone enjoying his liberality, but that every new comer, finding the drinks provided at M'Fadden's expense, has no objection to join in drinking his health; to which he would have no sort of an objection, but for the cost. Like all men suffering from the effect of sudden loss, he begins to consider the means of economising by which he may repay the loss of the preacher. "I say, Squire!" he ejaculates, suddenly stopping short in one of his walks, and beckoning mine host aside, "That won't do, it won't! It's a coming too tough, I tell you!" he says, shaking his head, and touching mine host significantly on the arm. "A fellow what's lost his property in this shape don't feel like drinkin everybody on whiskey what costs as much as your 'bright eye.' You see, every feller what's comin in's 'takin' at my expense, and claiming friendship on the strength on't. It don't pay, Squire! just stop it, won't ye?"

Mine host immediately directs the bar−keeper, with a sign and a whisper:—"No more drinks at M'Fadden's score, 'cept to two or three o' the most harristocratic." He must not announce the discontinuance openly; it will insult the feelings of the friendly people, many of whom anticipate a feast of drinks commensurate with their services and Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden's distinguished position in political life. Were they, the magnanimous people, informed of this sudden shutting off of their supplies, the man who had just enjoyed their flattering encomiums would suddenly find himself plentifully showered with epithets a tyrant slave−dealer could scarcely endure.

Calling mine host into a little room opening from the bar, he takes him by the arm,—intimates his desire to have a consultation on the state of his affairs, and the probable whereabouts of his divine:—"You see, this is all the thanks I get for my kindness (he spreads his hands and shrugs his shoulders.) A northern man may do what he pleases for southern rights, and it's just the same; he never gets any thanks for it. These sort o' fellers isn't to be sneered at when a body wants to carry a political end," he adds, touching mine host modestly on the shoulder, and giving him a quizzing look, "but ye can't make 'um behave mannerly towards respectable people, such as you and me is. But 'twould'nt do to give 'um edukation, for they'd just spile society−they would! Ain't my ideas logical, now, squire?" Mr. M'Fadden's mind seems soaring away among the generalities of state.

"Well!" returns mine host, prefacing the importance of his opinion with an imprecation, "I'm fixed a'tween two fires; so I can't say what would be square policy in affairs of state. One has feelins different on these things: I depends a deal on what our big folks say in the way of setting examples. And, too, what can you expect when this sort a ruff−scuff forms the means of raising their political positions; but, they are customers of mine,—have made my success in tavern−keeping!" he concludes, in an earnest whisper.

"Now, squire!" M'Fadden places his hand in mine host's arm, and looks at him seriously: "What 'bout that ar nigger preacher gittin off so? No way t' find it out, eh squire?" M'Fadden enquires, with great seriousness.

"Can't tell how on earth the critter did the thing; looked like peaceable property when he went to be locked up, did!"

"I think somebody's responsible for him, squire?" interrupts M'Fadden, watching the changes of the other's countenance: "seems how I heard ye say ye'd take the risk−"

"No,—no,—no!" rejoins the other, quickly; "that never will do. I never receipt for nigger property, never hold myself responsible to the customers, and never run any risks about their niggers. You forget, my friend, that whatever shadow of a claim you had on me by law was invalidated by your own act."

"My own act?" interrupts the disappointed man. "How by my own act? explain yourself!" suddenly allowing his feelings to become excited.

"Sending for him to come to your bedside and pray for you. It was when you thought Mr. Jones, the gentleman with the horns, stood over you with a warrant in his hand," mine host whispers in his ear, shrugging his shoulders, and giving his face a quizzical expression. "You appreciated the mental of the property then; but now you view it as a decided defect."

The disappointed gentleman remains silent for a few moments. He is deeply impressed with the anomaly of his case, but has not the slightest objection to fasten the responsibility on somebody, never for a moment supposing the law would interpose against the exercise of his very best inclinations. He hopes God will bless him, says it is always his luck; yet he cannot relinquish the idea of somebody being responsible. He will know more about the preaching rascal's departure. Turning to mine host of the inn: "But, you must have a clue to him, somewhere?" he says, enquiringly.

"There's my woman; can see if she knows anything about the nigger!" returns mine host, complacently. Ellen Juvarna is brought into the presence of the injured man, who interrogates her with great care; but all her disclosures only tend to throw a greater degree of mystery over the whole affair. At this, Mr. M'Fadden declares that the policy he has always maintained with reference to education is proved true with the preacher's running away. Nigger property should never be perverted by learning; though, if you could separate the nigger from the preaching part of the property, it might do some good, for preaching was at times a good article to distribute among certain slaves "what had keen instincts." At times, nevertheless, it would make them run away. Ellen knew Harry as a good slave, a good man, a good Christian, sound in his probity, not at all inclined to be roguish,—as most niggers are—a little given to drink, but never bad−tempered. Her honest opinion is that such a pattern of worthy nature and moral firmness would not disgrace itself by running away, unless induced by white "Buckra." She thinks she heard a lumbering and shuffling somewhere about the pen, shortly after midnight. It might have been wolves, however. To all this Mr. M'Fadden listens with marked attention. Now and then he interposes a word, to gratify some new idea swelling his brain. There is nothing satisfactory yet: he turns the matter over and over in his mind, looks Ellen steadfastly in the face, and watches the movement of every muscle. "Ah!" he sighs, "nothing new developing." He dismissed the wench, and turns to mine host of the inn. "Now, squire, (one minute mine host is squire, and the next Mr. Jones) tell ye what 'tis; thar's roguery goin on somewhere among them ar' fellers—them sharpers in the city, I means! (he shakes his head knowingly, and buttons his light sack−coat round him). That's a good gal, isn't she?" he enquires, drawing his chair somewhat closer, his hard face assuming great seriousness.

Mine host gives an affirmative nod, and says, "Nothin shorter! Can take her word on a turn of life or death. Tip top gal, that! Paid a price for her what u'd make ye wink, I reckon."

"That's just what I wanted to know," he interrupts, suddenly grasping the hand of his friend. "Ye see how I'se a little of a philosopher, a tall politician, and a major in the brigade down our district,—I didn't get my law akermin for nothin; and now I jist discovers how somebody−I mean some white somebody−has had a hand in helpin that ar' nig' preacher to run off. Cus'd critters! never know nothing till some white nigger fills their heads with roguery."

"Say, my worthy M'Fadden," interrupts the publican, rising suddenly from his seat, as if some new discovery had just broke forth in his mind, "war'nt that boy sold under a warrant?"

"Warranted−warranted−warranted sound in every particular? That he was. Just think of this, squire; you're a knowin one. It takes you! I never thought on't afore, and have had all my nervousness for nothin. Warranted sound in every particular, means−"

"A moment!" mine host interposes, suddenly: "there's a keen point of law there; but it might be twisted to some account, if a body only had the right sort of a lawyer to twist it."

The perplexed man rejoins by hoping he may not be interrupted just at this moment. He is just getting the

point of it straight in his mind. "You see," he says, "the thing begun to dissolve itself in my philosophy, and by that I discovered the pint the whole thing stands on. Its entirely metaphysical, though," he says, with a significant shake of the head. He laughs at his discovery; his father, long since, told him he was exceedingly clever. Quite a match for the publican in all matters requiring a comprehensive mind, he declares there are few lawyers his equal at penetrating into points. "He warranted him in every particular," he mutters, as mine host, watching his seriousness, endeavours to suppress a smile. M'Fadden makes a most learned motion of the fore finger of the right hand, which he presses firmly into the palm of his left, while contracting his brows. He will soon essay forth the point of logic he wishes to enforce. The property being a certain man endowed with preaching propensities, soundness means the qualities of the man, mental as well as physical; and running away being an unsound quality, the auctioneer is responsible for all such contingencies. "I have him there,—I have!" he holds up his hands exultingly, as he exclaims the words; his face brightens with animation. Thrusting his hands into his trowsers pockets he paces the room for several minutes, at a rapid pace, as if his mind had been relieved of some deep study. "I will go directly into the city, and there see what I can do with the chap I bought that feller of. I think when I put the law points to him, he'll shell out."

Making some preliminary arrangements with Jones of the tavern, he orders a horse to the door immediately, and in a few minutes more is hastening on his way to the city.

Arriving about noon−day, he makes his way through its busy thoroughfares, and is soon in the presence of the auctioneer. There, in wondrous dignity, sits the seller of bodies and souls, his cushioned arm−chair presenting an air of opulence. How coolly that pomp of his profession sits on the hard mask of his iron features, beneath which lurks a contempt of shame! He is an important item in the political hemisphere of the state, has an honourable position in society (for he is high above the minion traders), joined the Episcopal church not many months ago, and cautions Mr. M'Fadden against the immorality of using profane language, which that aggrieved individual allows to escape his lips ere he enters the door.

The office of our man of fame and fortune is thirty feet long by twenty wide, and sixteen high. Its walls are brilliantly papered, and painted with landscape designs; and from the centre of the ceiling hangs a large chandelier, with ground−glass globes, on which eagles of liberty are inscribed. Fine black−walnut desks, in chaste carving, stand along its sides, at which genteelly−dressed clerks are exhibiting great attention to business. An oil−cloth, with large flowers painted on its surface, spreads the floor, while an air of neatness reigns throughout the establishment singularly at variance with the outer mart, where Mr. Forshou sells his men, women, and little children. But its walls are hung with badly−executed engravings, in frames of gilt. Of the distinguished vender's taste a correct estimation may be drawn when we inform the reader that many of these engravings represented nude females and celebrated racehorses.

"Excuse me, sir! I didn't mean it," Mr. M'Fadden says, in reply to the gentleman's caution, approaching him as he sits in his elegant chair, a few feet from the street door, luxuriantly enjoying a choice regalia. "It's the little point of a very nasty habit that hangs upon me yet. I does let out the swear once in a while, ye see; but it's only when I gets a crook in my mind what won't come straight." Thus M'Fadden introduces himself, surprised to find the few very consistent oaths he has made use of not compatible with the man−seller's pious business habits. He will be cautious the next time; he will not permit such foul breath to escape and wound the gentleman's very tender feelings.

Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden addresses him as squire, and with studious words informs him of the nigger preacher property he sold him having actually run away! "Ye warranted him, ye know, squire!" he says, discovering the object of his visit, then drawing a chair, and seating himself in close proximity.

"Can't help that−quality we never warrant!" coolly returns the other, turning politely in his arm−chair, which works in a socket, and directing a clerk at one of the desks to add six months' interest to the item of three wenches sold at ten o'clock.

"Don't talk that ar way, squire! I trades a deal in your line, and a heap o' times, with you. Now we'll talk over the legal points."

"Make them short, if you please!"

"Well! ye warranted the nigger in every particular. There's the advertisement; and there's no getting over that! Ye must do the clean thing−no possumin−squire, or there 'll be a long lawsuit what takes the tin. Honour's the word in our trade." He watches the changes that are fast coming over the vender's countenance, folds his arms,

places his right foot over his left knee, and awaits a reply. Interrupting the vender just as he is about to give his opinion he draws from his pocket a copy of the paper containing the advertisement, and places it in his hand: "If ye'll be good enough to squint at it, ye'll see the hang o' my ideas," he says.

"My friend," returns the vender, curtly, having glanced over the paper, "save me and yourself any further annoyance. I could have told you how far the property was warranted, before I read the paper; and I remember making some very particular remarks when selling that item in the invoice. A nigger's intelligence is often a mere item of consideration in the amount he brings under the hammer; but we never warrant the exercise or extension of it. Po'h, man! we might just as well attempt to warrant a nigger's stealing, lying, cunning, and all such 'cheating master' propensities. Some of them are considered qualities of much value−especially by poor planters. Warrant nigger property not to run away, eh! Oh! nothing could be worse in our business."

"A minute, squire!" interrupts the appealing Mr. M'Fadden, just as the other is about to add a suspending clause to his remarks. "If warrantin nigger proper sound in all partiklers is'nt warrantin it not to run away, I'm no deacon! When a nigger's got run−away in him he ain't sound property, no way ye can fix it. Ye may turn all the law and philosophy yer mind to over in yer head, but it won't cum common sense to me, that ye warrant a nigger's body part, and let the head part go unwarranted. When ye sells a critter like that, ye sells all his deviltry; and when ye warrants one ye warrants t'other; that's the square rule o' my law and philosophy!"

The vender puffs his weed very coolly the while; and then, calling a negro servant, orders a chair upon which to comfortably place his feet. "Are you through, my friend?" he enquires, laconically; and being answered in the affirmative, proceeds−"I fear your philosophy is common philosophy−not the philosophy upon which nigger law is founded. You don't comprehend, my valued friend, that when we insert that negro property will be warranted, we don't include the thinking part; and, of course, running away belongs to that!" he would inform all those curious on such matters. Having given this opinion for the benefit of M'Fadden, and the rest of mankind interested in slavery, he rises from his seat, elongates himself into a consequential posi− tion, and stands biting his lips, and dangling his watch chain with the fingers of his left hand.

"Take ye up, there," the other suddenly interrupts, as if he has drawn the point from his antagonist, and is prepared to sustain the principle, having brought to his aid new ideas from the deepest recesses of his logical mind. Grasping the vender firmly by the arm, he looks him in the face, and reminds him that the runaway part of niggers belongs to the heels, and not to the head.

The vender exhibits some discomfiture, and, at the same time, a decided unwillingness to become a disciple of such philosophy. Nor is he pleased with the familiarity of his importuning customer, whose arm he rejects with a repulsive air.

There has evidently become a very nice and serious question, of which Mr. M'Fadden is inclined to take a commonsense view. His opponent, however, will not deviate from the strictest usages of business. Business mentioned the mental qualities of the property, but warranted only the physical,—hence the curious perplexity.

While the point stands thus nicely poised between their logic, Romescos rushes into the office, and, as if to surprise M'Fadden, extends his hand, smiling and looking in his face gratefully, as if the very soul of friendship incited him. "Mighty glad to see ye, old Buck!" he ejaculates, "feared ye war going to kick out."

The appalled man stands for a few seconds as unmoved as a statue; and then, turning with a half−subdued smile, takes the hand of the other, coldly.

"Friends again! ain't we, old boy?" breaks forth from Romescos, who continues shaking his hand, at the same time turning his head and giving a significant wink to a clerk at one of the desks. "Politics makes bad friends now and then, but I always thought well of you, Mack! Now, neighbour, I'll make a bargain with you; we'll live as good folks ought to after this," Romescos continues, laconically. His advance is so strange that the other is at a loss to comprehend its purport. He casts doubting glances at his wily antagonist, seems considering how to appreciate the quality of such an unexpected expression of friendship, and is half inclined to demand an earnest of its sincerity. At the same time, and as the matter now stands, he would fain give his considerate friend wide space, and remain within a proper range of etiquette until his eyes behold the substantial. He draws aside from Romescos, who says tremblingly: "Losing that preacher, neighbour, was a hard case−warn't it? You wouldn't a' catched this individual buyin' preachers−know too much about 'em, I reckon! It's no use frettin, though; the two hundred dollars 'll bring him. This child wouldn't want a profitabler day's work for his hound dogs." Romescos winks at the vender, and makes grimaces over M'Fadden's shoulder, as that gentleman turns and grumbles

out,—"He warranted him in every partikler; and running away is one of a nigger's partiklers?"

"My pertinacious friend!" exclaims the vender, turning suddenly towards his dissatisfied customer, "seeing you are not disposed to comprehend the necessities of my business, nor to respect my position, I will have nothing further to say to you upon the subject−not another word, now!" The dignified gentleman expresses himself in peremptory tones. It is only the obtuseness of his innate character becoming unnecessarily excited.

Romescos interposes a word or two, by way of keeping up the zest; for so he calls it. Things are getting crooked, according to his notion of the dispute, but fightin' won't bring back the lost. "'Spose ye leaves the settlin on't to me? There's nothing like friendship in trade; and seeing how I am up in such matters, p'raps I can smooth it down."

"There's not much friendship about a loss of this kind; and he was warranted sound in every particular!" returns the invincible man, shaking his head, and affecting great seriousness of countenance.

"Stop that harpin, I say!" the vender demands, drawing himself into a pugnacious attitude; "your insinuations against my honour aggravate me more and more."

"Well! just as you say about it," is the cool rejoinder. "But you 'll have to settle the case afore lawyer Sprouts, you will!" Stupidly inclined to dog his opinions, the sensitive gentleman, claiming to be much better versed in the mode of selling human things, becomes fearfully enraged. M'Fadden contends purely upon contingencies which may arise in the mental and physical complications of property in man; and this the gentleman man−seller cannot bear the reiteration of.

"Romescos thinks it is at best but a perplexin snarl, requiring gentlemen to keep very cool. To him they are both honourable men, who should not quarrel over the very small item of one preacher. "This warrantin' niggers' heads never amounts to anything,—it's just like warrantin' their heels; and when one gets bad, isn't t'other sure to be movin? Them's my sentiments, gratis!" Stepping a few feet behind M'Fadden, Romescos rubs his hands in great anxiety, makes curious signs to the clerks at the desk, and charges his mouth with a fresh cut of tobacco.

"Nobody bespoke your opinion," says the disconsolate M'Fadden, turning quickly, in consequence of a sign he detected one of the clerks making, and catching Romescos bestowing a grimace of no very complimentary character, "Your presence and your opinion are, in my estimation, things that may easily be dispensed with."

"I say!" interrupts Romescos, his right hand in a threatening attitude, "not quite so fast"−he drawls his words−"a gentleman don't stand an insult o' that sort. Just draw them ar' words back, like a yard of tape, or this individual 'll do a small amount of bruising on that ar' profile, (he draws his hand backward and forward across M'Fadden's face). 'Twon't do to go to church on Sundays with a broken phiz?" His face reddens with anger, as he works his head into a daring attitude, grates his teeth, again draws his fist across M'Fadden's face; and at length rubs his nasal organ.

"I understand you too well!" replies M'Fadden, with a curt twist of his head. "A man of your cloth can't insult a gentleman like me; you're lawless!" He moves towards the door, stepping sideways, watching Romescos over his left shoulder.

"I say!−Romescos takes his man by the arm−Come back here, and make a gentleman's apology!" He lets go M'Fadden's arm and seizes him by the collar violently, his face in a blaze of excitement.

"Nigger killer!" ejaculates M'Fadden, "let go there!" He gives his angry antagonist a determined look, as he, for a moment, looses his hold. He pauses, as if contemplating his next move.

The very amiable and gentlemanly man−vender thinks it time he interposed for the purpose of reconciling matters. "Gentlemen! gentlemen! respect me, if you do not respect yourselves. My office is no place for such disgraceful broils as these; you must go elsewhere." The modest gentleman, whose very distinguished family connexions have done much to promote his interests, would have it particularly understood that his office is an important place, used only for the very distinguished business of selling men, women, and little children. But Romescos is not so easily satisfied. He pushes the amiable gentleman aside, calls Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden a tyrant what kills niggers by the detestably mean process of starving them to death. "A pretty feller he is to talk about nigger killin! And just think what our state has come to when such fellers as him can make votes for the next election!" says Romescos, addressing himself to the vender. "The Irish influence is fast destroying the political morality of the country."

Turning to Mr. M'Fadden, who seems preparing for a display of his combativeness, he adds, "Ye see, Mack, ye will lie, and lie crooked too! and ye will steal, and steal dishonourably; and I can lick a dozen on ye quicker

nor chain lightnin? I can send the hol batch on ye−rubbish as it is−to take supper t'other side of sundown." To be equal with his adversary, Romescos is evidently preparing himself for the reception of something more than words. Twice or thrice he is seen to pass his right hand into the left breast pocket of his sack, where commonly his shining steel is secreted. In another moment he turns suddenly towards the vender, pushes him aside with his left hand, and brings his right in close proximity with Mr. M'Fadden's left listener. That individual exhibits signs of renewed courage, to which he adds the significant warning: "Not quite so close, if you please!"

"As close as I sees fit!" returns the other, with a sardonic grin. "Why don't you resent it?−a gentleman would!"

Following the word, Mr. M'Fadden makes a pass at his antagonist, which, he says, is only with the intention of keeping him at a respectful distance. Scarcely has his arm passed when Romescos cries out, "There! he has struck me! He has struck me again!" and deals M'Fadden a blow with his clenched fist that fells him lumbering to the floor. Simultaneously Romescos falls upon his prostrate victim, and a desperate struggle ensues.

The vender, whose sacred premises are thus disgraced, runs out to call the police, while the clerks make an ineffectual attempt to separate the combatants. Not a policeman is to be found. At night they may be seen swarming the city, guarding the fears of a white populace ever sensitive of black rebellion.

Like an infuriated tiger, Romescos, nimble as a catamount, is fast destroying every vestige of outline in his antagonist's face, drenching it with blood, and adding ghastliness by the strangulation he is endeavouring to effect.

"Try−try−trying to−kill−me−eh? You−you mad brute!" gutters out the struggling man, his eyes starting from the sockets like balls of fire, while gore and saliva foam from his mouth and nostrils as if his struggles are in death.

"Kill ye−kill ye?" Romescos rejoins, the shaggy red hair falling in tufts about his face, now burning with desperation: "it would be killin' only a wretch whose death society calls for."

At this, the struggling man, like one borne to energy by the last throes of despair, gives a desperate spring, succeeds in turning his antagonist, grasps him by the throat with his left hand, and from his pocket fires a pistol with his right. The report alarms; the shrill whistle calls to the rescue; but the ball has only taken effect in the flesh of Romescos's right arm. Quick to the moment, his arm dripping with gore from the wound, he draws his glittering dirk, and plunges it, with unerring aim, into the breast of his antagonist. The wounded man starts convulsively, as the other coolly draws back the weapon, the blood gushing forth in a livid stream. "Is not that in self−defence?" exclaims the bloody votary, turning his haggard and enraged face to receive the approval of the bystanders. The dying man, writhing under the grasp of his murderer, utters a piercing shriek. "Murdered! I'm dying! Oh, heaven! is this my last−last−last? Forgive me, Lord,—forgive me!" he gurgles; and making another convulsive effort, wrings his body from under the perpetrator of the foul deed. How tenacious of life is the dying man! He grasps the leg of a desk, raises himself to his feet, and, as if goaded with the thoughts of hell, in his last struggles staggers to the door,—discharges a second shot, vaults, as it were, into the street, and falls prostrate upon the pavement, surrounded by a crowd of eager lookers−on. He is dead! The career of Mr. M'Fadden is ended; his spirit is summoned for trial before a just God.

The murderer (perhaps we abuse the word, and should apply the more southern, term of renconterist), sits in a chair, calling for water, as a few among the crowd prepare to carry the dead body into Graspum's slave−pen, a few squares below.

Southern sensibility may call these scenes by whatever name it will; we have no desire to change the appropriateness, nor to lessen the moral tenor of southern society. It nurtures a frail democracy, and from its bastard offspring we have a tyrant dying by the hand of a tyrant, and the spoils of tyranny serving the good growth of the Christian church. Money constructs opinions, pious as well as political, and even changes the feelings of good men, who invoke heaven's aid against the bondage of the souls of men.

Romescos will not flee to escape the terrible award of earthly justice. Nay, that, in our atmosphere of probity, would be dishonourable; nor would it aid the purpose he seeks to gain.

CHAPTER XXXIV. A COMMON INCIDENT SHORTLY TOLD.

THE dead body of Mr. Lawrence M'Fadden, whose heart was strong with love of southern democracy, lies upon two pine−boards, ghastly and unshrouded, in a wretched slave−pen. Romescos, surrounded by admiring friends, has found his way to the gaol, where, as is the custom, he has delivered himself up to its keeper. He has spent a good night in that ancient establishment, and on the following morning finds his friends vastly increased. They have viewed him as rather desperate now and then; but, knowing he is brave withal, have "come to the rescue" on the present occasion. These frequent visits he receives with wonderful coolness and deference, their meats and drinks (so amply furnished to make his stay comfortable) being a great Godsend to the gaoler, who, while they last, will spread a princely table.

Brien Moon, Esq.−better known as the good−natured coroner−has placed a negro watchman over the body of the deceased, on which he proposes to hold one of those curious ceremonies called inquests. Brien Moon, Esq. is particularly fond of the ludicrous, is ever ready to appreciate a good joke, and well known for his happy mode of disposing of dead dogs and cats, which, with anonymous letters, are in great numbers entrusted to his care by certain waggish gentlemen, who desire he will "hold an inquest over the deceased, and not forget the fees." It is said−the aristocracy, however, look upon the charge with contempt−that Brien Moon, Esq. makes a small per centage by selling those canine remains to the governor of the workhouse, which very humane gentleman pays from his own pocket the means of transferring them into giblet−pies for the inmates. It may be all scandal about Mr. Moon making so large an amount from his office; but it is nevertheless true that sad disclosures have of late been made concerning the internal affairs of the workhouse.

The hour of twelve has arrived; and since eight in the morning Mr. Moon's time has been consumed in preliminaries necessary to the organisation of a coroner's jury. The reader we know will excuse our not entering into the minuti‘ of the organisation. Eleven jurors have answered the summons, but a twelfth seems difficult to procure. John, the good Coroner's negro servant, has provided a sufficiency of brandy and cigars, which, since the hour of eleven, have been discussed without stint. The only objection our worthy disposer of the dead has to this is, that some of his jurors, becoming very mellow, may turn the inquest into a farce, with himself playing the low−comedy part. The dead body, which lies covered with a sheet, is fast becoming enveloped in smoke, while no one seems to have a passing thought for it. Colonel Tom Edon,—who, they say, is not colonel of any regiment, but has merely received the title from the known fact of his being a hogdriver, which honourable profession is distinguished by its colonels proceeding to market mounted, while the captains walk,—merely wonders how much bad whiskey the dead 'un consumed while he lived.

"This won't do!" exclaims Brien Moon, Esq., and proceeds to the door in the hope of catching something to make his mournful number complete. He happens upon Mr. Jonas Academy, an honest cracker, from Christ's parish, who visits the city on a little business. Jonas is a person of great originality, is enclosed in loosely−setting homespun, has a woe−begone countenance, and wears a large−brimmed felt hat. He is just the person to make the number complete, and is led in, unconscious of the object for which he finds himself a captive. Mr. Brien Moon now becomes wondrous grave, mounts a barrel at the head of the corpse, orders the negro to uncover the body, and hopes gentlemen will take seats on the benches he has provided for them, while he proceeds to administer the oath. Three or four yet retain their cigars: he hopes gentlemen will suspend their smoking during the inquest. Suddenly it is found that seven out of the twelve can neither read nor write; and Mr. Jonas Academy makes known the sad fact that he does not comprehend the nature of an oath, never having taken such an article in his life. Five of the gentlemen, who can read and write, are from New England; while Mr. Jonas Academy declares poor folks in Christ's parish are not fools, troubled with reading and writing knowledge. He has been told they have a thing called a college at Columbia; but only haristocrats get any good of it. In answer to a question from Mr. Moon, he is happy to state that their parish is not pestered with a schoolmaster. "Yes, they killed the one we had more nor two years ago, thank Good! Han't bin trubl'd with one o' the critters since" he adds, with unmoved nerves. The Coroner suggests that in a matter of expediency like the present it may be well to explain the nature

of an oath; and, seeing that a man may not read and write, and yet comprehend its sacredness, perhaps it would be as well to forego the letter of the law. "Six used to do for this sort of a jury, but now law must have twelve," says Mr. Moon. Numerous voices assent to this, and Mr. Moon commences what he calls "an halucidation of the nature of an oath." The jurors receive this with great satisfaction, take the oath according to his directions, and after listening to the statement of two competent witnesses, who know but very little about the affair, are ready to render a verdict,—"that M'Fadden, the deceased, came to his death by a stab in the left breast, inflicted by a sharp instrument in the hand or hands of Anthony Romescos, during an affray commonly called a rencontre, regarding which there are many extenuating circumstances." To this verdict Mr. Moon forthwith bows assent, directs the removal of the body, and invites the gentlemen jurors to join him in another drink, which he does in compliment to their distinguished services. The dead body will be removed to the receiving vault, and Mr. Moon dismisses his jurors with many bows and thanks; and nothing more.

CHAPTER XXXV. THE CHILDREN ARE IMPROVING.

THREE years have rolled round, and wrought great changes in the aspect of affairs. M'Fadden was buried on his plantation, Romescos was bailed by Graspum, and took his trial at the sessions for manslaughter. It was scarcely worth while to trouble a respectable jury with the paltry case−and then, they were so frequent! We need scarcely tell the reader that he was honourably acquitted, and borne from the court amid great rejoicing. His crime was only that of murder in self−defence; and, as two tyrants had met, the successful had the advantage of public opinion, which in the slave world soars high above law. Romescos being again on the world, making his cleverness known, we must beg the reader's indulgence, and request him to accompany us while we return to the children.

Annette and Nicholas are, and have been since the sale, the property of Graspum. They develope in size and beauty−two qualities very essential in the man−market of our democratic world, the South. Those beautiful features, intelligence, and reserve, are much admired as merchandise; for southern souls are not lifted above this grade of estimating coloured worth. Annette's cherub face, soft blue eyes, clear complexion, and light auburn hair, add to the sweetness of a countenance that education and care might make brilliant; and yet, though reared on Marston's plantation, with unrestricted indulgence, her childish heart seems an outpouring of native goodness. She speaks of her mother with the affection of one of maturer years; she grieves for her return, wonders why she is left alone, remembers how kind that mother spoke to her when she said good by, at the cell door. How sweet is the remembrance of a mother! how it lingers, sparkling as a dewdrop, in a child's memory. Annette feels the affliction, but is too young to divine the cause thereof. She recalls the many happy plantation scenes; they are bright to her yet! She prattles about Daddy Bob, Harry, Aunt Rachel, and old Sue, now and then adding a solicitous question about Marston. But she does not realise that he is her father; no, it was not her lot to bestow a daughter's affection upon him, and she is yet too young to comprehend the poison of slave power. Her childlike simplicity affords a touching contrast to that melancholy injustice by which a fair creature with hopes and virtues after God's moulding, pure and holy, is made mere merchandise for the slave−market.

Annette has learned to look upon Nicholas as a brother; but, like herself, he is kept from those of his own colour by some, to him, unintelligible agency. Strange reflections flit through her youthful imagination, as she embraces him with a sister's fondness. How oft she lays her little head upon his shoulder, encircles his neck with her fair arm, and braids his raven hair with her tiny fingers! She little thinks how fatal are those charms she bears bloomingly into womanhood.

But, if they alike increase in beauty as they increase in age, their dispositions are as unlike as two opposites can be moulded. Nicholas has inherited that petulant will, unbending determination, and lurking love of avenging wrong, so peculiar to the Indian race. To restlessness he adds distrust of those around him; and when displeased, is not easily reconciled. He is, however, tractable, and early evinced an aptitude for mechanical pursuits that would have done credit to maturer years. Both have been at service, and during the period have created no small degree of admiration−Annette for her promising personal appearance, Nicholas for his precocious display of talent. Both have earned their living; and now Nicholas is arrived at an age when his genius attracts purchasers.

Conspicuous among those who have been keeping an eye on the little fellow, is Mr. Jonathan Grabguy, a master−builder, largely engaged in rearing dwellings. His father was a builder, and his mother used to help the workmen to make Venetian blinds. Fortune showered her smiles upon their energies, and brought them negro property in great abundance. Of this property they made much; the father of the present Mr. Grabguy (who became a distinguished mayor of the city) viewing it peculiarly profitable to use up his niggers in five years. To this end he forced them to incessant toil, belabouring them with a weapon of raw hide, to which he gave the singular cognomen of "hell−fire." When extra punishment was−according to his policy−necessary to bring out the "digs," he would lock them up in his cage (a sort of grated sentry−box, large enough to retain the body in an upright position), and when the duration of this punishment was satisfactory to his feelings, he would administer a counter quantity of stings with his "hell−fire" wattle. Indeed, the elder Mr. Grabguy, who afterwards became "His

Worship the Mayor," was a wonderful disciplinarian, which very valuable traits of character his son retains in all their purity. His acts deserve more specific notice than we are at present able to give them, inasmuch as by them the safety of a state is frequently endangered, as we shall show in the climax.

Our present Mr. Grabguy is a small man, somewhat slender of person, about five feet seven inches high, who usually dresses in the habiliments of a working man, and is remarkable for his quickness. His features are dark and undefinable, marked with that thoughtfulness which applies only to the getting of wordly goods. His face is narrow and careworn, with piercing brown eyes, high cheek bones, projecting nose and chin, low forehead, and greyish hair, which he parts in the centre. These form the strongest index to his stubborn character; nevertheless he hopes, ere long, to reach the same distinguished position held by his venerable father, who, peace to his ashes! is dead.

"Now, good neighbour Graspum," says our Mr. Grabguy, as he stands in Graspum's warehouse examining a few prime fellows, "I've got a small amount to invest in stock, but I wants somethin' choice−say two or three prime uns, handy at tools. I wants somethin' what 'll make mechanics. Then I wants to buy," he continues, deliberately, "a few smart young uns, what have heads with somethin' in 'um, that ye can bring up to larn things. White mechanics, you see, are so independent now−a−days, that you can't keep 'um under as you can niggers.

"I've bin thinkin' 'bout tryin' an experiment with nigger prentices; and, if it goes, we can dispense with white mechanics entirely. My word for it, they're only a great nuisance at best. When you put 'um to work with niggers they don't feel right, and they have notions that our society don't respect 'um because they must mix with the black rascals in following their trades; and this works its way into their feelings so, that the best on 'um from the north soon give themselves up to the worst dissipation. Ah! our white mechanics are poor wretches; there isn't twenty in the city you can depend on to keep sober two days."

"Well, sir," interrupts Graspum, with an air of great importance, as, with serious countenance, he stands watching every change in Mr. Grabguy's face, at intervals taking a cursory survey of his merchandise, "can suit you to most anything in the line. You understand my mode of trade, perfectly?" He touches Mr. Grabguy on the arm, significantly, and waits the reply, which that gentleman makes with a bow. "Well, if you do," he continues, "you know the means and markets I have at my command. Can sell you young uns of any age, prime uns of various qualities−from field hands down to watch−makers, clergymen!" He always keeps a good supply on hand, and has the very best means of supply. So Mr. Grabguy makes a purchase of three prime men, whom he intends to transform into first−rate mechanics. He declares he will not be troubled hereafter with those very miserable white workmen he is constrained to import from the north. They are foolish enough to think they are just as good as any body, and can be gentlemen in their profession. They, poor fools! mistake the south in their love of happy New England and its society, as they call it.

Having completed his bargain, he hesitates, as if there is something more he would like to have. "Graspum!" he says, "What for trade? can we strike for that imp o' yours at Mrs. Tuttlewill's?" Without waiting for Graspum's reply, he adds−"That chap 's goin to make a tall bit of property one of these days!"

"Ought to," rejoins Graspum, stoically; "he's got right good stock in him." The man of business gives his head a knowing shake, and takes a fresh quid of tobacco. "Give that 'sprout' a chance in the world, and he'll show his hand!" he adds.

"That's what I wants," intimates our tradesman. He has had his eye on the fellow, and knows he's got a head what 'll make the very best kind of a workman. But it will be necessary to take the stubborn out without injuring the "larning" part. Mr. Grabguy, with great unconcern, merely suggests these trifling matters for the better regulating of Mr. Graspum's price.

"Can do that easy enough, if you only study the difference between a nigger's hide and head. Can put welts on pretty strong, if you understand the difference a'tween the too," intimates our man of business, as he places his thumbs in his vest, and commences humming a tune. Then he stops suddenly, and working his face into a very learned contortion, continues−"Ye see, Grabguy, a man has to study the human natur of a nigger just the same as he would a mule or a machine. In truth, Grabguy, niggers are more like mules nor anything else, 'cause the brute 'll do everything but what ye wants him to do, afore he's subdued. You must break them when they are young. About ten or a dozen welts, sir, well laid on when ye first begin, and every time he don't toe the mark, will, in the course of a year, make him as submissive as a spaniel−it will! The virtue of submission is in the lash, it supples like seeds."

"About the stock, Graspum: I don't quite agree with you about that,—I never believed in blood, ye know. As far as this imp goes, I have my doubts about the blood doin on him much good; seein' how it kind o' comes across my mind that there's some Ingin in him. Now, if my philosophy serves me right, Ingin blood makes slave property want to run away (the speaker spreads himself with great nonchalance), the very worst fault."

"Poh! poh!−isn't a bit o' that about him. That imp 's from Marston's estate, can't scare up nothin so promisin' in the way of likely colour," Graspum interposes, with great assurance of manner. "You didn't see the gal−did you?" he concludes.

"I reckon I've taken a squint at both on 'em! Pretty fine and likely. From the same bankrupt concern, I s'pose?" Mr. Grabguy looks quite serious, and waits for a reply.

"Yes−nothing less," Graspum replies, measuredly. "But won't it make your eye water, neighbour Grabguy, one of these days! Bring a tall price among some of our young bucks, eh!" He gives neighbour Grabguy a significant touch on the arm, and that gentleman turns his head and smiles. How quaintly modest!

"By the by, talking of Marston, what has become of him? His affairs seem to have died out in the general levity which the number of such cases occasion. But I tell you what it is, Graspum," (he whispers, accompanying the word with an insinuating look), "report implicates you in that affair."

"Me?−Me?−Me, Sir? God bless you! why, you really startle me. My honour is above the world's scandal. Ah! if you only knew what I've done for that man, Marston;—that cussed nephew of his came within a feather of effecting my ruin. And there he lies, stubborn as a door− plate, sweating out his obstinacy in gaol. Lord bless your soul, I'm not to blame, you know!−I have done a world of things for him; but he won't be advised."

"His creditors think he has more money, and money being the upshot of all his troubles, interposes the point of difficulty in the present instance. I tell them he has no more money, but—I know not why—they doubt the fact the more, and refuse to release him, on the ground of my purchasing their claims at some ulterior period, as I did those two fi fas when the right of freedom was being contested in the children. But, you see, Grabguy, I'm a man of standing; and no money would tempt me to have anything to do with another such case. It was by a mere quirk of law, and the friendship of so many eminent lawyers, that I secured that fifteen hundred dollars from M'Carstrow for the gal what disappeared so mysteriously."

"Graspum!" interrupts Mr. Grabguy, suddenly, accompanying his remark with a laugh, "you're a good bit of a lawyer when it comes to the cross−grained. You tell it all on one side, as lawyers do. I know the risk you run in buying the fi fas on which those children were attached!" Mr. Grabguy smiles, doubtingly, and shakes his head.

"There are liabilities in everything," Graspum drawls out, measuredly. "Pardon me, my friend, you never should found opinion on suspicion. More than a dozen times have I solicited Marston to file his schedule, and take the benefit of the act. However, with all my advice and kindness to him, he will not move a finger towards his own release. Like all our high−minded Southerners, he is ready to maintain a sort of compound between dignity and distress, with which he will gratify his feelings. It's all pride, sir−pride!−you may depend upon it." (Graspum lays his hands together, and affects wondrous charity). "I pity such men from the very bottom of my heart, because it always makes me feel bad when I think what they have been. Creditors, sir, are very unrelenting; and seldom think that an honourable man would suffer the miseries of a prison rather than undergo the pain of being arraigned before an open court, for the exposition of his poverty. Sensitiveness often founds the charge of wrong. The thing is much misunderstood; I know it, sir! Yes, sir! My own feelings make me the best judge," continues Graspum, with a most serious countenance. He feels he is a man of wonderful parts, much abused by public opinion, and, though always trying to promote public good, never credited for his many kind acts.

Turning his head aside to relieve himself of a smile, Mr. Grabguy admits that he is quite an abused man; and, setting aside small matters, thinks it well to be guided by the good motto:—'retire from business with plenty of money.' It may not subdue tongues, but it will soften whispers. "Money," Mr. Grabguy intimates, "upon the strength of his venerable father's experience, is a curious medium of overcoming the ditchwork of society. In fact," he assures Graspum, "that with plenty of shiners you may be just such a man as you please; everybody will forget that you ever bought or sold a nigger, and ten chances to one if you do not find yourself sloped off into Congress, before you have had time to study the process of getting there. But, enough of this, Graspum;—let us turn to trade matters. What's the lowest shot ye'll take for that mellow mixture of Ingin and aristocracy. Send up and bring him down: let us hear the lowest dodge you'll let him slide at."

Mr. Grabguy evinces an off−handedness in trade that is quite equal to Graspum's keen tact. But Graspum has

the faculty of preserving a disinterested appearance singularly at variance with his object.

A messenger is despatched, receipt in hand, for the boy Nicholas. Mrs. Tuttlewell, a brusque body of some sixty years, and with thirteen in a family, having had three husbands (all gentlemen of the highest standing, and connected with first families), keeps a stylish boarding−house, exclusively for the aristocracy, common people not being competent to her style of living; and as nobody could ever say one word against the Tuttlewell family, the present head of the Tuttlewell house has become very fashionably distinguished. The messenger's arrival is made known to Mrs. Tuttlewell, who must duly consider the nature of the immediate demand. She had reason to expect the services of the children would have been at her command for some years to come. However, she must make the very best of it; they are Graspum's property, and he can do what he pleases with them. She suggests, with great politeness, that the messenger take a seat in the lower veranda. Her house is located in a most fashionable street, and none knew better than good lady Tuttlewell herself the value of living up to a fashionable nicety; for, where slavery exists, it is a trade to live.

Both children have been "waiting on table," and, on hearing the summons, repair to their cabin in the yard. Mrs. Tuttlewell, reconsidering her former decision, thinks the messenger better follow them, seeing that he is a nigger with kindly looks. "Uncle!" says Annette, looking up at the old Negro, as he joins them: "Don't you want me too?"

"No," returns the man, coolly shaking his head.

"I think they must be going to take us back to the old plantation, where Daddy Bob used to sing so. Then I shall see mother−how I do want to see her!" she exclaims, her little heart bounding with ecstasy. Three years or more have passed since she prattled on her mother's knee.

The negro recognizes the child's simplicity. "I on'e wants dat child; but da'h an't gwine t' lef ye out on da plantation, nohow!" he says.

"Not going to take us home!" she says, with a sigh. Nicholas moodily submits himself to be prepared, as Annette, more vivacious, keeps interposing with various enquiries. She would like to know where they are going to take little Nicholas; and when they will let her go and see Daddy Bob and mother? "Now, you can take me; I know you can!" she says, looking up at the messenger, and taking his hand pertly.

"No−can't, little 'un! Mus' lef' 'um fo'h nuder time. You isn't broder and sister−is ye?"

"No!" quickly replies the little girl, swinging his hand playfully; "but I want to go where he goes; I want to see mother when he does."

"Well, den, little 'un (the negro sees he cannot overcome the child's simplicity by any other means), dis child will come fo'h 'um to−morrow−dat I will!"

"And you'll bring Nicholas back−won't you?" she enquires, grasping the messenger more firmly by the hand.

"Sartin! no mistake 'bout dat, little 'uman." At this she takes Nicholas by the hand, and retires to their little room in the cabin. Here, like one of older years, she washes him, and dresses him, and fusses over him.

He is merely a child for sale; so she combs his little locks, puts on his new osnaburgs, arranges his nice white collar about his neck, and makes him look so prim. And then she ties a piece of black ribbon about his neck, giving him the bright appearance of a school−boy on examination−day. The little girl's feelings seem as much elated as would be a mother's at the prospect of her child gaining a medal of distinction.

"Now, Nicholas!" she whispers, with touching simplicity, as she views him from head to foot with a smile of exultation on her face, "your mother never dressed you so neat. But I like you more and more, Nicholas, because both our mothers are gone; and maybe we shall never see 'um again." And she kisses him fondly,—tells him not to stay long,—to tell her all he has seen and heard about mother, when he returns.

"I don't know, 'Nette, but 'pears to me we ain't like other children−they don't have to be sold so often; and I don't seem to have any father."

"Neither do I; but Mrs. Tuttlewell says I mustn't mind that, because there's thousands just like us. And then she says we ain't the same kind o' white folks that she is; she says we are white, but niggers for all that. I don't know how it is! I'm not like black folks, because I'm just as white as any white folks," she rejoins, placing her little arms round his neck and smoothing his hair with her left hand.

"I'll grow up, one o' these days."

"And so will I," she speaks, boldly.

"And I'm goin' to know where my mother's gone, and why I ain't as good as other folks' white children," he

rejoins sullenly, shaking his head, and muttering away to himself. It is quite evident that the many singular stages through which he is passing, serve only to increase the stubborness of his nature. The only black distinguishable in his features are his eyes and hair; and, as he looks in the glass to confirm what he has said, Annette takes him by the hand, tells him he must not mind, now; that if he is good he shall see Franconia,—and mother, too, one of these days. He must not be pettish, she remarks, holding him by the hand like a sister whose heart glows with hope for a brother's welfare. She gives him in charge of the messenger, saying, "Good by!" as she imprints a kiss on his cheek, its olive hues changing into deep crimson.

The negro answers her adieu with "Good by, little dear! God bless 'um!" Nay, the native goodness of his heart will not permit him to leave her thus. He turns round, takes her in his arms, kisses and kisses her fair cheek. It is the truth of an honest soul, expressed with tears glistening in his eyes. Again taking Nicholas by the hand, he hastens through the passage of Mrs. Tuttlewell's house where, on emerging into the street, he is accosted by that very fashionable lady, who desires to know if he has got the boy "all right!" Being answered in the affirmative, she gives a very dignified−"Glad of it," and desires her compliments to Mr. Graspum, who she hopes will extend the same special regards to his family, and retires to the quietude of her richly−furnished parlour.

The gentleman dealer and his customer are waiting in the man shambles, while the negro messenger with his boy article of trade plod their way along through the busy streets. The negro looks on his charge with a smile of congratulation. "Mas'r 'll laugh all over 'e clothes when he sees ye−dat he will!" he says, with an air of exultation.

"I'd like to know where I'm goin' to afore I go much further," returns the boy, curtly, as he walks along, every few minutes asking unanswerable questions of the negro.

"Lor, child!" returns the negro, with a significant smile, "take ye down to old massa what own 'um! Fo'h true!"

"Own me!" mutters the child, surlily. "How can they own me without owning my mother?—and I've no father."

"White man great 'losipher; he know so much, dat nigger don't know nofin," is the singularly significant answer.

"But God didn't make me for a nigger,—did he?"

"Don' know how dat is, child. 'Pears like old mas'r tink da' ain't no God; and what he sees in yander good book lef 'um do just as 'e mind to wid nigger. Sometimes Buckra sell nigger by de pound, just like 'e sell pig; and den 'e say 't was wid de Lord's will."

"If mas'r Lord be what Buckra say he be, dis child don' want t'be 'quainted wid 'um," he coolly dilates, as if he foresees the mournful result of the child's bright endowments.

The negro tries to quiet the child's apprehensions by telling him he thinks "Buckra, what's waiting down in da'h office, gwine t' buy 'um of old mas'r. Know dat Buckra he sharp feller. Get e' eye on ye, and make up 'e mind what 'e gwine to give fo'h 'um, quicker!" says the negro.

Graspum has invited his customer, Mr. Grabguy, into his more comfortable counting−room, where, as Nicholas is led in, they may be found discussing the rights of the south, as guaranteed by the federal constitution. The south claim rights independent of the north; and those rights are to secede from the wrongs of the north whenever she takes into her head the very simple notion of carrying them out. Graspum, a man of great experience, whose keen sense of justice is made keener by his sense of practical injustice,—thinks the democracy of the south was never fully understood, and that the most sure way of developing its great principles is by hanging every northerner, whose abolition mania is fast absorbing the liberties of the country at large.

"That's the feller!" says Mr. Grabguy, as the negro leads Nicholas into his presence, and orders him to keep his hands down while the gentleman looks at him. "Stubborn sticks out some, though, I reckon," Mr. Grabguy adds, rather enthusiastically. "Absalom! Isaac! Joe! eh? what's your name?"

"He's a trump!" interposes Graspum, rubbing his hands together, and giving his head a significant shake.

"Nicholas, they call me, master," answers the boy, pettishly.

Mr. Grabguy takes him by the arms, feels his muscle with great care and caution, tries the elasticity of his body by lifting him from the floor by his two ears. This is too much, which the child announces with loud screams. "Stuff! out and out," says Mr. Grabguy, patting him on the back, in a kind sort of way. At the same time he gives a look of satisfaction at Graspum.

"Everything a man wants, in that yaller skin," returns that methodical tradesman, with a gracious nod.

"Black lightnin' eyes−long wiry black hair, a skin full of Ingin devil, and a face full of stubborn," Mr. Grabguy

discourses, as he contemplates the article before him.

"Well, now, about the lowest figure for him?" he continues, again looking at Graspum, and waiting his reply. That gentleman, drawing his right hand across his mouth, relieves it of the virtueless deposit, and supplies it with a fresh quid.

"Sit down, neighbour Grabguy," he says, placing a chair beside him. They both sit down; the negro attendant stands a few feet behind them: the boy may walk a line backward and forward. "Say the word! You know I'll have a deal o' trouble afore breaking the feller in," Grabguy exclaims, impatiently.

Graspum is invoking his philosophy. He will gauge the point of value according to the coming prospect and Mr. Grabguy's wants. "Well, now, seeing it's you, and taking the large amount of negro property I have sold to your distinguished father into consideration−I hope to sell forty thousand niggers yet, before I die−he should bring six hundred." Graspum lays his left hand modestly on Mr. Grabguy's right arm, as that gentleman rather starts with surprise. "Take the extraordinary qualities into consideration, my friend; he's got a head what's worth two hundred dollars more nor a common nigger,—that is, if you be going to turn it into knowledge profit. But that wasn't just what I was going to say" (Graspum becomes profound, as he spreads himself back in his chair). "I was going to say, I'd let you−you mustn't whisper it, though−have him for five hundred and twenty; and he's as cheap at that as bull−dogs at five dollars."

Grabguy shakes his head: he thinks the price rather beyond his mark. He, however, has no objection to chalking on the figure; and as both are good democrats, they will split the difference.

Graspum, smiling, touches his customer significantly with his elbow. "I never do business after that model," he says. "Speaking of bull−dogs, why, Lord bless your soul, Sam Beals and me traded t'other day: I gin him a young five−year old nigger for his hound, and two hundred dollars to boot. Can't go five hundred and twenty for that imp, nohow! Could o' got a prime nigger for that, two years ago."

"Wouldn't lower a fraction! He's extraordinary prime, and'll increase fifty dollars a year every year for ten years or more."

Mr. Grabguy can't help that: he is merely in search of an article capable of being turned into a mechanic, or professional man,—anything to suit the exigencies of a free country, in which such things are sold. And as it will require much time to get the article to a point where it'll be sure to turn the pennies back, perhaps he'd as well let it alone: so he turns the matter over in his head. And yet, there is a certain something about the "young imp" that really fascinates him; his keen eye, and deep sense of nigger natur' value, detect the wonderful promise the article holds forth.

"Not one cent lower would I take for that chap. In fact, I almost feel like recanting now," says Graspum, by way of breaking the monotony.

"Well, I'll bid you good day," says the other, in return, affecting preparation to leave. He puts out his hand to Graspum, and with a serious look desires to know if that be the lowest figure.

"Fact! Don't care 'bout selling at that. Couldn't have a better investment than to keep him!"

Mr. Grabguy considers and reconsiders the matter over in his mind; paces up and down the floor several times, commences humming a tune, steps to the door, looks up and down the street, and says, "Well, I'll be moving homeward, I will."

"Like yer custom, that I do; but then, knowing what I can do with the fellow, I feels stiff about letting him go," interposes Graspum, with great indifference, following to the door, with hands extended.

This is rather too insinuating for Mr. Grabguy. Never did piece of property loom up so brightly, so physically and intellectually valuable. He will return to the table. Taking his seat again, he draws forth a piece of paper, and with his pencil commences figuring upon it. He wants to get at the cost of free and slave labour, and the relative advantages of the one over the other. After a deal of multiplying and subtracting, he gives it up in despair. The fine proportions of the youth before him distract his very brain with contemplation. He won't bother another minute; figures are only confusions: so far as using them to compute the relative value of free and slave labour, they are enough to make one's head ache. "Would ye like to go with me, boy? Give ye enough to eat, but make ye toe the mark!" He looks at Nicholas, and waits a reply.

"Don't matter!" is the boy's answer. "Seems as if nobody cared for me; and so I don't care for nobody."

"That's enough," he interrupts, turning to Graspum: "there's a showing of grit in that, eh?"

"Soon take it out," rejoins that methodical gentleman. "Anyhow, I've a mind to try the fellow, Graspum. I feel

the risk I run; but I don't mind−it's neck or nothin here in the south! Ye'll take a long note, s'pose? Good, ye know!"

Graspum motions his head and works his lips, half affirmatively.

"Good as old gold, ye knows that," insinuates Mr. Grabguy.

"Yes, but notes aint cash; and our banks are shut down as tight as steel traps. At all events make it bankable, and add the interest for six months. It's against my rules of business, though," returns Graspum, with great financial emphasis.

After considerably more very nice exhibitions of business tact, it is agreed that Mr. Grabguy takes the "imp" at five hundred and twenty dollars, for which Graspum accepts his note at six months, with interest. Mr. Grabguy's paper is good, and Graspum considers it equal to cash, less the interest. The "imp" is now left in charge of the negro, while the two gentlemen retire to the private counting−room, where they will settle the preliminaries.

A grave−looking gentleman at a large desk is ordered to make the entry of sale; as the initiate of which he takes a ponderous ledger from the case, and, with great coolness, opens its large leaves. "Nicholas, I think his name is?" he ejaculates, turning to Graspum, who, unconcernedly, has resumed his seat in the great arm−chair.

"Yes; but I suppose it must be Nicholas Grabguy, now," returns Graspum, bowing to his book−keeper, and then turning to Mr. Grabguy.

"One minute, if you please!" rejoins that gentlemen, as the sedate book−keeper turns to his page of N's in the index. Mr. Grabguy will consider that very important point for a few seconds.

"Better drop the Marston, as things are. A good many high feeling connections of that family remain; and to continue the name might be to give pain." This, Graspum says, he only puts out as a suggestion.

"Enter him as you say, gentlemen," interposes the clerk, who will mend his pen while waiting their pleasure.

Mr. Grabguy runs his right hand several times across his forehead, and after a breathless pause, thinks it as well not to connect his distinguished name with that of the nigger,—not just at this moment! Being his property, and associating with his business and people, that will naturally follow. "Just enter him, and make out the bill of sale describing him as the boy Nicholas," he adds.

"Boy Nicholas!" reiterates the book−keeper, and straight−way enters his name, amount fetched, to whom sold, and general description, on his files. In a few minutes more−Graspum, in his chair of state, is regretting having sold so quick,—Mr. Grabguy is handed his bill of sale, duly made out. At the same time, that sedate official places the note for the amount into Graspum's hands. Graspum examines it minutely, while Mr. Grabguy surveys the bill of sale. "Mr. Benson, my clerk here, does these things up according to legal tenour; he, let me inform you, was brought up at the law business, and was rather celebrated once; but the profession won't pay a man of his ability," remarks Graspum, with an "all right!" as he lays the note of hand down for Mr. Grabguy's signature.

Mr. Benson smiles in reply, and adjusts the very stiffly starched corners of his ponderous shirt collar, which he desires to keep well closed around his chin. "An honourable man, that's true, sir, can't live honestly by the law, now−a−days," he concludes, with measured sedateness. He will now get his bill−book, in which to make a record of the piece of paper taken in exchange for the human 'imp.'

"Clap your name across the face!" demands Graspum; and Grabguy seizes a pen, and quickly consummates the bargain by inscribing his name, passing it to Mr. Benson, and, in return, receiving the bill of sale, which he places in his breast pocket. He will not trouble Mr. Benson any further; but, if he will supply a small piece of paper, Mr. Grabguy will very kindly give the imp an order, and send him to his workshop.

"Will the gentleman be kind enough to help himself," says Mr. Benson, passing a quire upon the table at which Mr. Grabguy sits.

"I'll trim that chap into a first−rate mechanic," says Mr. Grabguy, as he writes,—"I have bought the bearer, Nicholas, a promising chap, as you will see. Take him into the shop and set him at something, if it is only turning the grindstone; as I hav'nt made up my mind exactly about what branch to set him at. He's got temper−you'll see that in a minute, and will want some breakin in, if I don't calklate 'rong." This Mr. Grabguy envelopes, and directs to his master mechanic. When all things are arranged to his satisfaction, Nicholas is again brought into his presence, receives an admonition, is told what he may expect if he displays his bad temper, is presented with the note, and despatched, with sundry directions, to seek his way alone, to his late purchaser's workshop.

"Come, boy! ain't you going to say 'good−by' to me 'afore you go? I hav'nt been a bad master to you," says Graspum, putting out his hand.

"Yes, master," mutters the child, turning about ere he reaches the door. He advances towards Graspum, puts out his little hand; and in saying "good by, master," there is so much childish simplicity in his manner that it touches the tender chord embalmed within that iron frame. "Be a good little fellow!" he says, his emotions rising. How strong are the workings of nature when brought in contact with unnatural laws! The monster who has made the child wretched—who has for ever blasted its hopes, shakes it by the hand, and says—"good by, little 'un!" as it leaves the door to seek the home of a new purchaser. How strange the thoughts invading that child's mind, as, a slave for life, it plods its way through the busy thoroughfares! Forcibly the happy incidents of the past are recalled; they are touching reclections−sweets in the dark void of a slave's life; but to him no way−marks, to measure the happy home embalmed therein, are left.

CHAPTER XXXVI. WORKINGS OF THE SLAVE SYSTEM.

DEMOCRACY! thy trumpet voice for liberty is ever ringing in our ears; but thy strange workings defame thee. Thou art rampant in love of the "popular cause," crushing of that which secures liberty to all; and, whilst thou art great at demolishing structures, building firm foundations seems beyond thee, for thereto thou forgetteth to lay the cornerstone well on the solid rock of principle. And, too, we love thee when thou art moved and governed by justice; we hate thee when thou showest thyself a sycophant to make a mad mob serve a pestilential ambition. Like a young giant thou graspest power; but, when in thy hands, it becomes a means of serving the baser ends of factious demagogues. Hypocrite! With breath of poison thou hast sung thy songs to liberty while making it a stepping−stone to injustice; nor hast thou ever ceased to wage a tyrant's war against the rights of man. Thou wearest false robes; thou blasphemest against heaven, that thy strength in wrong may be secure−yea, we fear thy end is fast coming badly, for thou art the bastard offspring of Republicanism so purely planted in our land. Clamour and the lash are thy sceptres, and, like a viper seeking its prey, thou charmest with one and goadeth men's souls with the other. Having worked thy way through our simple narrative, show us what thou hast done. A father hast thou driven within the humid wall of a prison, because he would repent and acknowledge his child. Bolts and bars, in such cases, are democracy's safeguards; but thou hast bound with heavy chains the being who would rise in the world, and go forth healing the sick and preaching God's word. Even hast thou turned the hearts of men into stone, and made them weep at the wrong thou gavest them power to inflict. That bond which God gave to man, and charged him to keep sacred, thou hast sundered for the sake of gold,—thereby levelling man with the brutes of the field. Thou hast sent two beautiful children to linger in the wickedness of slavery,—to die stained with its infamy! Thou hast robbed many a fair one of her virtue, stolen many a charm; but thy foulest crime is, that thou drivest mothers and fathers from the land of their birth to seek shelter on foreign soil. Would to God thou could'st see thyself as thou art,—make thy teachings known in truth and justice,—cease to mock thyself in the eyes of foreign tyrants, nor longer serve despots who would make thee the shield of their ill−gotten power!

Within those malarious prison walls, where fast decays a father who sought to save from slavery's death the offspring he loved, will be found a poor, dejected negro, sitting at the bedside of the oppressed man, administering to his wants. His friendship is true unto death,—the oppressed man is his angel, he will serve him at the sacrifice of life and liberty. He is your true republican, the friend of the oppressed! Your lessons of democracy, so swelling, so boastfully arrayed for a world's good, have no place in his soul,—goodness alone directs his examples of republicanism. But we must not be over venturous in calling democracy to account, lest we offend the gods of power and progress. We will, to save ourselves, return to our narrative.

Marston, yet in gaol, stubbornly refuses to take the benefit of the act,—commonly called the poor debtor's act. He has a faithful friend in Daddy Bob, who has kept his ownership concealed, and, with the assistance of Franconia, still relieves his necessities. Rumour, however, strongly whispers that Colonel M'Carstrow is fast gambling away his property, keeping the worst of company, and leading the life of a debauchee,—which sorely grieves his noble−hearted wife. In fact, Mrs. Templeton, who is chief gossip−monger of the city, declares that he is more than ruined, and that his once beautiful wife must seek support at something.

An honest jury of twelve free and enlightened citizens, before the honourable court of Sessions, have declared Romescos honourably acquitted of the charge of murder, the fatal blow being given in commendable self−defence.

The reader will remember that in a former chapter we left the stolen clergyman (no thanks to his white face and whiter necked brethren of the profession), on the banks of the Mississippi, where, having purchased his time of his owner, he is not only a very profitable investment to that gentleman, but of great service on the neighbouring plantations. Earnest in doing good for his fellow bondmen, his efforts have enlisted for him the sympathy of a generous−hearted young lady, the daughter of a neighbouring planter. Many times had he recounted Mrs. Rosebrook's friendship for him to her, and by its influence succeeded in opening the desired communication. Mrs. Rosebrook had received and promptly answered all his fair friend's letters: the answers

contained good news for Harry; she knew him well, and would at once set about inducing her husband to purchase him. But here again his profession interposed a difficulty, inasmuch as its enhancing the value of the property to so great an extent would make his master reluctant to part with him. However, as nothing could be more expressive of domestic attachment than the manner in which the Rosebrooks studied each other's feelings for the purpose of giving a more complete happiness, our good lady had but to make known her wish, and the deacon stood ready to execute it. In the present case he was but too glad of the opportunity of gratifying her feelings, having had the purchase of a clergyman in contemplation for some months back. He sought Harry out, and, after bartering (the planter setting forth what a deal of money he had made by his clergyman) succeeded in purchasing him for fourteen hundred dollars, the gentleman producing legalised papers of his purchase, and giving the same. As for his running away, there is no evidence to prove that; nor will Harry's pious word be taken in law to disclose the kidnapping. M'Fadden is dead,—his estate has long since been administered upon; Romescos murdered the proof, and swept away the dangerous contingency.

Here, then, we find Harry−we must pass over the incidents of his return back in the old district−about to administer the Gospel to the negroes on the Rosebrook estates. He is the same good, generous−hearted black man he was years ago. But he has worked hard, paid his master a deal of money for his time, and laid up but little for himself. His clothes, too, are somewhat shabby, which, in the estimation of the Rosebrook negroes−who are notoriously aristocratic in their notions−is some detriment to his ministerial character. At the same time, they are not quite sure that Harry Marston, as he must now be called, will preach to please their peculiar mode of thinking. Master and missus have given them an interest in their labour; and, having laid by a little money in missus's savings bank, they are all looking forward to the time when they will have gained their freedom, according to the promises held out. With these incitements of renewed energy they work cheerfully, take a deep interest in the amount of crop produced, and have a worthy regard for their own moral condition. And as they will now pay tribute for the support of a minister of the Gospel, his respectability is a particular object of their watchfulness. Thus, Harry's first appearance on the plantation, shabbily dressed, is viewed with distrust. Uncle Bradshaw, and old Bill, the coachman, and Aunt Sophy, and Sophy's two gals, and their husbands, are heard in serious conclave to say that "It won't do!" A clergy gentleman, with no better clothes than that newcomer wears, can't preach good and strong, nohow! Dad Daniel is heard to say. Bradshaw shakes his white head, and says he's goin' to have a short talk with master about it. Something must be done to reconcile the matter.

Franconia and good Mrs. Rosebrook are not so exacting: the latter has received him with a warm welcome, while the former, her heart bounding with joy on hearing of his return, hastened into his presence, and with the affection of a child shook, and shook, and shook his hand, as he fell on his knees and kissed hers. "Poor Harry!" she says, "how I have longed to see you, and your poor wife and children!"

"Ah, Franconia, my young missus, it is for them my soul fears."

"But we have found out where they are," she interrupts.

"Where they are!" he reiterates.

"Indeed we have!" Franconia makes a significant motion with her head.

"It's true, Harry; and we'll see what can be done to get them back, one of these days," adds Mrs. Rosebrook, her soul−glowing eyes affirming the truth of her assertion. They have come out to spend the day at the plantation, and a happy day it is for those whose hearts they gladden with their kind words. How happy would be our south−how desolate the mania for abolition—if such a comity of good feeling between master and slaves existed on every plantation! And there is nothing to hinder such happy results of kindness.

"When that day comes, missus,—that day my good old woman and me will be together again,—how happy I shall be! Seems as if the regaining that one object would complete my earthly desires. And my children,—how much I have felt for them, and how little I have said!" returns Harry, as, seated in the veranda of the plantation mansion, the two ladies near him are watching his rising emotions.

"Never mind, Harry," rejoins Franconia; "it will all be well, one of these days. You, as well as uncle, must bear with trouble. It is a world of trouble and trial." She draws her chair nearer him, and listens to his narrative of being carried off,—his endeavours to please his strange master down in Mississippi,—the curious manner in which his name was changed,—the sum he was compelled to pay for his time, and the good he effected while pursuing the object of his mission on the neighbouring plantations. Hope carried him through every trial,—hope prepared his heart for the time of his delivery,—hope filled his soul with gratitude to his Maker, and hope, which

ever held its light of freedom before him, inspired him with that prayer he so thankfully bestowed on the head of his benefactor, whose presence was as the light of love borne to him on angels' wings.

Moved to tears by his recital of past struggles, and the expression of natural goodness exhibited in the resignation with which he bore them, ever praying and trusting to Him who guides our course in life, Franconia in turn commenced relating the misfortunes that had befallen her uncle. She tells him how her uncle has been reduced to poverty through Lorenzo's folly, and Graspum, the negro dealer's undiscoverable mode of ensnaring the unwary. He has been importuned, harassed, subjected to every degradation and shame, scouted by society for attempting to save those beautiful children, Annette and Nicholas, from the snares of slavery. And he now welters in a debtor's prison, with few save his old faithful Daddy Bob for friends.

"Master, and my old companion, Daddy Bob!" exclaims Harry, interrupting her at the moment.

"Yes: Daddy takes care of him in his prison cell."

"How often old Bob's expressive face has looked upon me in my dreams! how often he has occupied my thoughts by day!"

"Goodness belongs to him by nature."

"And master is in prison; but Daddy is still his friend and faithful! Well, my heart sorrows for master: I know his proud heart bleeds under the burden," he says, shaking his head sorrowfully. There is more sympathy concealed beneath that black exterior than words can express. He will go and see master; he will comfort him within his prison walls; he will rejoin Daddy Bob, and be master's friend once more. Mrs. Rosebrook, he is sure, will grant him any privilege in her power. That good lady is forthwith solicited, and grants Harry permission to go into the city any day it suits his convenience−except Sunday, when his services are required for the good of the people on the plantation. Harry is delighted with this token of her goodness, and appoints a day when he will meet Miss Franconia,—as he yet calls her,—and go see old master and Daddy. How glowing is that honest heart, as it warms with ecstasy at the thought of seeing "old master," even though he be degraded within prison walls!

While this conversation is going on in the veranda, sundry aged members of negro families—aunties and mammies—are passing backwards and forwards in front of the house, casting curious glances at the affection exhibited for the new preacher by "Miss Franconia." The effect is a sort of reconciliation of the highly aristocratic objections they at first interposed against his reception. "Mus' be somebody bigger dan common nigger preacher; wudn't cotch Miss Frankone spoken wid 'um if 'um warn't," says Dad Timothy's Jane, who is Uncle Absalom's wife, and, in addition to having six coal−black children, as fat and sleek as beavers, is the wise woman of the cabins, around whom all the old veteran mammies gather for explanations upon most important subjects. In this instance she is surrounded by six or seven grave worthies, whose comical faces add great piquancy to the conclave. Grandmumma Dorothy, who declares that she is grandmother to she don't know how much little growing−up property, will venture every grey hair in her head−which is as white as the snows of Nova Scotia−that he knows a deal o' things about the gospel, or he wouldn't have missus for such a close acquaintance. "But his shirt ain't just da'h fashon fo'h a 'spectable minister ob de gospel," she concludes, with profound wisdom evinced in her measured nod.

Aunt Betsy, than whose face none is blacker, or more comically moulded, will say her word; but she is very profound withal. "Reckon how tain't de clo' what make e' de preacher tink good" (Aunty's lip hangs seriously low the while). "Lef missus send some calico fum town, and dis old woman son fix 'um into shirt fo'h him," she says, with great assurance of her sincerity.

Harry−Mister Harry, as he is to be called by the people−finds himself comfortably at home; the only drawback, if such it may be called, existing in the unwillingness exhibited on the part of one of the overseers to his being provided with apartments in the basement of the house instead of one of the cabins. This, however, is, by a few conciliatory words from Mrs. Rosebrook, settled to the satisfaction of all. Harry has supper provided for him in one of the little rooms downstairs, which he is to make his Study, and into which he retires for the night.

When daylight has departed, and the very air seems hanging in stillness over the plantation, a great whispering is heard in Dad Daniel's cabin−the head quarters, where grave matters of state, or questions affecting the moral or physical interests of the plantation, are discussed, and Dad Daniel's opinion held as most learned−the importance of which over the other cabins is denoted by three windows, one just above the door being usually filled with moss or an old black hat. Singular enough, on approaching the cabin it is discovered that Daniel has convoked a senate of his sable brethren, to whom he is proposing a measure of great importance. "Da'h new precher, gemen!

is one ob yer own colur−no more Buckra what on'e gib dat one sarmon,—tank God fo'h dat!−and dat colour geman, my children, ye must look up to fo'h de word from de good book. Now, my bredren, 'tis posin' on ye dat ye make dat geman 'spectable. I poses den, dat we, bredren, puts in a mite apiece, and gib dat ar' geman new suit ob fus' bes'clof', so 'e preach fresh and clean," Dad Daniel is heard to say. And this proposition is carried out on the following morning, when Daddy Daniel−his white wool so cleanly washed, and his face glowing with great good−nature−accompanied by a conclave of his sable companions, presents himself in the front veranda, and demands to see "missus." That all−conciliating personage is ever ready to receive deputations, and on making her appearance, and receiving the usual salutations from her people, receives from the hand of that venerable prime minister, Daddy Daniel, a purse containing twelve dollars and fifty cents. It is the amount of a voluntary contribution−a gift for the new preacher. "Missus" is requested, after adding her portion, to expend it in a suit of best black for the newcomer, whom they would like to see, and say "how de, to."

Missus receives this noble expression of their gratitude with thanks and kind words. Harry is summoned to the veranda, where, on making his appearance, he is introduced to Dad Daniel, who, in return, escorts him down on the plazza where numbers of the people have assembled to receive him. Here, with wondrous ceremony, Dad Daniel doing the polite rather strong, he is introduced to all the important people of the plantation. And such a shaking of hands, earnest congratulations, happy "how des," bows, and joyous laughs, as follow, place the scene so expressive of happiness beyond the power of pen to describe. Then he is led away, followed by a train of curious faces, to see Dad Daniel's neatly−arranged cabin; after which he will see plantation church, and successively the people's cabins. To−morrow evening, at early dusk, it is said, according to invitation and arrangement, he will sup on the green with his sable brethren, old and young, and spice up the evening's entertainment with an exhortation; Dad Daniel, as is his custom, performing the duties of deacon.

Let us pass over this scene, and−Harry having ingratiated himself with the plantation people, who are ready to give him their distinguished consideration−ask the reader to follow us through the description of another, which took place a few days after.

Our clergyman has delivered to his sable flock his first sermon, which Dad Daniel and his compatriots pronounce great and good,—just what a sermon should be. Such pathos they never heard before; the enthusiasm and fervency with which it was delivered inspires delight; they want no more earnestness of soul than the fervency with which his gesticulations accompanied the words; and now he has obtained a furlough that he may go into the city and console his old master. A thrill of commiseration seizes him as he contemplates his once joyous master now in prison; but, misgivings being useless, onward he goes. And he will see old Bob, recall the happy incidents of the past, when time went smoothly on.

He reaches the city, having tarried a while at missus's villa, and seeks M'Carstrow's residence, at the door of which he is met by Franconia, who receives him gratefully, and orders a servant to show him into the recess of the hall, where he will wait until such time as she is ready to accompany him to the county prison. M'Carstrow has recently removed into plainer tenements: some whisper that necessity compelled it, and that the "large shot" gamblers have shorn him down to the lowest imaginable scale of living. Be this as it may, certain it is that he has not looked within the doors of his own house for more than a week: report says he is enjoying himself in a fashionable house, to the inmates of which he is familiarly known. He certainly leads his beautiful wife anything but a pleasant or happy life. Soon Franconia is ready, and onward wending her way for the gaol, closely followed by Harry. She would have no objection to his walking by her side, but custom (intolerant interposer) will not permit it. They pass through busy thoroughfares and narrow streets into the suburbs, and have reached the prison outer gate, on the right hand of which, and just above a brass knob, are the significant words, "Ring the bell."

"What a place to put master in!" says Harry, in a half whisper, turning to Franconia, as he pulls the brass handle and listens for the dull tinkling of the bell within. He starts at the muffled summons, and sighs as he hears the heavy tread of the officer, advancing through the corridor to challenge his presence. The man advances, and has reached the inner iron gate, situated in a narrow, vaulted arch in the main building. A clanking and clicking sound is heard, and the iron door swings back: a thick−set man, with features of iron, advances to the stoop, down the steps, and to the gate. "What's here now?" he growls, rather than speaks, looking sternly at the coloured man, as he thrusts his left hand deep into his side pocket, while holding the key of the inner door in his right.

"Visitor," returns Franconia, modestly.

"Who does the nigger want to see?" he enquires, with pertinacity in keeping with his profession.

"His old master!" is the quick reply.

"You both? I guess I know what it is,—you want to see Marston: he used to be a rice−planter, but's now in the debtor's ward for a swimming lot of debts. Well, s'pose I must let you in: got a lot o' things, I s'pose?" he says, looking wickedly through the bars as he springs the bolts, and swings back the gate. "I beg yer pardon a dozen times! but I didn't recognise ye on the outer side," continues the official, becoming suddenly servile. He makes a low bow as he recognises Franconia−motions his hand for them to walk ahead. They reach the steps leading to the inner gate, and ascending, soon are in the vaulted passage.

If they will allow him, the polite official will unlock the grated door. Stepping before Franconia, who, as the clanking of the locks grate on her ear, is seized with sensations she cannot describe, he inserts the heavy key. She turns to Harry, her face pallid as marble, and lays her tremulous hand on his arm, as if to relieve the nervousness with which she is seized. Click! click! sounds forth: again the door creaks on its hinges, and they are in the confines of the prison. A narrow vaulted arch, its stone walls moistened with pestilential malaria, leads into a small vestibule, on the right hand of which stretched a narrow aisle lined on both sides with cells. Damp and pestiferous, a hollow gloominess seems to pervade the place, as if it were a pest−house for torturing the living. Even the air breathes of disease,—a stench, as of dead men buried in its vaults, darts its poison deep into the system. It is this, coupled with the mind's discontent, that commits its ravages upon the poor prisoner,—that sends him pale and haggard to a soon− forgotten grave.

"Last door on the right,—you know, mum," says the official: "boy will follow, lightly: whist! whist!"

"I know, to my sorrow," is her reply, delivered in a whisper. Ah! her emotions are too tender for prison walls; they are yielding tears from the fountain of her very soul.

"He's sick: walk softly, and don't think of the prisoners. Knock at the door afore enterin'," says a staid−looking warden, emerging from a small door on the left hand of the vestibule.

"Zist! zist!" returns the other, pointing with the forefinger of his right hand down the aisle, and, placing his left, gently, on Franconia's shoulder, motioning her to move on.

Slowly, her handkerchief to her face, she obeys the sign, and is moving down the corridor, now encountering anxious eyes peering through the narrow grating of huge black doors. And then a faint, dolorous sound strikes on their listening ears. They pause for a moment,—listen again! It becomes clearer and clearer; and they advance with anxious curiosity. "It's Daddy Bob's voice," whispers Harry; "but how distant it sounds!

"Even that murmurs in his confinement," returns Franconia.

"How, like a thing of life, it recalls the past−the past of happiness!" says Harry, as they reach the cell door, and, tremulously, hesitate for a few moments.

"Listen again!" continues Harry. The sound having ceased a moment or two, again commences, and the word "There's a place for old mas'r yet, And de Lord will see him dar," are distinctly audible. "How the old man battles for his good master!" returns Harry, as Franconia taps gently on the door. The wooden trap over the grating is closed; bolts hang carelessly from their staples; and yet, though the door is secured with a hook on the inside, disease and death breathe their morbid fumes through the scarce perceptible crevices. A whispering−"Come in!" is heard in reply to the tap upon the door, which slowly opens, and the face of old Bob, bathed in grief, protrudes round the frame. "Oh, missus−missus−missus−God give good missus spirit!" he exclaims, seizing Franconia fervently by the hand, and looking in her face imploringly. A fotid stench pervaded the atmosphere of the gloomy cell; it is death spreading its humid malaria. "Good old master is g−g−g−gone!" mutters the negro, in half−choked accents.

With a wild shriek, the noble woman rushes to the side of his prison cot, seizes his blanched hand that hangs carelessly over the iron frame, grasps his head frantically, and draws it to her bosom, as the last gurgle of life bids adieu to the prostrate body. He is dead!

The old slave has watched over him, shared his sorrows and his crust, has sung a last song to his departing spirit. How truthful was that picture of the dying master and his slave! The old man, struggling against the infirmities of age, had escaped the hands of the man−seller, served his master with but one object−his soul's love−and relieved his necessities, until death, ending his troubles, left no more to relieve. Now, distracted between joy at meeting Harry, and sorrow for the death of master, the poor old man is lost in the confusion of his feelings. After saluting Franconia, he turned to Harry, threw his arms around his neck, buried his head in his bosom, and wept like a child. "Home−home again,—my Harry! but too late to see mas'r," he says, as the fountains of his soul

give out their streams.

"We must all go where master has gone," returns Harry, as he, more calm, fondles the old man, and endeavours to reconcile his feelings. "Sit there, my old friend−sit there; and remember that God called master away. I must go to his bed−side," whispers Harry, seating the old man on a block of wood near the foot of the cot, where he pours forth the earnest of his grief.

CHAPTER XXXVII. AN ITEM IN THE COMMON CALENDAR.

THUS painfully has Marston paid his debtors. Around his lifeless body may spring to life those sympathies which were dead while he lived; but deplorings fall useless on dead men. There is one consideration, however, which must always be taken into account; it is, that while sympathy for the living may cost something, sympathy for the dead is cheap indeed, and always to be had. How simply plain is the dead man's cell! In this humid space, ten by sixteen feet, and arched over−head, is a bucket of water, with a tin cup at the side, a prison tub in one corner, two wooden chairs, a little deal stand, (off which the prisoner ate his meals), and his trunk of clothing. The sheriff, insisting that it was his rule to make no distinction of persons, allowed prison cot and prison matress to which, by the kind permission of the warden, Franconia added sheets and a coverlit. Upon this, in a corner at the right, and opposite a spacious fire−place, in which are two bricks supporting a small iron kettle, lies the once opulent planter,—now with eyes glassy and discoloured, a ghastly corpse. His house once was famous for its princely hospitality,—the prison cot is not now his bequest: but it is all the world has left him on which to yield up his life. "Oh, uncle! uncle! uncle!" exclaims Franconia, who has been bathing his contorted face with her tears, "would that God had taken me too−buried our troubles in one grave! There is no trouble in that world to which he has gone: joy, virtue, and peace, reign triumphant there," she speaks, sighing, as she raises her bosom from off the dead man. Harry has touched her on the shoulder with his left hand, and is holding the dead man's with his right: he seems in deep contemplation. His mind is absorbed in the melancholy scene; but, though his affection is deep, he has no tears to shed at this moment. No; he will draw a chair for Franconia, and seat her near the head of the cot, for the fountains of her grief have overflown. Discoloured and contorted, what a ghastly picture the dead man's face presents! Glassy, and with vacant glare, those eyes, strange in death, seem wildly staring upward from earth. How unnatural those sunken cheeks—those lips wet with the excrement of black vomit—that throat reddened with the pestilential poison! "Call a warden, Daddy!" says Harry; "he has died of black vomit, I think." And he lays the dead body square upon the cot, turns the sheets from off the shoulders, unbuttons the collar of its shirt. "How changed! I never would have known master; but I can see something of him left yet." Harry remains some minutes looking upon the face of the departed, as if tracing some long lost feature. And then he takes his hands−it's master's hand, he says−and places them gently to his sides, closes his glassy eyes, wipes his mouth and nostrils, puts his ear to the dead man's mouth, as if doubting the all−slayer's possession of the body, and with his right hand parts the matted hair from off the cold brow. What a step between the cares of the world and the peace of death! Harry smooths, and smooths, and smooths his forehead with his hand; until at length his feelings get the better of his resolution; he will wipe the dewy tears from his eyes. "Don't weep, Miss Franconia,—don't weep! master is happy with Jesus,—happier than all the plantations and slaves of the world could make him" he says, turning to her as she sits weeping, her elbow resting on the cot, and her face buried in her handkerchief.

"Bad job this here!" exclaims the warden, as he comes lumbering into the cell, his face flushed with anxiety. "This yaller−fever beats everything: but he hasn't been well for some time," he continues, advancing to the bed−side, looking on the deceased for a few minutes, and then, as if it were a part of his profession to look on dead men, says: "How strange to die out so soon!"

"He was a good master," rejoins Harry.

"He wasn't your master−Was he?" enquires the gaoler, in gruff accents.

"Once he was."

"But, did you see him die, boy?"

"Thank God, I did not."

"And this stupid old nigger hadn't sense to call me!" (he turns threateningly to Bob): "Well,—must 'a drop'd off like the snuff of a tallow candle!"

Daddy knew master was a poor man now;—calling would have availed nothing; gaolers are bad friends of poverty.

"Could you not have sent for me, good man?" enquires Franconia, her weeping eyes turning upon the warden,

who says, by way of answering her question, "We must have him out o' here."

"I said mas'r was sicker den ye s'posed, yesterday; nor ye didn't notice 'um!" interposes Bob, giving a significant look at the warden, and again at Franconia.

"What a shame, in this our land of boasted hospitality! He died neglected in a prison cell!"

"Truth is, ma'am," interrupts the warden, who, suddenly becoming conscious that it is polite to be courteous to ladies wherever they may be met, uncovers, and holds his hat in his hand,—"we are sorely tried with black−vomit cases; no provision is made for them, and they die on our hands afore we know it, just like sheep with the rot. It gives us a great deal of trouble;—you may depend it does, ma'am; and not a cent extra pay do we get for it. For my own part, I've become quite at home to dead men and prisoners. My name is−you have no doubt heard of me before−John Lafayette Flewellen: my situation was once, madam, that of a distinguished road contractor; and then they run me for the democratic senator from our district, and I lost all my money without getting the office−and here I am now, pestered with sick men and dead prisoners. And the very worst is that ye can't please nobody; but if anything is wanted, ma'am, just call for me: John Lafayette Flewellen's my name, ma'am." The man of nerve, with curious indifference, is about to turn away,—to leave the mourning party to themselves, merely remarking, as he takes his hand from that of the corpse, that his limbs are becoming fridgid, fast.

"Stay−a−moment,—warden," says Franconia, sobbing: "When was he seized with the fever?"

"Day afore yesterday, ma'am; but he didn't complain until yesterday. That he was in a dangerous way I'm sure I'd no idea." The warden shrugs his shoulders, and spreads his hands. "My eyes, ma'am, but he drank strongly of late! Perhaps that, combined with the fever, helped slide him off?"

"Ah! yes,—it was something else−it was grief! His troubles were his destroyer." She wipes her eyes, and, with a look of commiseration, turns from the man whose business it is to look coldly upon unfortunate dead men.

"There was the things you sent him, ma'am; and he got his gaol allowance, and some gruel. The law wouldn't allow us to do more for him,—no, it wouldn't!" He shakes his head in confirmation.

"I wanted old mas'r to let 'um bring doctor; but he said no! he would meet de doctor what cured all diseases in another world," interrupts old Bob, as he draws his seat close to the foot of the cot, and, with his shining face of grief, gazes on the pale features of his beloved master.

"Let him lie as he is, till the coroner comes," says the warden, retiring slowly, and drawing the heavy door after him.

The humble picture was no less an expression of goodness, than proof of the cruel severity of the law. The news of death soon brought curious debtors into the long aisle, while sorrow and sympathy might be read on every face. But he was gone, and with him his wants and grievances. A physician was called in, but he could not recall life, and, after making a few very learned and unintelligible remarks on the appearance of the body, took his departure, saying that they must not grieve−that it was the way all flesh would go. "He, no doubt, died of the black vomit, hastened by the want of care," he concluded, as he left the cell.

"Want of care!" rejoins Franconia, again giving vent to her feelings. How deeply did the arrow dart into the recesses of her already wounded heart!

Mr. Moon, the methodical coroner, was not long repairing to the spot. He felt, and felt, and felt the dead man's limbs, asked a few questions, bared the cold breast, ordered the body to be straightened a little, viewed it from several angles, and said an inquest was unnecessary. It would reveal no new facts, and, as so many were dying of the same disease, could give no more relief to his friends. Concerning his death, no one could doubt the cause being black vomit. With a frigid attempt at consolation for Franconia, he will withdraw. He has not been long gone, when the warden, a sheet over his left arm, again makes his appearance; he passes the sheet to Harry, with a request that he will wind the dead debtor up in it.

Franconia, sobbing, rises from her seat, opens a window at the head of the cot (the dead will not escape through the iron grating), and paces the floor, while Harry and Daddy sponge the body, lay it carefully down, and fold it in the winding−sheet. "Poor master,—God has taken him; but how I shall miss him! I've spent happy days wid 'im in dis place, I have!" says Bob, as they lay his head on the hard pillow. He gazes upon him with affection,—and says "Mas'r 'll want no more clothes."

And now night is fast drawing its dark mantle over the scene,—the refulgent shadows of the setting sun play through the grated window into the gloomy cell: how like a spirit of goodness sent from on high to lighten the sorrows of the downcast, seems the light. A faint ray plays its soft tints on that face now pallid in death; how it

inspires our thoughts of heaven! Franconia watches, and watches, as fainter and fainter it fades away, like an angel sent for the spirit taking its departure. "Farewell!" she whispers, as darkness shuts out the last mellow glimmer: "Come sombre night, and spread thy stillness!"

The warden, moved by the spark of generosity his soul possesses, has brought some cologne, and silently places it in Franconia's hands. She advances to the cot, seats herself near the head of her dear departed, encircles his head with her left arm, and with her white 'kerchief bathes his face with the liquid, Harry holding the vessel in his hand, at her request. A candle sheds its sickly light upon the humid walls; faintly it discloses the face of Daddy Bob, immersed in tears, watching intently over the foot of the cot. "Missus Frankone is alw's kind to mas'r!"

"I loved uncle because his heart was good," returns Franconia.

"'Tis dat, missus. How kindly old mas'r, long time ago, used to say, 'Good mornin', Bob! Daddy, mas'r lubs you!"

How firmly the happy recollection of these kind words is sealed in the old man's memory.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. IN WHICH REGRETS ARE SHOWN OF LITTLE WORTH.

THE reader may remember, that we, in the early part of our narrative, made some slight mention of the Rovero family, of which Franconia and Lorenzo were the only surviving children. They, too, had been distinguished as belonging to a class of opulent planters; but, having been reduced to poverty by the same nefarious process through which we have traced Marston's decline, and which we shall more fully disclose in the sequel, had gathered together the remnants of a once extensive property, and with the proceeds migrated to a western province of Mexico, where, for many years, though not with much success, Rovero pursued a mining speculation. They lived in a humble manner; Mrs. Rovero, Marston's sister−and of whom we have a type in the character of her daughter, Franconia−discarded all unnecessary appurtenances of living, and looked forward to the time when they would be enabled to retrieve their fortunes and return to their native district to spend the future of their days on the old homestead. More than four years, however, had passed since any tidings had been received of them by Franconia; and it was strongly surmised that they had fallen victims to the savage incursions of marauding parties, who were at that time devastating the country, and scattering its defenceless inhabitants homeless over the western shores of central America. So strong had this impression found place in Franconia's mind that she had given up all hopes of again meeting them. As for M'Carstrow's friends, they had never taken any interest in her welfare, viewing her marriage with the distinguished colonel as a mere catch on the part of her parents, whose only motive was to secure themselves the protection of a name, and, perhaps, the means of sustaining themselves above the rank disclosure of their real poverty. To keep "above board" is everything in the south; and the family not distinguished soon finds itself well nigh extinguished. Hence that ever tenacious clinging to pretensions, sounding of important names, and maintenance of absurd fallacies,—all having for their end the drawing a curtain over that real state of poverty there existing. Indeed, it was no secret that even the M'Carstrow family (counting itself among the very few really distinguished families of the state, and notorious for the contempt in which they affected to hold all common people), had mortgaged their plantation and all its negroes for much more than their worth in ordinary times. As for tradesmen's bills, there were any quantity outstanding, without the shadow of a prospect of their being paid, notwithstanding importuners had frequently intimated that a place called the gaol was not far distant, and that the squire's office was within a stone's throw of "the corner." Colonel M'Carstrow, reports say, had some years ago got a deal of money by an unexplainable hocus pocus, but it was well nigh gone in gambling, and now he was keeping brothel society and rioting away his life faster than the race−horses he had formerly kept on the course could run.

Hospitality hides itself when friends are needy; and it will be seen here that Franconia had few friends−we mean friends in need. The Rosebrook family formed an exception. The good deacon, and his ever generous lady, had remained Franconia's firmest friends; but so large and complicated were the demands against Marston, and so gross the charges of dishonour—suspicion said he fraudulently made over his property to Graspum−that they dared not interpose for his relief; nor would Marston himself have permitted it. The question now was, what was to be done with the dead body?

We left Franconia bathing its face, and smoothing the hair across its temples with her hand. She cannot bury the body from her own home:—no! M'Carstow will not permit that. She cannot consign it to the commissioners for the better regulation of the "poor house,"−her feelings repulse the thought. One thought lightens her cares; she will straightway proceed to Mrs. Rosebrook's villa,—she will herself be the bearer of the mournful intelligence; while Harry will watch over the remains of the departed, until Daddy, who must be her guide through the city, shall return. "I will go to prepare the next resting−place for uncle," says Franconia, as if nerving herself to carry out the resolution.

"With your permission, missus," returns Harry, touching her on the arm, and pointing through the grated window into the gloomy yard. "Years since−before I passed through a tribulation worse than death−when we were going to be sold in the market, I called my brothers and sisters of the plantation together, and in that yard invoked heaven to be merciful to its fallen. I was sold on that day; but heaven has been merciful to me; heaven

has guided me through many weary pilgrimages, and brought me here to−night; and its protecting hand will yet restore me my wife and little ones. Let us pray to−night; let us be grateful to Him who seeth the fallen in his tribulation, but prepareth a place for him in a better world. Let us pray and hope," he continued: and they knelt at the side of the humble cot on which lay the departed, while he devoutly and fervently invoked the Giver of all Good to forgive the oppressor, to guide the oppressed, to make man feel there is a world beyond this, to strengthen the resolution of that fair one who is thus sorely afflicted, to give the old man who weeps at the feet of the departed new hope for the world to come,—and to receive that warm spirit which has just left the cold body into his realms of bliss.

What of roughness there was in his manner is softened by simplicity and truthfulness. The roughest lips may breathe the purest prayer. At the conclusion, Franconia and Daddy leave for Mrs. Rosebrook's villa, while Harry, remaining to watch over the remains, draws his chair to the stand, and reads by the murky light.

"I won't be long; take care of old mas'r," says Daddy, as he leaves the cell, solicitously looking back into the cavern−like place.

It is past ten when they reach the house of Mrs. Rosebrook, the inmates of which have retired, and are sleeping. Everything is quiet in and about the enclosure; the luxuriant foliage bespreading a lawn extending far away to the westward, seems refreshing itself with dew that sparkles beneath the starlight heavens, now arched like a crystal mist hung with diamond lights. The distant watchdog's bark re−echoes faintly over the broad lagoon, to the east; a cricket's chirrup sounds beneath the woodbine arbour; a moody guardsman, mounted on his lean steed, and armed for danger, paces his slow way along: he it is that breaks the stillness while guarding the fears of a watchful community, who know liberty, but crush with steel the love thereof.

A rap soon brings to the door the trim figure of a mulatto servant. He conveys the name of the visitor to his "missus," who, surprised at the untimely hour Franconia seeks her, loses no time in reaching the ante−room, into which she has been conducted.

Daddy has taken his seat in the hall, and recognises "missus" as she approaches; but as she puts out her hand to salute him, she recognises trouble seated on his countenance. "Young missus in da'h," he says, pointing to the ante−room while rubbing his eyes.

"But you must tell me what trouble has befallen you," she returns, as quickly, in her dishabille, she drops his hand and starts back.

"Missus know 'um all,—missus da'h." Again he points, and she hastens into the ante−room, when, grasping Franconia by the hand, she stares at her with breathless anxiety expressed in her face. A pause ensues in which both seem bewildered. At length Franconia breaks the silence. "Uncle is gone!" she exclaims, following the words with a flow of tears.

"Gone!" reiterates the generous−hearted woman, encircling Franconia's neck with her left arm, and drawing her fondly to her bosom.

"Yes,—dead!" she continues, sobbing audibly. There is something touching in the words,—something which recalls the dearest associations of the past, and touches the fountains of the heart. It is the soft tone in which they are uttered,—it gives new life to old images. So forcibly are they called up, that the good woman has no power to resist her violent emotions: gently she guides Franconia to the sofa, seats her upon its soft cushion, and attempts to console her wrecked spirit.

The men−servants are called up,—told to be prepared for orders. One of them recognises Daddy, and, inviting him into the pantry, would give him food, Trouble has wasted the old man's appetite; he thinks of master, but has no will to eat. No; he will see missus, and proceed back to the prison, there join Harry, and watch over all that is mortal of master. He thanks Abraham for what he gave him, declines the coat he would kindly lend him to keep out the chill, seeks the presence of his mistress (she has become more reconciled), says, "God bless 'um!" bids her good night, and sallies forth.

Mrs. Rosebrook listens to the recital of the melancholy scene with astonishment and awe. "How death grapples for us!" she exclaims, her soft, soul−beaming eyes glaring with surprise. "How it cuts its way with edge unseen. Be calm, be calm, Franconia; you have nobly done your part,—nobly! Whatever the pecuniary misfortunes,—whatever the secret cause of his downfall, you have played the woman to the very end. You have illustrated the purest of true affection; would it had repaid you better. Before daylight−negroes are, in consequence of their superstition, unwilling to remove the dead at midnight−I will have the body removed

here,—buried from my house." The good woman did not disclose to Franconia that her husband was from home, making an effort to purchase Harry's wife and children from their present owner. But she will do all she can,—the best can do no more.

At the gaol a different scene is presented. Harry, alone with the dead man, waits Daddy's return. Each tap of the bell awakes a new hope, soon to be disappointed. The clock strikes eleven: no Daddy returns. The gates are shut: Harry must wile away the night, in this tomb−like abode, with the dead. What stillness pervades the cell; how mournfully calm in death sleeps the departed! The watcher has read himself to sleep; his taper, like life on its way, has nearly shed out its pale light; the hot breath of summer breathes balmy through the lattice bars; mosquitoes sing their torturous tunes while seeking for the dead man's blood; lizards, with diamond eyes, crawl upon the wall, waiting their ration: but death, less inexorable than creditors, sits pale king over all. The palace and the cell are alike to him; the sharp edge of his unseen sword spares neither the king in his purple robe, nor the starving beggar who seeks a crust at his palace gate,—of all places the worst.

As morning dawns, and soft fleeting clouds tinge the heavens with light, four negroes may be seen sitting at the prison gate, a litter by their side, now and then casting silent glances upward, as if contemplating the sombre wall that frowns above their heads, enclosing the prison. The guard, armed to the teeth, have passed and repassed them, challenged and received their answer, and as often examined their passes. They−the negroes−have come for a dead man. Guardmen get no fees of dead men,—the law has no more demands to serve: they wish the boys much joy with their booty, and pass on.

Six o'clock arrives; the first bell rings; locks, bolts, and bars clank in ungrateful medley; rumbling voices are heard within the hollow−sounding aisles; whispers from above chime ominously with the dull shuffle rumbling from below. "Seven more cases,—how it rages!" grumbles a monotonous voice, and the gate opens at the warden's touch. "Who's here?" he demands, with stern countenance unchanged, as he shrugs his formidable shoulders. "I see, (he continues, quickly), you have come for the dead debtor. Glad of it, my good fellow; this is the place to make dead men of debtors. Brought an order, I s'pose?" Saying "follow me," he turns about, hastens to the vestibule, receives the order from the hand of Duncan, the chief negro, reads it with grave attention, supposes it is all straight, and is about to show him the cell where the body lays, and which he is only too glad to release. "Hold a moment!" Mr. Winterflint—such is his name—says. Heaven knows he wants to get rid of the dead debtor; but the laws are so curious, creditors are so obdurate, and sheriffs have such a crooked way of doing straight things, that he is in the very bad position of not knowing what to do. Some document from the sheriff may be necessary; perhaps the creditors must agree to the compromise. He forgets that inexorable Death, as he is vulgarly styled, has forced a compromise: creditors must now credit "by decease." Upon this point, however, he must be satisfied by his superior. He now wishes Mr. Brien Moon would evince more exactness in holding inquests, and less anxiety for the fees. Mr. Winterflint depends not on his own decisions, where the laws relating to debtors are so absurdly mystical. "Rest here, boy," he says; "I won't be a minute or two,—must do the thing straight." He seeks the presence of that extremely high functionary, the gaoler (high indeed wherever slavery rules), who, having weighed the points with great legal impartiality, gives it as his most distinguished opinion that no order of release from the high sheriff is requisite to satisfy the creditors of his death: take care of the order sent, and make a note of the niggers who take him away, concludes that highly important gentleman, as comfortably his head reclines on soft pillow. To this end was Mr. Moon's certificate essential.

Mr. Winterflint returns; enquires who owns the boys.

"Mas'r Rosebrook's niggers," Duncan replies, firmly; "but Missus send da order."

"Sure of that, now? Good niggers them of Rosebrook's: wouldn't a' gin it to nobody else's niggers. Follow me−zist, zist!" he says, crooking his finger at the other three, and scowling, as Duncan relieves their timidity by advancing. They move slowly and noiselessly up the aisle, the humid atmosphere of which, pregnant with death, sickens as it steals into the very blood. "In there−zist! make no noise; the dead debtor lies there," whispers the warden, laying his left hand upon Duncan's shoulder, and, the forefinger of his right extended, pointing toward the last cell on the left. "Door's open; not locked, I meant. Left it unsecured last night. Rap afore ye go in, though." At the methodical warden's bidding Duncan proceeds, his foot falling lightly on the floor. Reaching the door, he places his right hand on the swinging bolt, and for a few seconds seems listening. He hears the muffled sound of a footfall pacing the floor, and then a muttering as of voices in secret communion, or dying echoes from the tomb. He has not mistaken the cell; its crevices give forth odours pergnant of proof. Two successive raps bring Harry to

the door: they are admitted to the presence of the dead. One by one Harry receives them by the hand, but he must needs be told why Daddy is not with them. They know not. He ate a morsel, and left late last night, says one of the negroes. Harry is astonished at this singular intelligence: Daddy Bob never before was known to commit an act of unfaithfulness; he was true to Marston in life,—strange that he should desert him in death. "Mas'r's death−bed wasn't much at last," says Duncan, as they gather round the cot, and, with curious faces, mingle their more curious remarks. Harry draws back the white handkerchief which Franconia had spread over the face of the corpse, as the negroes start back affrighted. As of nervous contortion, the ghastly face presents an awful picture. Swollen, discoloured, and contracted, no one outline of that once cheerful countenance can be traced. "Don't look much like Mas'r Marston used to look; times must a' changed mightily since he used to look so happy at home," mutters Duncan, shaking his head, and telling the others not to be "fear'd; dead men can't hurt nobody."

"Died penniless;—but e' war good on e' own plantation," rejoins another. "One ting be sartin 'bout nigger−he know how he die wen 'e time cum; Mas'r don know how 'e gwine to die!"

Having seen enough of the melancholy finale, they spread the litter in the aisle, as the warden enters the cell to facilitate the dead debtor's exit. Harry again covers the face, and prepares to roll the body in a coverlit brought by Duncan. "I kind of liked him−he was so gentlemanly−has been with us so long, and did'nt seem like a prisoner. He was very quiet, and always civil when spoken to," interposes the warden, as, assisting the second shrouding, he presses the hand of the corpse in his own.

Now he is ready; they place his cold body on the litter; a few listless prisoners stand their sickly figures along the passage, watch him slowly borne to the iron gate in the arched vault. Death−less inexorable than creditors−has signed his release, thrown back prison bolts and bars, wrested him from the grasp of human laws, and now mocks at creditors, annuls fi fas, bids the dead debtor make his exit. Death pays no gaol fees; it makes that bequest to creditors; but it reserves the keys of heaven for another purpose. "One ration less," says the warden, who, closing the grated door, casts a lingering look after the humble procession, bearing away the remains of our departed.

With Harry as the only follower, they proceed along, through suburban streets, and soon reach the house of that generous woman. A minister of the gospel awaits his coming; the good man's words are consoling, but he cannot remodel the past for the advantage of the dead. Soon the body is placed in a "ready−made coffin," and the good man offers up the last funeral rites; he can do no more than invoke the great protector to receive the departed into his bosom.

"How the troubles of this world rise up before me! Oh! uncle! uncle! how I could part with the world and bury my troubles in the same grave!" exclaims Franconia, as, the ceremony having ended, they bear the body away to its last resting−place; and, in a paroxysm of grief, she shrieks and falls swooning to the floor.

In a neatly inclosed plat, a short distance from the Rosebrook Villa, and near the bank of a meandering rivulet, overhung with mourning willows and clustering vines, they lay him to rest. The world gave the fallen man nothing but a prison−cell wherein to stretch his dying body; a woman gives him a sequestered grave, and nature spreads it with her loveliest offering. It is the last resting−place of the Rosebrook family, which their negroes, partaking of that contentment so characteristic of the family, have planted with flowers they nurture with tenderest care. There is something touching in the calm beauty of the spot; something breathing of rural contentment. It is something to be buried in a pretty grave−to be mourned by a slave−to be loved by the untutored. How abject the slave, and yet how true his affection! how dear his requiem over a departed friend! "God bless master−receive his spirit!" is heard mingling with the music of the gentle breeze, as Harry, sitting at the head of the grave, looks upward to heaven, while earth covers from sight the mortal relics of a once kind master.

It has been a day of sadness at the villa−a day of mourning and tribulation. How different the scene in the city! There, men whisper strange regrets. Sympathy is let loose, and is expanding itself to an unusual degree. Who was there that did not know Marston's generous, gushing soul! Who was there that would not have stretched forth the helping hand, had they known his truly abject condition! Who that was not, and had not been twenty times, on the very brink of wresting him from the useless tyranny of his obdurate creditors! Who that had not waited from day to day, with purse−strings open, ready to pour forth the unmistakeable tokens of friendship! How many were only restrained from doing good−from giving vent to the fountains of their hospitality−through fear of being contaminated with that scandal rumour had thrown around his decline! Over his death hath sprung to life that curious fabric of living generosity, so ready to bespread a grave with unneeded bounties,—so emblematic of how many false mourners hath the dead. But Graspum would have all such expressions shrink beneath his glowing

goodness. With honied words he tells the tale of his own honesty: his business intercourse with the deceased was in character most generous. Many a good turn did Marston receive at his hands; long had he been his faithful and unwearied friend. Fierce are the words with which he would execrate the tyrant creditors; yea, he would heap condign punishment on their obdurate heads. Time after time did he tell them the fallen man was penniless; how strange, then, that they tortured him to death within prison walls. He would sweep away such vengeance, bury it with his curses, and make obsolete such laws as give one man power to gratify his passion on another. His burning, surging anger can find no relief; nor can he tolerate such antiquated debtor laws: to him they are the very essence of barbarism, tainting that enlightened civilisation so long implanted by the State, so well maintained by the people. It is on those ennobling virtues of state, he says, the cherished doctrines of our democracy are founded. Graspum is, indeed, a well−developed type of our modern democracy, the flimsy fabric of which is well represented in the gasconade of the above outpouring philanthropy.

And now, as again the crimson clouds of evening soften into golden hues−as the sun, like a fiery chariot, sinks beneath the western landscape, and still night spreads her shadowy mantle down the distant hills, and over the broad lagoon to the north−two sable figures may be seen patting, sodding, and bespreading with fresh−plucked flowers the new grave. As the rippling brook gives out its silvery music, and earth seems drinking of the misty dew, that, like a bridal veil, spreads over its verdant hillocks, they whisper their requiem of regret, and mould the grave so carefully. "It's mas'r's last," says one, smoothing the cone with his hands.

"We will plant the tree now," returns the other, bringing forward a young clustering pine, which he places at the head of the grave, and on which he cuts the significant epitaph−"Good master lies here!"

Duncan and Harry have paid their last tribute. "He is at peace with this world," says the latter, as, at the gate, he turns to take a last look over the paling.

CHAPTER XXXIX. HOW WE SHOULD ALL BE FORGIVING.

LET us forget the scenes of the foregoing chapters, and turn to something of pleasanter hue. In the meantime, let us freely acknowledge that we live in a land−our democratic south, we mean−where sumptuous living and abject misery present their boldest outlines,—where the ignorance of the many is excused by the polished education of a very few,—where autocracy sways its lash with bitterest absolutism,—where menial life lies prostrate at the feet of injustice, and despairingly appeals to heaven for succour,—where feasts and funerals rival each other,—and when pestilence, like a glutton, sends its victims to the graveyard most, the ball−room glitters brightest with its galaxy. Even here, where clamour cries aloud for popular government, men's souls are most crushed−not with legal right, but by popular will! And yet, from out all this incongruous substance, there seems a genial spirit working itself upon the surface, and making good its influence; and it is to that influence we should award the credit due. That genial spirit is the good master's protection; we would it were wider exercised for the good of all. But we must return to our narrative.

The Rosebrook Villa has assumed its usual cheerfulness; but while pestilence makes sad havoc among the inhabitants of the city, gaiety is equally rampant. In a word, even the many funeral trains which pass along every day begin to wear a sort of cheerfulness, in consequence of which, it is rumoured, the aristocracy−we mean those who have money to spend−have made up their minds not to depart for the springs yet awhile. As for Franconia, finding she could no longer endure M'Carstrow's dissolute habits, and having been told by that very distinguished gentleman, but unamiable husband, that he despised the whole tribe of her poor relations, she has retired to private boarding, where, with the five dollars a week, he, in the outpouring of his southern generosity, allows her, she subsists plainly but comfortably. It is, indeed, a paltry pittance, which the M'Carstrow family will excuse to the public with the greatness of their name.

Harry has returned to the plantation, where the people have smothered him in a new suit of black. Already has he preached three sermons in it, which said sermons are declared wonderful proofs of his biblical knowledge. Even Daddy Daniel, who expended fourteen picayunes in a new pair of spectacles, with which to hear the new parson more distinctly, pronounces the preaching prodigious. He is vehement in his exultation, lavishes his praise without stint; and as his black face glows with happiness, thanks missus for her great goodness in thus providing for their spiritual welfare. The Rosebrook "niggers" were always extremely respectable and well ordered in their moral condition; but now they seem invested with a new impulse for working out their own good; and by the advice of missus, whom every sable son and daughter loves most dearly, Daddy Daniel has arranged a system of evening prayer meetings, which will be held in the little church, twice a week. And, too, there prevails a strong desire for an evening gathering now and then, at which the young shiners may be instructed how to grow. A curiously democratic law, however, offers a fierce impediment to this; and Daddy Daniel shakes his head, and aunt Peggy makes a belligerent muttering when told such gatherings cannot take place without endangering the state's rights. It is, nevertheless, decided that Kate, and Nan, and Dorothy, and Webster, and Clay, and such like young folks, may go to "settings up" and funerals, but strictly abstain from all fandangoes. Dad Daniel and his brother deacons cannot countenance such fiddling and dancing, such break−downs, and shoutings, and whirlings, and flouncing and frilling, and gay ribboning, as generally make up the evening's merriment at these fandangoes, so prevalent on neighbouring plantations about Christmas time. "Da don' mount to no good!" Daniel says, with a broad guffaw. "Nigger what spect t' git hi' way up in da world bes lef dem tings." And so one or two more screws are to be worked up for the better regulation of the machinery of the plantation. As for Master Rosebrook−why, he wouldn't sell a nigger for a world of money; and he doesn't care how much they learn; the more the better, provided they learn on the sly. They are all to be freed at a certain time, and although freedom is sweet, without learning they might make bad use of it. But master has had a noble object in view for some days past, and which, after encountering many difficulties, he has succeeded in carrying out to the great joy of all parties concerned.

One day, as the people were all busily engaged on the plantation, Bradshaw's familiar figure presents itself at the house, and demands to see Harry. He has great good news, but don't want to tell him "nofin" till he arrives at

the Villa. "Ah, good man" (Bradshaw's face beams good tidings, as he approaches Harry, and delivers a note) "mas'r specs ye down da' wid no time loss." Bradshaw rubs his hands, and grins, and bows, his face seeming two shades blacker than ever, but no less cheerful.

"Master wants me to preach somewhere, next Sunday,—I know he does," says Harry, reading the note, which requests him to come immediately into the city. He will prepare to obey the summons, Dan and Sprat meanwhile taking good care of the horse and carriage, while Bradshaw makes a friendly visit to a few of the more distinguished cabins, and says "how de" to venerable aunties, who spread their best fare before him, and, with grave ceremony, invite him in to refresh before taking his return journey into the city; and Maum Betsy packs up six of her real smart made sweet cakes for the parson and Bradshaw to eat along the road. Betsy is in a strange state of bewilderment to know why master wants to take the new parson away just now, when he's so happy, and is only satisfied when assured that he will be safely returned to−morrow. A signal is made for Dad Daniel, who hastens to the cabin in time to see everything properly arranged for the parson's departure, and say: "God bless 'um,—good by!"

"Now, what can master want with me?" enquires Harry, as, on the road, they roll away towards the city.

Bradshaw cracks his whip, and with a significant smile looks Harry in the face, and returns: "Don' ax dis child no mo' sich question. Old mas'r and me neber break secret. Tell ye dis, do'h! Old mas'r do good ting, sartin."

"You know, but won't tell me, eh?" rejoins Harry, his manly face wearing a solicitous look. Bradshaw shakes his head, and adds a cunning wink in reply.

It is three o'clock when they arrive at the Villa, where, without reserve, missus extends her hand, and gives him a cordial welcome,—tells him Franconia has been waiting to see him with great patience, and has got a present for him. Franconia comes rushing into the hall, and is so glad to see him; but her countenance wears an air of sadness, which does not escape his notice−she is not the beautiful creature she was years ago, care has sadly worn upon those rounded features. But master is there, and he looks happy and cheerful; and there is something about the house servants, as they gather round him to have their say, which looks of suspiciously good omen. He cannot divine what it is; his first suspicions being aroused by missus saying Franconia had been waiting to see him.

"We must not call him Harry any longer−it doesn't become his profession: now that he is Elder of my plantation flock, he must, from this time, be called Elder!" says Rosebrook, touching him on the arm with the right hand. And the two ladies joined in, that it must be so. "Go into the parlour, ladies; I must say a word or two to the Elder," continued Rosebrook, taking Harry by the arm, and pacing through the hall into the conservatory at the back of the house. Here, after ordering Harry to be seated, he recounts his plan of emancipation, which, so far, has worked admirably, and, at the time proposed, will, without doubt or danger, produce the hoped−for result. "You, my good man," he says, "can be a useful instrument in furthering my ends; I want you to be that instrument!" His negroes have all an interest in their labour, which interest is preserved for them in missus's savings−bank; and at a given time they are to have their freedom, but to remain on the plantation if they choose, at a stipulated rate of wages. Indeed, so strongly impressed with the good results of his proposed system is Rosebrook, that he long since scouted that contemptible fallacy, which must have had its origin in the very dregs of selfishness, that the two races can only live in proximity by one enslaving the other. Justice to each other, he holds, will solve the problem of their living together; but, between the oppressor and the oppressed, a volcano that may at any day send forth its devouring flame, smoulders. Rosebrook knows goodness always deserves its reward; and Harry assures him he never will violate the trust. Having said thus much, he rises from his chair, takes Harry by the arm, and leading him to the door of the conservatory, points him to a passage leading to the right, and says: "In there!−proceed into that passage, enter a door, first door on the left, and then you will find something you may consider your own."

Harry hesitated for a moment, watched master's countenance doubtingly, as if questioning the singular command.

"Fear not! nobody will hurt you," continues Rosebrook.

"Master never had a bad intention," thinks Harry; "I know he would not harm me; and then missus is so good." Slowly and nervously he proceeds, and on reaching the door hears a familiar "come in" answering his nervous rap. The door opened into a neat little room, with carpet and chairs, a mahogany bureau and prints, all so neatly arranged, and wearing such an air of cleanliness. No sooner has he advanced beyond the threshold than the

emaciated figure of a black sister vaults into his arms, crying, "Oh Harry! Harry! Harry!−my dear husband!" She throws her arms about his neck, and kisses, and kisses him, and buries her tears of joy in his bosom. How she pours out her soul's love!−how, in rapturous embraces, her black impulses give out the purest affection!

"And you!−you!−you!−my own dear Jane! Is it you? Has God commanded us to meet once more, to be happy once more, to live as heaven hath ordained us to live?" he returns, as fervently and affectionately he holds her in his arms, and returns her token of love. "Never! never! I forget you, never! By night and by day I have prayed the protecting hand of Providence to guide you through life's trials. How my heart has yearned to meet you in heaven! happy am I we have met once more on earth; yea, my soul leaps with joy. Forgive them, Father, forgive them who separate us on earth, for heaven makes the anointed!" And while they embrace thus fondly, their tears mingling with joy, children, recognising a returned father as he entered the door, are clinging at his feet beseechingly. He is their father;—how like children they love! "Sam, Sue, and Beckie, too!" he says, as one by one he takes them in his arms and kisses them. But there are two more, sombre and strange. He had caught the fourth in his arms, unconsciously. "Ah, Jane!" he exclaims, turning toward her, his face filled with grief and chagrin, "they are not of me, Jane!" He still holds the little innocent by the hand, as nervously he waits her reply. It is not guilt, but shame, with which she returns an answer.

"It was not my sin, Harry! It was him that forced me to live with another,—that lashed me when I refused, and, bleeding, made me obey the will," she returns, looking at him imploringly. Virtue is weaker than the lash; none feel it more than the slave. She loved Harry, she followed him with her thoughts; but it was the Christian that reduced her to the level of the brute. Laying her coloured hand upon his shoulder, she besought his forgiveness, as God was forgiving.

"Why should I not forgive thee, Jane? I would not chide thee, for no sin is on thy garments. Injustice gave master the right to sell thee, to make of thee what he pleased. Heaven made thy soul purest,—man thy body an outcast for the unrighteous to feast upon. How could I withhold forgiveness, Jane? I will be a father to them, a husband to thee; for what thou hast been compelled to do is right, in the land we live in." So saying, he again embraces her, wipes the tears from her eyes, and comforts her. How sweet is forgiveness! It freshens like the dew of morning on the drooping plant; it strengthens the weary spirit, it steals into the desponding soul, and wakes to life new hopes of bliss,—to the slave it is sweet indeed!

"I will kiss them, too," he ejaculates, taking them in his arms with the embrace of a fond father,—which simple expression of love they return with prattling. They know not the trials of their parents; how blessed to know them not!

And now they gather the children around them, and seat themselves on a little settee near the window, where Harry, overjoyed at meeting his dear ones once more, fondles them and listens to Jane, as with her left arm round his neck she discloses the sad tale of her tribulation. Let us beg the reader to excuse the recital; there is nothing fascinating in it, nor would we call forth the modest blushes of our generous south. A few words of the woman's story, however, we cannot omit; and we trust the forgiving will pardon their insertion. She tells Harry she was not separated from her children; but that Romescos, having well considered her worth, sold her with her "young uns" to the Rev. Peter—, who had a small plantation down in Christ's Parish. The reverend gentleman, being born and educated to the degrading socialities of democratic states, always says he is not to blame for "using" the rights the law gives him; nor does he forget to express sundry regrets that he cannot see as preachers at the north see. As for money, he thinks preachers have just as good a right to get it as gentlemen of any other honourable profession. Now and then he preaches to niggers; and for telling them how they must live in the fear of the Lord, be obedient to their master, and pay for redemption by the sweat of their brows, he adds to his pile of coin. But he is strongly of the opinion that niggers are inferior "brutes" of the human species, and in furtherance of this opinion (so popular in the whole south) he expects them to live a week on a peck of corn. As for Jane−we must excuse the reverend gentleman, because of his faith in southern principles−he compelled her to live with the man Absalom ere she had been two days on his plantation, and by the same Absalom she had two children, which materially increased the cash value of the Reverend Peter—'s slave property. Indeed, so well is the reverend gentleman known for his foul play, that it has been thrown up to him in open court−by wicked planters who never had the fear of God before their eyes−that he more than half starved his niggers, and charged them toll for grinding their corn in his mill. Though the Reverend Peter —never failed to assure his friends and acquaintances of his generosity (a noble quality which had long been worthily maintained by the ancient family to which he belonged),

the light of one generous act had never found its way to the public. In truth, so elastically did his reverend conscientiousness expand when he learned the strange motive which prompted Rosebrook to purchase Jane and her little ones, that he sorely regretted he had not put two hundred dollars more on the price of the lot. Fortunately Jane was much worn down by grief and toil, and was viewed by the reverend gentleman as a piece of property he would rather like to dispose of to the best advantage, lest she should suddenly make a void in his dollars and cents by sliding into some out of the way grave−yard. But Rosebrook, duly appreciating the unchristian qualities of our worthy one's generosity, kept his motive a profound secret until the negociation was completed. Now that it had become known that the Reverend Peter—(who dresses in blackest black, most sanctimoniously cut, whitest neckcloth wedded to his holy neck, and face so simply serious) assures Rosebrook he has got good people,—they are valuably promising−he will pray for them, that the future may prosper their wayfaring. He cannot, however, part with the good man without admonishing him how dangerous it is to give unto "niggers" the advantage of a superior position.

Reader, let us hope the clergy of the south will take heed lest by permitting their brethren to be sold and stolen in this manner they bring the profession into contempt. Let us hope the southern church will not much longer continue to bring pure Christianity into disgrace by serving ends so vile that heaven and earth frowns upon them; for false is the voice raised in sanctimony to heaven for power to make a footstool of a fallen race!

CHAPTER XL. CONTAINING VARIOUS MATTERS.

GREAT regularity prevails on the Rosebrook plantation, and cheering are the prospects held out to those who toil thereon. Mrs. Rosebrook has dressed Jane (Harry's wife) in a nice new calico, which, with her feet encased in shining calf−skin shoes, and her head done up in a bandana, with spots of great brightness, shows her lean figure to good advantage. Like a good wife, happy with her own dear husband, she pours forth the emotions of a grateful heart, and feels that the world−not so bad after all−has something good in store for her. And then Harry looks even better than he did on Master Marston's plantation; and, with their little ones−sable types of their parents−dressed so neatly, they must be happy. And now that they are duly installed at the plantation, where Harry pursues his duties as father of the flock, and Jane lends her cheering voice and helping hand to make comfort in the various cabins complete−and with Dad Daniel's assurance that the people won't go astray−we must leave them for a time, and beg the reader's indulgence while following us through another phase of the children's history.

A slave is but a slave—an article subject to all the fluctuations of trade—a mere item in the scale of traffic, and reduced to serving the ends of avarice or licentiousness. This is a consequence inseparable from his sale. It matters not whether the blood of the noblest patriot course in his veins, his hair be of flaxen brightness, his eyes of azure blue, his skin of Norman whiteness, and his features classic,—he can be no more than a slave, and as such must yield to the debasing influences of an institution that crushes and curses wherever it exists. In proof of this, we find the bright eyes of our little Annette, glowing with kindliest love, failing to thaw the frozen souls of man−dealers. Nay, bright eyes only lend their aid to the law that debases her life. She has become valuable only as a finely and delicately developed woman, whose appearance in the market will produce sharp bidding, and a deal of dollars and cents. Graspum never lost an opportunity of trimming up these nice pieces of female property, making the money invested in them turn the largest premium, and satisfying his customers that, so far as dealing in the brightest kind of fancy stock was concerned, he is not a jot behind the most careful selecter in the Charleston market. Major John Bowling—who is very distinguished, having descended from the very ancient family of that name, and is highly thought of by the aristocracy—has made the selection of such merchandise his particular branch of study for more than fourteen years. In consequence of the major's supposed taste, his pen was hitherto most frequented by gentlemen and connoisseur; but now Graspum assures all respectable people, gentlemen of acknowledged taste, and young men who are cultivating their way up in the world, that his selections are second to none; of this he will produce sufficient proof, provided customers will make him a call and look into the area of his fold. The fold itself is most uninviting (it is, he assures us, owing to his determination to carry out the faith of his plain democracy); nevertheless, it contains the white, beautiful, and voluptuous,—all for sale. In fact—the truth must be told—Mr. Graspum assures the world that he firmly believes there is a sort of human nature extant—he is troubled sometimes to know just where the line breaks off—which never by any possibility could have been intended for any thing but the other to traffic in−to turn into the most dollars and cents. In proof of this principle he kept Annette until she had well nigh merged into womanhood, or until such time as she became a choice marketable article, with eyes worth so much; nose, mouth, so much; pretty auburn hair, worth so much; and fine rounded figure—with all its fascinating appurtenances—worth so much;—the whole amounting to so much; to be sold for so much, the nice little profit being chalked down on the credit side of his formidable ledger, in which stands recorded against his little soul (he knows will get to heaven) the sale of ten thousand black souls, which will shine in brightness when his is refused admittance to the portal above.

Having arrived at the point most marketable, he sells her to Mr. Gurdoin Choicewest, who pays no less a sum than sixteen hundred dollars in hard cash for the unyielding beauty−money advanced to him by his dear papa, who had no objection to his having a pretty coloured girl, provided Madam Choicewest−most indulgent mother she was, too−gave her consent; and she said she was willing, provided−; and now, notwithstanding she was his own, insisted on the preservation of her virtue, or death. Awful dilemma, this! To lash her will be useless; and the few kicks she has already received have not yet begun to thaw her frozen determination. Such an unyielding thing

is quite useless for the purpose for which young Choicewest purchased her. What must be done with her? The older Choicewest is consulted, and gives it as his decided opinion that there is one of two things the younger Choicewest must do with this dear piece of property he has so unfortunately got on his hands,—he must sell her, or tie her up every day and pump her with cold water, say fifteen minutes at a time. Pumping niggers, the elder Mr. Choicewest remarks, with the coolness of an Austrian diplomatist, has a wondrous effect upon them; "it makes 'em give in when nothing else will." He once had four prime fellows, who, in stubbornness, seemed a match for Mr. Beelzebub himself. He lashed them, and he burned them, and he clipped their ears; and then he stretched them on planks, thinking they would cry "give in" afore the sockets of their joints were drawn out; but it was all to no purpose, they were as unyielding as granite.

About that time there was a celebrated manager of negroes keeping the prison. This clever functionary had a peculiar way of bringing the stubbornness out of them; so he consigned the four unbending rascals to his skill. And this very valuable and very skilful gaol−keeper had a large window in his establishment, with iron bars running perpendicular; to the inside of which he would strap the four stubborn rascals, with their faces scientifically arranged between the bars, to prevent the moving of a muscle. Thus caged, their black heads bound to the grating, the scientific gaoler, who was something of a humourist withal, would enjoy a nice bit of fun at seeing the more favoured prisoners (with his kind permission) exercise their dexterity in throwing peas at the faces of the bounden. How he would laugh−how the pea−punishing prisoners would enjoy it−how the fast bound niggers, foaming with rage and maddened to desperation, would bellow, as their very eyeballs darted fire and blood! What grand fun it was! bull−baiting sank into a mere shadow beside it. The former was measuredly passive, because the bull only roared, and pitched, and tossed; whereas here the sport was made more exhilarating by expressions of vengeance or implorings. And then, as a change of pastime, the skilful gaoler would demand a cessation of the pea hostilities, and enjoin the commencement of the water war; which said war was carried out by supplying about a dozen prisoners with as many buckets, which they would fill with great alacrity, and, in succession, throw the contents with great force over the unyielding, from the outside. The effect of this on naked men, bound with chains to iron bars, may be imagined; but the older Choicewest declares it was a cure. It brought steel out of the "rascals," and made them as submissive as shoe−strings. Sometimes the jolly prisoners would make the bath so strong, that the niggers would seem completely drowned when released; but then they'd soon come to with a jolly good rolling, a little hartshorn applied to their nostrils, and the like of that. About a dozen times putting through the pea and water process cured them.

So says the very respectable Mr. Choicewest, with great dignity of manners, as he seriously advises the younger Choicewest to try a little quantity of the same sort on his now useless female purchase. Lady Choicewest must, however, be consulted on this point, as she is very particular about the mode in which all females about her establishment are chastised. Indeed, Lady Choicewest is much concerned about the only male, heir of the family, to whom she looks forward for very distinguished results to the family name. The family (Lady Choicewest always assures those whom she graciously condescends to admit into the fashionable precincts of her small but very select circle), descended from the very ancient and chivalric house of that name, whose celebrated estate was in Warwickshire, England; and, in proof of this, my Lady Choicewest invariably points to a sad daub, illustrative of some incomprehensible object, suspended over the antique mantelpiece. With methodical grace, and dignity which frowns with superlative contempt upon every thing very vulgar—for she says "she sublimely detests them very low creatures what are never brought up to manners at the north, and are worse than haystacks to larn civility"—my lady solicits a near inspection of this wonderful hieroglyphic, which she tells us is the family arms,—an ancient and choice bit of art she would not part with for the world. If her friends evince any want of perception in tracing the many deeds of valour it heralds, on behalf of the noble family of which she is an undisputed descendant, my lady will at once enter upon the task of instruction; and with the beautiful fore−finger of her right hand, always jewelled with great brilliancy, will she satisfactorily enlighten the stupid on the fame of the ancient Choicewest family, thereon inscribed. With no ordinary design on the credulity of her friends, Lady Choicewest has several times strongly intimated that she was not quite sure that one or two of her ancestors in the male line of the family were not reigning dukes as far down as the noble reign of the ignoble Oliver Cromwell! The question, nevertheless, is whether the honour of the ancient Choicewest family descended from Mr. or Mrs. Choicewest. The vulgar mass have been known to say (smilingly) that Lady Choicewest's name was Brown, the father of which very ancient family sold herrings and small pigs at a little stand in the market: this, however, was

a very long time ago, and, as my lady is known to be troubled with an exceedingly crooked memory, persons better acquainted with her are more ready to accept the oblivious excuse.

Taking all these things into consideration, my Lady Choicewest is exceedingly cautious lest young Gourdoin Choicewest should do aught to dishonour the family name; and on this strange perplexity in which her much indulged son is placed being referred to her, she gives it as her most decided opinion that the wench, if as obstinate as described, had better be sold to the highest bidder−the sooner the better. My lady lays great emphasis on "the sooner the better." That something will be lost she has not the slightest doubt; but then it were better to lose a little in the price of the stubborn wretch, than to have her always creating disturbance about the genteel premises. In furtherance of this−my lady's mandate−Annette is sold to Mr. Blackmore Blackett for the nice round sum of fifteen hundred dollars. Gourdoin Choicewest hates to part with the beauty, grieves and regrets,—she is so charmingly fascinating. "Must let her slide, though; critter won't do at all as I wants her to," he lisps, regretting the serious loss of the dollars. His friend Blackmore Blackett, however, is a gentleman, and therefore he would not deceive him in the wench: hence he makes the reduction, because he finds her decidedly faulty. Had Blackmore Blackett been a regular flesh trader, he would not have scrupled to take him in. As it is, gentlemen must always be gentlemen among themselves. Blackett, a gentleman of fortune, who lives at his ease in the city, and has the very finest taste for female beauty, was left, most unfortunately, a widower with four lovely daughters, any one of which may be considered a belle not to be rung by gentlemen of ordinary rank or vulgar pretension. In fact, the Blackett girls are considered very fine specimens of beauty, are much admired in society, and expect ere long, on the clear merit of polish, to rank equal with the first aristocracy of the place.

Mr. Blackmore Blackett esteems himself an extremely lucky fellow in having so advantageously procured such a nice piece of property,—so suited to his taste. Her price, when compared with her singularly valuable charms, is a mere nothing; and, too, all his fashionable friends will congratulate him upon his good fortune. But as disappointments will come, so Mr. Blackmore Blackett finds he has got something not quite so valuable as anticipated; however, being something of a philosopher, he will improve upon the course pursued by the younger Choicewest: he makes his first advances with great caution; whispers words of tenderness in her ear; tells her his happy jewel for life she must be. Remembering her mother, she turns a deaf ear to Mr. Blackett's pleadings. The very cabin which he has provided for her in the yard reminds her of that familiar domicile on Marston's plantation. Neither by soft pleadings, nor threatenings of sale to plantation life, nor terrors of the lash, can he soften the creature's sympathies, so that the flesh may succumb. When he whispered soft words and made fascinating promises, she would shake her head and move from him; when he threatened, she would plead her abject position; when he resorted to force, she would struggle with him, making the issue her virtue or death. Once she paid the penalty of her struggles with a broken wrist, which she shows us more in sorrow than anger. Annette is beautiful but delicate; has soft eyes beaming with the fulness of a great soul; but they were sold, once,—now, sympathy for her is dead. The law gives her no protection for her virtue; the ruffian may violate it, and Heaven only can shelter it with forgiveness. As for Blackett, he has no forgiveness in his temperament,—passion soars highest with him; he would slay with violent hands the minion who dared oppose its triumph.

About this time, Mr. Blackett, much to his surprise, finds a storm of mischief brewing about his domestic domain. The Miss Blacketts, dashing beauties, have had it come to their ears over and over again that all the young men about the city say Annette Mazatlin (as she is now called) is far more beautiful than any one of the Blacketts. This is quite enough to kindle the elements of a female war. In the south nothing can spread the war of jealousy and vanity with such undying rage as comparing slave beauty with that of the more favoured of the sexes. A firman of the strongest kind is now issued from the portfolio of the Miss Blacketts, forbidding the wretched girl entering the house; and storms of abuse are plentifully and very cheaply lavished on her head, ere she puts it outside the cabin. She was a nasty, impudent hussy; the very worst of all kind of creatures to have about a respectable mansion,—enough to shock respectable people! The worst of it was, that the miserable white nigger thought she was handsome, and a lot of young, silly−headed men flattered her vanity by telling the fool she was prettier than the Blacketts themselves,—so said the very accomplished Miss Blacketts. And if ever domicile was becoming too warm for man to live in, in consequence of female indignation, that one was Mr. Blackmore Blackett's. It was not so much that the father had purchased this beautiful creature to serve fiendish purposes. Oh no!−that was a thing of every−day occurrence,—something excusable in any respectable man's family. It was

beauty rivalling, fierce and jealous of its compliments. Again, the wretch−found incorrigible, and useless for the purpose purchased−is sold. Poor, luckless maiden! she might add, as she passed through the hands of so many purchasers. This time, however, she is less valuable from having fractured her left wrist, deformity being always taken into account when such property is up at the flesh shambles. But Mr. Blackmore Blackett has a delicacy about putting her up under the hammer just now, inasmuch as he could not say she was sold for no fault; while the disfigured wrist might lead to suspicious remarks concerning his treatment of her. Another extremely unfortunate circumstance was its getting all about the city that she was a cold, soulless thing, who declared that sooner than yield to be the abject wretch men sought to make her, she would die that only death. She had but one life, and it were better to yield that up virtuously than die degraded. Graspum, then, is the only safe channel in which to dispose of the like. That functionary assures Mr. Blackmore Blackett that the girl is beautiful, delicate, and an exceedingly sweet creature yet! but that during the four months she has depreciated more than fifty per cent in value. His remarks may be considered out of place, but they are none the less true, for it is ascertained, on private examination, that sundry stripes have been laid about her bare loins. Gurdoin Choicewest declared to his mother that he never for once had laid violent hands on the obstinate wench; Mr. Blackmore Blackett stood ready to lay his hand on the Bible, and lift his eyes to heaven for proof of his innocence; but a record of the infliction, indelible of blood, remained there to tell its sad tale,—to shame, if shame had aught in slavery whereon to make itself known. Notwithstanding this bold denial, it is found that Mr. Blackmore Blackett did on two occasions strip her and secure her hands and feet to the bed−post, where he put on "about six at a time," remarkably "gently." He admired her symmetrical form, her fine, white, soft, smooth skin−her voluptuous limbs, so beautifully and delicately developed; and then there was so much gushing sweetness, mingled with grief, in her face, as she cast her soft glances upon him, and implored him to end her existence, or save her such shame! Such, he says, laconically, completely disarmed him, and he only switched her a few times.

"She's not worth a dot more than a thousand dollars. I couldn't give it for her, because I couldn't make it out on her. The fact is, she'll get a bad name by passing through so many hands−a deuced bad name!" says Graspum, whose commercial language is politically cold. "And then there's her broken wrist−doubtful! doubtful! doubtful! what I can do with her. For a plantation she isn't worth seven coppers, and sempstresses and housemaids of her kind are looked on suspiciously. It's only with great nicety of skill ye can work such property to advantage," he continues, viewing her in one of Mr. Blackmore Blackett's ante−rooms.

The upshot of the matter is, that Mr. Blackmore Blackett accepts the offer, and Graspum, having again taken the damaged property under his charge, sends it back to his pen. As an offset for the broken wrist, she has three new dresses, two of which were presented by the younger Choicewest, and one by the generous Blackmore Blackett.

Poor Annette! she leaves for her home in the slave−pen, sad at heart, and in tears. "My mother! Oh, that I had a mother to love me, to say Annette so kindly,—to share with me my heart's bitter anguish. How I could love Nicholas, now that there is no mother to love me!" she mutters as she sobs, wending her way to that place of earthly torment. How different are the feelings of the oppressor. He drinks a social glass of wine with his friend Blackett, lights his cigar most fashionably, bids him a polite good morning, and intimates that a cheque for the amount of the purchase will be ready any time he may be pleased to call. And now he wends his way homeward, little imagining what good fortune awaits him at the pen to which he has despatched his purchase.

Annette has reached the pen, in which she sits, pensively, holding her bonnet by the strings, the heavy folds of her light auburn hair hanging dishevelled over her shoulders. Melancholy indeed she is, for she has passed an ordeal of unholy brutality. Near her sits one Pringle Blowers, a man of coarse habits, who resides on his rice−plantation, a few miles from the city, into which he frequently comes, much to the annoyance of quietly disposed citizens and guardsmen, who are not unfrequently called upon to preserve the peace he threatens to disturb. Dearly does he love his legitimate brandy, and dearly does it make him pay for the insane frolics it incites him to perpetrate, to the profit of certain saloons, and danger of persons. Madman under the influence of his favourite drink, a strange pride besets his faculties, which is only appeased with the demolition of glass and men's faces. For this strange amusement he has become famous and feared; and as the light of his own besotted countenance makes its appearance, citizens generally are not inclined to interpose any obstacle to the exercise of his belligerent propensities.

Here he sits, viewing Annette with excited scrutiny. Never before has he seen anything so pretty, so bright, so

fascinating−all clothed with a halo of modesty−for sale in the market. The nigger is completely absorbed in the beauty, he mutters to himself: and yet she must be a nigger or she would not be here. That she is an article of sale, then, there can be no doubt. "Van, yer the nicest gal I've seen! Reckon how Grasp. paid a tall shot for ye, eh?" he says, in the exuberance of his fascinated soul. He will draw nearer to her, toss her undulating hair, playfully, and with seeming unconsciousness draw his brawny hand across her bosom. "Didn't mean it!" he exclaims, contorting his broad red face, as she puts out her hand, presses him from her, and disdains his second attempt. "Pluck, I reckon! needn't put on mouths, though, when a feller's only quizzin." He shrugs his great round shoulders, and rolls his wicked eyes.

"I am not for you, man!" she interrupts: "I would scorn you, were I not enslaved," she continues, a curl of contempt on her lip, as her very soul kindles with grief. Rising quickly from his side she walked across the pen, and seated herself on the opposite side. Here she casts a frowning look upon him, as if loathing his very presence. This, Mr. Pringle Blowers don't altogether like: slaves have no right to look loathingly on white people. His flushed face glows red with excitement; he runs his brawny fingers through the tufted mats of short curly hair that stand almost erect on his head, draws his capacious jaws into a singular angle, and makes a hideous grimace.

The terrified girl has no answer to make; she is a forlorn outcast of democracy's rule. He takes the black ribbon from round his neck, bares his bosom more broadly than before, throws the plaid sack in which he is dressed from off him, and leaping as it were across the room, seizes her in his arms. "Kisses are cheap, I reckon, and a feller what don't have enough on 'em 's a fool," he ejaculates, as with a desperate struggle she bounds from his grasp, seizes the knife from a negro's hand as she passes him, and is about to plunge the shining steel into her breast. "Oh, mother, mother!−what have I done?−is not God my Saviour?−has he forsaken me?−left me a prey to those who seek my life?"

"I settle those things," said a voice in the rear, and immediately a hand grasped her arm, and the knife fell carelessly upon the floor. It was Graspum; the sudden surprise overcame her; she sank back in his arms, and swooned. "She swoons,—how limber, how lifeless she seems!" says Graspum, as with great coolness he calls a negro attendant, orders him to remove her to the grass plat, and bathe her well with cold water. "A good dowsing of water is the cure for fainting niggers," he concludes.

The black man takes her in his arms, and with great kindness, lays her on the plat, bathes her temples, loosens her dress, and with his rough hand manipulates her arms. How soft and silky they seem to his touch! "Him hard to slave ye, miss," he says, laying his hand upon her temples, gently, as with commiseration he looks intently on her pallid features.

"Now, Blowers," says Graspum, as soon as they are by themselves, "what in the name of the Gentiles have you been up to?"

"Wal−can't say its nothin, a'cos that wouldn't do. But, ye see, the critter made my mouth water so; there was no standin on't! And I wanted to be civil, and she wouldn't,—and I went t' fumlin with her hair what looked so inviting, as there was no resistin on't, and she looked just as sassy as sixty; and to stun the whole, when I only wanted to kiss them ar' temptin lips, the fool was going to kill herself. It wasn't how I cared two buttons about it; but then the feelin just came over me at the time," he answers, shaking his huge sides, giving Graspum a significant wink, and laughing heartily.

"Never at a loss, I see!" returns the other, nodding his head, pertinently: "If I didn't know ye, Blowers, that might go down without sticking."

"Ye don't tell where ye raised that critter, eh?" he interrupts, inquisitively, pointing his thumb over his right shoulder, and crooking his finger, comically.

"Raised her with shiners−lots on 'em!" he rejoins, pushing Mr. Pringle Blowers in the stomach, playfully, with his forefinger.

"Graspum! yer a wicked 'un."

"Suit ye, kind 'a−eh, Blowers?" he rejoins, enquiringly, maintaining great gravity of manner as he watches each change of Blowers' countenance.

Blowers laughs in reply. His laugh has something sardonic in it, seeming more vicious as he opens his great wicked mouth, and displays an ugly row of coloured teeth.

"Sit down, Blowers, sit down!" says Graspum, motioning his hand, with a studied politeness. The two gentlemen take seats side by side, on a wooden bench, stretched across the centre of the pen, for negroes to sit

upon. "As I live, Blowers, thar ain't another individual like you in the county. You can whip a file of common guardsmen, put the Mayor's court through a course of affronts, frighten all the females out of the fashionable houses, treat a regiment of volunteers, drink a bar−room dry−"

"Compliments thick, long and strong," interposes Blowers, winking and wiping his mouth. "Can elect half the members of the assembly!" he concludes.

"True! nevertheless," rejoins Graspum, "a great man cannot be flattered−compliments are his by merit! And the city knows you're a man of exquisite taste."

Blowers interrupts with a loud laugh, as he suggests the propriety of seeing the "gal get round again."

"Not so fast, Blowers; not so fast!" Graspum ejaculates, as Blowers is about to rise from his seat and follow Annette.

"Well, now!" returns Blowers, remaining seated, "Might just as well come square to the mark,—ye want to sell me that wench?"

"Truth's truth!" he replies. "Blowers is the man who's got the gold to do it."

"Name yer price; and no rounding the corners!" exclaims Blowers, his countenance quickening with animation. He takes Graspum by the arm with his left hand, turns him half round, and waits for a reply.

Seeing it's Blowers, (the keen business man replies, in an off−hand manner), who's a trump in his way, and don't care for a few dollars, he'll take seventeen hundred for her, tin down; not a fraction less! He will have no bantering, inasmuch as his friends all know that he has but one price for niggers, from which it is no use to seek a discount. Mr. Blowers, generally a good judge of such articles, would like one more view at it before fully making up his mind. Graspum calls "Oh, boy!" and the negro making his appearance, says: "Dat gal 'um all right agin; went mos asleep, but am right as parched pen now."

"Have her coming," he returns, facing Blowers. "Nothing the matter with that gal," he exclaims, touching his elbow. "It is merely one of her flimsy fits; she hasn't quite come to maturity."

Slowly the negro leads her, weeping (Graspum says they will cry−it's natural!) into the presence of the far−famed and much−feared Mr. Pringle Blowers. Her hair hangs carelessly about her neck and shoulders, the open incision of her dress discloses a neatly worked stomacher; how sweetly glows the melancholy that broods over her countenance! "I'll take her−I'll take her!" exclaims Blowers, in spasmodic ecstasy.

"I know'd you would; I'll suit you to a charm," rejoins the man of trade, laconically, as the negro steps a few feet backward, and watches the process. "Considers it a trade," is the reply of Blowers, as he orders his waggon to be brought to the door.

"Oh! master, master! save me−save me! and let me die in peace. Don't, good master, don't sell me again!" Thus saying she falls on her knees at Graspum's feet, and with hands uplifted beseeches him to save her from the hands of a man whose very sight she loathes. She reads the man's character in his face; she knows too well the hellish purpose for which he buys her. Bitter, bitter, are the tears of anguish she sheds at his feet, deep and piercing are her bemoanings. Again her soft, sorrowing eyes wander in prayer to heaven: as Graspum is a husband, a brother, and a father,—whose children are yet in the world's travel of uncertainty, she beseeches him to save her from that man.

"Don't be mad, girl," he says, pushing her hand from him.

"Frightened, eh? Make ye love me, yet! Why, gal, ye never had such a master in the world as I'll be to ye. I lay I makes a lady on ye, and lets ye have it all yer own way, afore a fortnight," he rejoins, spreading his brawny arms over her, as she, in an attitude of fright, vaults from beneath them, and, uttering a faint cry, glides crouching into a corner of the pen. There is no protection for her now; her weepings and implorings fall harmless on the slavedealer's ears; heaven will protect her when earth knows her no more!

"There's two can play a game like that, gal!" exclaims Blowers. "Rough play like that don't do with this ere citizen. Can just take the vixen out on a dozen on ye as what don't know what's good for 'em." Blowers is evidently allowing his temper to get the better of him. He stands a few feet from her, makes grim his florid face, gesticulates his hands, and daringly advances toward her as the negro announces the arrival of his waggon.

"You must go with him, girl; stop working yourself into a fever; stop it, I say," interposes Graspum, peremptorily. "The waggon! the waggon! the waggon! to carry me away, away;—never, never to return and see my mother?" she exclaims, as well nigh in convulsions she shrieks, when Blowers grasps her in his arms (Graspum saying, be gentle, Blowers), drags her to the door, and by force thrusts her into the waggon, stifling her

cries as on the road they drive quickly away. As the last faint wail dies away, and the vehicle bearing its victim disappears in the distance, we think how sweet is liberty, how prone to injustice is man, how crushing of right are democracy's base practices.

"Does seem kind of hard; but it's a righteous good sale. Shouldn't wonder if she played the same game on him she did with t'other two fools. Get her back then, and sell her over again. Well! come now; there's no great loss without−some−small−gain!" says Graspum, as, standing his prominent figure in the door of his man pen, he watches the woman pass out of sight, thrusts his hands deep into his breeches pockets, and commences humming an air for his own special amusement.

CHAPTER XLI. NICHOLAS'S SIMPLE STORY.

THE reader will remember that we left Nicholas seeking his way to Mr. Grabguy's workshop, situated in the outskirts of the city. And we must here inform him that considerable change in the social position of the younger Grabguy family has taken place since we left them, which is some years ago. The elder Grabguy, who, it will be remembered, was very distinguished as his Worship the Mayor of the City (that also was some years ago), has departed this life, leaving the present principal of the Grabguy family a large portion of his estate, which, being mostly of "nigger property," requires some little transforming before it can be made to suit his more extended business arrangements. This material addition to the already well− reputed estate of Mr. Grabguy warrants his admittance into very respectable, and, some say, rather distinguished society. Indeed, it is more than whispered, that when the question of admitting Mr. and Mrs. Grabguy to the membership of a very select circle, the saintly cognomen of which is as indefinable as its system of selecting members, or the angles presented by the nasal organs of a few ladies when anything short of the very first families are proposed, there were seven very fashionable ladies for, and only three against. The greatest antagonist the Grabguys have to getting into the embrace of this very select circle is Mrs. Chief Justice Pimpkins, a matronly body of some fifty summers, who declares there can be no judge in the world so clever as her own dear Pimpkins, and that society was becoming so vulgar and coarse, and so many low people−whose English was as hopefully bad as could be, and who never spoke when they didn't impugn her risible nerves−were intruding themselves upon its polished sanctity, that she felt more and more every day the necessity of withdrawing entirely from it, and enjoying her own exclusively distinguished self. In the case of Grabguy's admittance to the St. Cecilia, my Lady Pimpkins−she is commonly called Lady Chief Justice Pimpkins−had two most formidable black balls; the first because Mrs. Grabguy's father was a bread−baker, and the second that the present Grabguy could not be considered a gentleman while he continued in mechanical business. Another serious objection Mrs. Pimpkins would merely suggest as a preventive;—such people were ill suited to mix with titled and other distinguished society! But, Grabguy, to make up for the vexatious rejection, has got to be an alderman, which is a step upward in the scale of his father's attained distinction. There is nothing more natural, then, than that Grabguy should seek his way up in the world, with the best means at his hands; it is a worthy trait of human nature, and is as natural to the slave. In this instance−when master and slave are both incited to a noble purpose−Grabguy is a wealthy alderman, and Nicholas−the whiter of the two−his abject slave. The master, a man of meagre mind, and exceedingly avaricious, would make himself distinguished in society; the slave, a mercurial being of impassioned temper, whose mind is quickened by a sense of the injustice that robs him of his rights, seeks only freedom and what may follow in its order.

Let us again introduce the reader to Nicholas, as his manly figure, marked with impressive features, stands before us, in Grabguy's workshop. Tall, and finely formed, he has grown to manhood, retaining all the quick fiery impulses of his race. Those black eyes wandering irresistibly, that curl of contempt that sits upon his lip, that stare of revenge that scowls beneath those heavy eyebrows, and that hate of wrong that ever and anon pervades the whole, tell how burns in his heart the elements of a will that would brave death for its rights−that would bear unmoved the oppressor's lash−that would embrace death rather than yield to perfidy. He tells us−"I came here, sold−so they said−by God's will. Well. I thought to myself, isn't this strange, that a curious God−they tell me he loves everybody−should sell me? It all seemed like a misty waste to me. I remembered home−I learned to read, myself−I remembered mother, I loved her, but she left me, and I have never seen her since. I loved her, dear mother! I did love her; but they said she was gone far away, and I musn't mind if I never see'd her again. It seemed hard and strange, but I had to put up with it, for they said I never had a father, and my mother had no right to me" (his piercing black eyes glare, as fervently he says, mother!). "I thought, at last, it was true, for everybody had a right to call me nigger,—a blasted white nigger, a nigger as wouldn't be worth nothing. And then they used to kick me, and cuff me, and lash me; and if nigger was nigger I was worse than a nigger, because every black nigger was laughing at me, and telling me what a fool of a white nigger I was;—that white niggers was nobody,

could be nobody, and was never intended for nobody, as nobody knew where white niggers come from. But I didn't believe all this; it warn't sensible. Something said−Nicholas! you're just as good as anybody: learn to read, write, and cypher, and you'll be something yet. And this something−I couldn't tell what it was, nor could I describe it−seemed irresistible in its power to carry me to be that somebody it prompted in my feelings. I was white, and when I looked at myself I knew I wasn't a nigger; and feeling that everybody could be somebody, I began to look forward to the time when I should rise above the burden of misfortune that seemed bearing me down into the earth. And then, Franconia, like a sister, used to come to me, and say so many kind things to me that I felt relieved, and resolved to go forward. Then I lost sight of Franconia, and saw nobody I knew but Annette; and she seemed so pretty, and loved me so affectionately. How long it seems since I have seen her! She dressed me so nicely, and parted my hair, and kissed me so kindly; and said good−by, when I left her, so in regret, I never can forget it. And it was then they said I was sold. Mr. Graspum said he owned me, and owning me was equal to doing what he pleased with me. Then I went home to Mr. Grabguy's; and they said Mr. Grabguy owned me just as he owned his great big dog they called a democratic bull−dog, the foreman said he paid a democratic ten−dollar gold piece for. They used to say the only difference between me and the dog was, that the dog could go where he pleased without being lashed, and I couldn't. And the dog always got enough to eat, and seemed a great favourite with everybody, whereas I got only more kicks than cucumbers, didn't seem liked by anybody, and if I got enough to eat I had nobody to thank but good old Margery, the cook, who was kind to me now and then, and used to say−"I like you, Nicholas!" And that used to make me feel so happy! Old Margery was coal−black; but I didn't care for that,—the knowledge of somebody loving you is enough to light up the happy of life, and make the heart feel contented. In this manner my thoughts went here and there and everywhere; and the truth is, I had so many thoughts, that I got completely bewildered in thinking how I was to better myself, and be like other folks. Mr. Grabguy seemed kind to me at first,—said he would make a great mechanic of me, and give me a chance to buy myself. I didn't know what this "buy myself" meant, at first. But I soon found out−he tells us he must speak with caution−that I must pay so many hundred dollars afore I could be like other folks. The kindness Mr. Grabguy at first exhibited for me didn't last long; he soon began to kick me, and cuff me, and swear at me. And it 'pear'd to me as if I never could please anybody, and so my feelings got so embittered I didn't know what to do. I was put into the shop among the men, and one said Nigger, here! and another said, Nigger, get there!−and they all seemed not to be inclined to help me along. And then I would get in a passion: but that never made things better. The foreman now and then said a kind word to me; and whenever he did, it made my heart feel so good that I seemed a new being with brighter hopes. Well, Mr. Grabguy put me to turning the grindstone, first; and from turning the grindstone−the men used to throw water in my face when they ground their chisels, and their plane irons, and axes and adzes−I was learned to saw, and to plain boards, and then to mortice and frame, and make mouldings, and window−sashes, and door−frames. When I could do all these, master used to say I was bound to make a great workman, and, laughingly, would say I was the most valuable property he ever owned. About this time I began to find out how it was that the other white folks owned themselves and master owned me; but then, if I said anything about it, master might tie me up and lash me as he used to do; and so I remained quiet, but kept up a thinking. By and by I got perfect at the carpenter's trade, and I learned engineering; and when I had got engineering perfect, I took a fancy for making stucco work and images. And people said I learned wondrously fast, and was the best workman far or near. Seeing these things, people used to be coming to me, and talking to me about my value, and then end by wanting me to make them specimens of stucco. I seemed liked by everybody who came to see me, and good people had a kind word for me; but Mr. Grabguy was very strict, and wouldn't allow me to do anything without his permission. People said my work was perfect, and master said I was a perfect piece of property; and it used to pain deep into my heart when master spoke so. Well! I got to be a man, and when the foreman got drunk master used to put me in his place. And after a while I got to be foreman altogether: but I was a slave, they said, and men wouldn't follow my directions when master was away; they all acknowledged that I was a good workman, but said a nigger never should be allowed to direct and order white people. That made my very blood boil, as I grew older, because I was whiter than many of them. However, submit was the word; and I bore up and trusted to heaven for deliverance, hoping the day would come soon when its will would be carried out. With my knowledge of mechanics increased a love of learning, which almost amounted to a passion. They said it was against the law for a nigger to read; but I was raised so far above black niggers that I didn't mind what the law said: so I got 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and the Bible, and 'Young's Night Thoughts,' and from them I learned great

truths: they gave me new hopes, refreshed my weary soul, and made me like a new−clothed being ready to soar above the injustice of this life. Oh, how I read them at night, and re−read them in the morning, and every time found something new in them, something that suited my case! Through the sentiments imbibed from them I saw freedom hanging out its light of love, fascinating me, and inciting me to make a death struggle to gain it.

"One day, as I was thinking of my hard fate, and how I did all the work and master got all the money for it−and how I had to live and how he lived, master came in−looking good−natured. He approached me, shook hands with me, said I was worth my weight in gold; and then asked me how I would like to be free. I told him I would jump for joy, would sing praises, and be glad all the day long.

"'Aint you contented where you are, Nicholas?' he enquired. I told him I didn't dislike him; but freedom was sweetest. 'Give me a chance of my freedom, master, and yet you may know me as a man,' says I, feeling that to be free was to be among the living; to be a slave was to be among the moving dead. To this he said, he always had liked me, was proud of me, had unbounded confidence in my directions over the men, and always felt safe when he went from home leaving things in my charge. 'In this view of the case, Nicholas,' he says, 'I have come to the conclusion,—and it's Mrs. Grabguy's conclusion, too,—to let you work evenings, on overtime, for yourself. You can earn a deal of money that way, if you please; just save it up, and let me keep it for you, and in consideration of your faithfulness I will set you free whenever you get a thousand dollars to put into my hands. Now that's generous−I want to do the straight thing, and so Mrs. Grabguy wants to do the straight thing; and what money you save you can put in Mrs. Grabguy's hands for safe keeping. She's a noble−minded woman, and 'll take good care of it.' This was to me like entering upon a new life of hope and joy. How my heart yearned for the coming day, when I should be free like other folks! I worked and struggled by night and day; and good Mr. Simons befriended me, and procured me many little orders, which I executed, and for which I got good pay. All my own earnings I put into Mrs. Grabguy's hands; and she told me she would keep it for me, safe, till I got enough to buy my freedom. My confidence in these assurances was undivided. I looked upon Mrs. Grabguy as a friend and mother; and good Mr. Simons, who was poor but honest, did many kind things to help me out. When I got one hundred dollars in missus' hands I jumped for joy; with it I seemed to have got over the first difficult step in the great mountain. Then missus said I must take Jerushe for my wife. I didn't like Jerushe at first—she was almost black; but missus said we were both slaves; hence, that could be no objection. As missus's order was equally as positive as master's, there was no alternative but to obey it, and Jerushe became my wife. We were lawfully married, and missus made a nice little party for us, and Jerushe loved me, and was kind to me, and her solicitude for my welfare soon made me repay her love. I pitied her condition, and she seemed to pity mine; and I soon forgot that she was black, and we lived happily together, and had two children, which missus said were hers. It was hard to reconcile this, and yet it was so, by law as well as social right. But then missus was kind to Jerushe, and let her buy her time at four dollars a week, which, having learned to make dresses, she could pay and have a small surplus to lay by every week. Jerushe knew I was struggling for freedom, and she would help me to buy that freedom, knowing that, if I was free, I would return her kindness, and struggle to make her free, and our children free.

"Years rolled on,—we had placed nearly five hundred dollars in missus's hands: but how vain were the hopes that had borne us through so many privations for the accumulation of this portion of our price of freedom! Master has sold my children,—yes, sold them! He will not tell me where nor to whom. Missus will neither see nor hear me; and master threatens to sell me to New Orleans if I resent his act. To what tribunal can I appeal for justice? Shut from the laws of my native land, what justice is there for the slave where injustice makes its law oppression? Master may sell me, but he cannot vanquish the spirit God has given me; never, never, will I yield to his nefarious designs. I have but one life to yield up a sacrifice for right−I care not to live for wrong!" Thus he speaks, as his frenzied soul burns with indignation. His soul's love was freedom; he asked but justice to achieve it. Sick at heart he has thrown up that zeal for his master's welfare which bore him onward, summoned his determination to resist to the last−to die rather than again confront the dreary waste of a slave's life. Grabguy has forfeited the amount deposited by Nicholas as part of the price of his freedom,—betrayed his confidence.

He tells us his simple story, as the workmen, with fear on their countenances, move heedlessly about the room. As he concludes, Grabguy, with sullen countenance, enters the great door at the end of the building; he is followed by three men in official garbs, two of whom bear manacles in their hands. Nicholas's dark eye flashes upon them, and with an instinctive knowledge of their errand, he seizes a broad axe, salutes them, and, defiantly,

cautions their advance. Grabguy heeds not; and as the aggrieved man slowly retreats backward to protect himself with the wall, still keeping his eye set on Grabguy, two negroes make a sudden spring upon him from behind, fetter his arms as the officers rush forward, bind him hand and foot, and drag him to the door, regardless of his cries for mercy: they bind him to a dray, and drive through the streets to the slave pen of Graspum. We hear his pleading voice, as his ruffian captors, their prey secure, disappear among the busy crowd.

CHAPTER XLII. HE WOULD DELIVER HER FROM BONDAGE.

ABOUT twelve o'clock of a hazy night, in the month of November, and while Annette, in the hands of Mr. Pringle Blowers, with death−like tenacity refuses to yield to his vile purposes, a little taunt−rigged schooner may be seen stealing her way through the grey mist into Charleston inner harbour. Like a mysterious messenger, she advances noiselessly, gibes her half−dimmed sails, rounds to a short distance from an old fort that stands on a ridge of flats extending into the sea, drops her anchor, and furls her sails. We hear the rumble of the chain, and "aye, aye!" sound on the still air, like the murmur of voices in the clouds. A pause is followed by the sharp sound of voices echoing through the hollow mist; then she rides like a thing of life reposing on the polished water, her masts half obscured in mist, looming high above, like a spectre in gauze shroud. The sound dies away, and dimly we see the figure of a man pacing the deck from fore−shroud to taffrail. Now and then he stops at the wheel, casts sundry glances about the horizon, as if to catch a recognition of some point of land near by, and walks again. Now he places his body against the spokes, leans forward, and compares the "lay" of the land with points of compass. He will reach his hand into the binnacle, to note the compass with his finger, and wait its traversing motion. Apparently satisfied, he moves his slow way along again; now folding his arms, as if in deep study, then locking his hands behind him, and drooping his head. He paces and paces for an hour, retires below, and all is still.

Early on the following morning, a man of middle stature, genteelly dressed, may be seen leaving the craft in a boat, which, rowed by two seamen, soon reaches a wharf, upon the landing slip of which he disembarks. He looks pale, and his countenance wears a placidness indicating a mind absorbed in reflection. With a carpet−bag in his right hand does he ascend the steps to the crown of the wharf, as the boat returns to the mysterious−looking craft. Standing on the capsill for a few minutes, his blue eyes wander over the scene, as if to detect some familiar object. The warehouses along the wharfs wear a dingy, neglected air; immense piles of cotton bales stand under slender sheds erected here and there along the line of buildings which form a curvature declining to the east and west. Again, open spaces are strewn with bales of cotton waiting its turn through the press (a large building near by, from which steam is issuing in successive puffings and roarings); from which compressed bales emerge out of the lower story, followed by a dozen half−naked negroes, who, half−bent, trundle it onward into piles, or on board ships. Far above these is spread out a semicircle of dwellings, having a gloomy and irregular appearance, devoid of that freshness and brightness which so distinguish every New England city. The bustle of the day is just commencing, and the half−mantled ships, lying unmoved at the wharfs, give out signs of activity. The new comer is about to move on up the wharf, when suddenly he is accosted by a negro, who, in ragged garb, touches his hat politely, and says, with a smile, "Yer sarvant, mas'r!"

"Your name, my boy?" returns the man, in a kind tone of voice. The negro, thrusting his hands deep into the pockets of his old sack coat, seems contemplating an answer. He has had several names, both surname and Christian; names are but of little value to a slave. "Pompe they once called me, but da' calls me Bill now," he answers, eyeing the stranger, suspiciously. "Pompe, Pompe! I've heard that name: how familiar it sounds!" the stranger says to himself.

"One mas'r call me Turtle Tom," rejoins the negro, scratching his head the while.

"Turtle Tom!" reiterates the stranger. "Had you no other name coupled with Pompe, when that was the name by which you were recognised?"

The negro will not wait his finishing the sentence. He says he had good old mas'r's name; but good old mas'r−"so dey tells"−dead and gone long time ago. "His name was Marston; and dat war dis child's name den, God bless 'um!" he answers the stranger.

"Marston, who lived on the banks of the Ashley?" again he enquires, as his face crimsons with excitement.

"Dat war my mas'r; and dem war good old times when I lived dar," returns the negro, significantly nodding his head.

"Then you are the first man I have met, the first I want to see," exclaimed the stranger, grasping the negro by the hand, and, much to his surprise, shaking it heartily.

"'Taint Lorenzo," returns the negro, contemplating the stranger with astonishment.

The stranger is not Lorenzo, but he has heard much of him. What happy recollections its familiar sound recalls: how it strengthens his hopes of success in his mission. The negro tells him he is a labourer on the wharf, and cannot leave to conduct him to an hotel; he will, however, direct the stranger to a comfortable abode in Church Street. It is quiet and unostentatious, but will serve his purpose. Placing a piece of money in the negro's hand, he assures him that he is his friend−has much need of his services−will pay him well for their employment. He has equally aroused the negro's curiosity; and, were it nothing more than satisfying that, he would be faithful to his promise to call the same night at seven o'clock. Precisely at that hour the negro will fulfil his engagement. The stranger wends his way to Church Street, and up a narrow alley, on the left hand side, finds comfortable apartments, as directed. Here he makes his toilet, and sallies out to reconnoitre the city. Meanwhile the little craft is entered at the custom−house as a fruiter, bound from New Providence to New York, and put in for a harbour. There is something suspicious about a fruiter putting in for a harbour at this season, and many curious glances are cast upon the little captain as he bows to the truth of his entry before the deputy collector.

The stranger has spent the day in viewing the city, and at nightfall, the negro, true to his engagement, presents his sable figure at his lodgings. A servant having shown him up stairs, he is ushered into his presence, where, seeming bewildered, he looks about inquiringly, as if doubting the object for which he has been summoned. Abjectly he holds his tattered cap in his hand, and tremblingly inquires what master wants with him.

"Have confidence, my good fellow," the stranger speaks, with a smile; "my mission is love and peace." He places a chair beside a small table in the centre of the room; bids the negro sit down, which he does with some hesitation. The room is small; it contains a table, bureau, washstand, bed, and four chairs, which, together with a few small prints hanging from the dingy walls, and a square piece of carpet in the centre of the room, constitute its furniture. "You know Marston's plantation−know it as it was when Marston resided thereon, do you?" enquires the stranger, seating himself beside the negro, who evidently is not used to this sort of familiarity.

"Know 'um well, dat I does," answers the negro, quickly, as if the question had recalled scenes of the past.

"And you know the people, too, I suppose?"

"Da'h people!" ejaculates the negro, with a rhapsody of enthusiasm; "reckon I does."

"Will you recount them."

The negro, commencing with old master, recounts the names of Miss Franconia, Clotilda, Ellen, Aunt Rachel, old Daddy Bob, and Harry.

"It is enough," says the stranger, "they are all familiar names."

"Did you know my good old master?" interrupts the negro, suddenly, as if detecting some familiar feature in the stranger's countenance.

"No," he replies, measuredly; "but his name has sounded in my ears a thousand times. Tell me where are the children, Annette and Nicholas? and where may I find Franconia?"

The negro shakes his head, and remains silent for a few minutes. At length he raises his hand, and in a half−whisper says, "Gone, gone, gone; sold and scattered, good mas'r. Habn't see dem child dis many a day: reckon da'h done gone down south." He hesitates suddenly, as if calling something to memory; and then, placing his left hand on the stranger's right arm, as he rubs his left across his forehead, stammers out−"Mas'r, mas'r, I reckon dis child do know somefin 'bout Miss Frankone. Anyhow, mas'r (ye knows I'se nigger do'h, and don't keep up 'quaintance a'ter mas'r sell um), can put ye straight 'bout Missus Rosebrook's house, and reckon how dat lady can put ye straight on Miss Frankone's where'bout." It is what the stranger wants. He has heard of Mrs. Rosebrook before; she will give him the information he seeks; so, turning again to the negro, he tells him that, for a few days at least, he shall require his presence at the same hour in the evening: tonight he must conduct him to Mrs. Rosebrook's sequestered villa.

The watch−tower bell of the guard−house sounds forth nine o'clock. The soldier−like sentinel, pacing with loaded musket, and armed with sharpest steel, cries out in hoarse accents, "All's well!" The bell is summoning all negroes to their habitations: our guide, Bill, informs the stranger that he must have a "pass" from a white man before he can venture into the street. "Mas'r may write 'um," he says, knowing that it matters but little from whom it comes, so long as the writer be a white man. The pass is written; the negro partakes of refreshment that has been prepared for him at the stranger's request, and they are wending their way through the city. They pass between rows of massive buildings, many of which have an antique appearance, and bear strong signs of neglect; but their

unique style of architecture denotes the taste of the time in which they were erected. Some are distinguished by heavy stone colonnades, others by verandas of fret−work, with large gothic windows standing in bold outline. Gloomy−looking guard−houses, from which numerous armed men are issuing forth for the night's duty,—patrolling figures with white cross belts, and armed with batons, standing at corners of streets, or moving along with heavy tread on the uneven side−walk,—give the city an air of military importance. The love of freedom is dangerous in this democratic world; liberty is simply a privilege. Again the stranger and his guide (the negro) emerge into narrow lanes, and pass along between rows of small dwellings inhabited by negroes; but at every turn they encounter mounted soldiery, riding two abreast, heavily armed. "Democracy, boast not of thy privileges! tell no man thou governest with equal justice!" said the stranger to himself, as the gas−light shed its flickers upon this military array formed to suppress liberty.

They have reached the outskirts of the city, and are approaching a pretty villa, which the negro, who has been explaining the nature and duties of this formidable display of citizen soldiery, points to, as the peaceful home of the Rosebrook family. Brighter and brighter, as they approach, glares the bright light of a window in the north front. "I wish Mas'r Rosebrook owned me," says the negro, stopping at the garden gate, and viewing the pretty enclosure ere he opens it. "If ebery mas'r and missus war as kind as da'h is, dar wouldn't be no need o' dem guard−houses and dem guardmen wid dar savage steel," he continues, opening the gate gently, and motioning the stranger to walk in. Noiselessly he advances up the brick walk to the hall entrance, and rings the bell. A well−dressed negro man soon makes his appearance, receives him politely, as the guide retires, and ushers him into a sumptuously furnished parlour. The Rosebrook negroes quickly recognise a gentleman, and detecting it in the bearing of the stranger they treat him as such. Mrs. Rosebrook, followed by her husband, soon makes her appearance, saluting the stranger with her usual suavity. "I have come, madam," he says, "on a strange mission. With you I make no secret of it; should I be successful it will remove the grief and anxiety of one who has for years mourned the fate of her on whom all her affections seem to have centred. If you will but read this it will save the further recital of my mission." Thus saying, he drew a letter from his pocket, presented it, and watched her countenance as line by line she read it, and, with tears glistening in her eyes, passed it to her husband.

"I am, good sir, heartily glad your mission is thus laudable. Be at home, and while you are in the city let our home be yours. Franconia is here with us to−night; the child you search after is also with us, and it was but to−day we learned the cruelties to which she has been subjected during the last few years. Indeed, her fate had been kept concealed from us until a few weeks ago, and to−day, having escaped the brutal designs of a ruffian, she fled to us for protection, and is now concealed under our roof−"

"Yes, poor wretch−it is too true!" rejoins Rosebrook. "But something must be done as quickly as possible, for if Pringle Blowers regains her she will be subjected to tortures her frame is too delicate to bear up under. There must be no time lost, not a day!" he says, as Mrs. Rosebrook quickly leaves the room to convey the news to Franconia, who, with Annette, is in an adjoining apartment.

Like a hunted deer, Annette's fears were excited on hearing the stranger enter; Franconia is endeavoring to quiet them. The poor slave fears the ruffian's pursuit, trembles at each foot−fall upon the door−sill, and piteously turns to her old friend for protection. Blowers, maddened with disappointment, would rather sacrifice her to infamy than sell her for money to a good master. The price of a pretty slave is no object with this boasting democrat,—the gratification of his carnal desires soars supreme. Rosebrook knows this, as the abject woman does to her sorrow.

As Rosebrook and the stranger sit conversing upon the object of his mission, and the best way to effect it, this good woman returns leading by the arm a delicately−formed girl, whose blonde countenance is shadowed with an air of melancholy which rather adds to her charms than detracts from her beauty. The stranger's eye rests upon her,—quickly he recognises Clotilda's features, Clotilda's form, and gentleness; but she is fairer than Clotilda, has blue eyes, and almost golden hair. She hesitates as her eyes meet the stranger's. "Do not fear, my child," speaks Franconia, whose slender figure follows her into the room. Assured that the stranger is her friend, she is introduced to him, and modestly takes her seat on a chair by the window. The stranger's name is Maxwell, and on hearing it announced Franconia anticipated the pleasure of meeting with her old friend, through whose agency she effected Clotilda's escape. Advancing towards him with extended hand, she looks enquiringly in his face, saying, "Am I mistaken?" She shakes her head, doubtingly. "No! it is not my friend Maxwell," she continues.

"No!" rejoins the stranger; "he is my cousin: by his directions I have come here. I have brought a letter from

his wife Clotilda, whose dear deliverer you were; and whose thoughts now daily recur to you, to your love and kindness to her, with undying brightness." "Ah!" interrupts Franconia, welcoming him with a fervent heart, "I knew Clotilda would never forget Annette; I knew she would remember me; I knew her ardent soul would give forth its measure of gratitude. Happy am I that you have come−though years have rolled by since I gave up all hopes of the joyous consummation−to relieve this sorrowing child," she says, running to Annette, and with tears of joy in her eyes, exclaiming, "My child! my child! you 'll yet be saved. The ruffian who tortured you to−day will torture you no more−no more!" And she kisses the sorrowing girl's cheek, as tears of sympathy gush into her eyes.

Rosebrook handed Franconia the letter, which she read as her face brightened with joy. "Good Clotilda! how happy she must be! How generous, how kind, how true dear Maxwell was to her; and they are living together so comfortably, and have such a nice family growing up; but she wants her slave child! A slave mother never forgets her slave offspring!" she exclaims, with enthusiastic delight, as she reads and re−reads the letter. Back she paces to Annette, lays her right arm gently over her shoulder, and pats her cheek with her left hand: "Annette will see her mother, yet. There is an all−protecting hand guiding us through every ill of life. Be of good cheer, my child; never despond while there is a hope left; bury the horrors of the past in the brighter prospect of the future." And leading her to the table she seats her by her side and reads the letter aloud, as with joy the forlorn girl's feelings bound forth. We need scarcely tell the reader that Clotilda's letter was read in listening silence, and ran thus:—"Nassau, New Providence, "October 24, 18−. "My Dear Franconia,

"My thoughts have never ceased to recur to you, nor to my dear Annette. You were a mother and a deliverer to me; I know−though I have not received a word in reply to any of my letters−you have been a mother to my child. As you know, I dare not write as much as I would, lest this letter fall into the hands of those whose interest it is to perpetuate our enslavement. I hope you are happy with a good husband, as I am. Years have rolled by since we parted, and many have been the scenes and changes through which I have passed, but they were all pleasant changes, each for brighter and happier prospects. I was married to him who, with you, effected my escape, a few weeks after landing at Harbour Island. Since then we have resided in Nassau, where my husband, who loves me dearly, pursues an extensive and lucrative business, and we both move in the best society of the place. We have a pretty family of three children, the oldest nine years old, and the youngest five. How my heart would leap with joy if I thought you would accept an invitation to come and see me, to spend a few weeks with me, and see yourself how comfortable and happy a slave may be! Perhaps I should not say happy, for I never can be truly happy without my Annette. Something haunts my mind whenever I recur to her,—which is every day. And then I have written so many letters to which no answers have been returned; but, a whispering angel, as if to console me, says, Franconia will be her mother, and you will yet see her.

"The gentleman who bears this letter is my husband's cousin. He has all my husband's generosity of character, and will seek you for the purpose of finding Annette, and bearing her safely to me. He has proffered his services, and sworn to carry out his object; and being on his way to New York for the purpose of entering into business with his uncle now in that city, will touch at Charleston, for the object herein stated. Further his object, my dear Franconia, and that heaven will reward the hand that in mercy helps the enslaved, "Is the prayer of your grateful "CLOTILDA MAXWELL."

"I knew mother would never forget me; I knew she would come back to me, would be kind to me, as she used to be, and save me from such cruelty as I have suffered. Several times have I resolved on putting an end to my unhappy existence, but as often did something say to me, 'live hoping−there is a better day coming.' God guides, governs, and raises up the weary soul," says Annette, in touching accents, as Franconia finished reading the letter.

While this conversation is progressing, and the plan of getting Annette out of the city being devised, a nice supper, at Mrs. Rosebrook's request, is being prepared in the adjoining room. To this the stranger is invited, and all sit down in a happy circle. Franconia seems invested with new life; Annette forgets for the time her troubles; Mrs. Rosebrook, who does the honours of the table, wishes every ill−used slave could find means of escaping into freedom; and Deacon Rosebrook says he will join heart and hand in getting the forlorn girl free from her base purchaser.

CHAPTER XLIII. OTHER PHASES OF THE SUBJECT.

WE must leave to the reader's imagination much that transpired at the Rosebrook Villa during the night above mentioned, and ask him to accompany us on the following morning, when curious placards may be seen posted here and there at corners of streets and other conspicuous places about the city. Mr. Pringle Blowers has lost a beautiful female slave, whose fair hair, beautiful complexion, deep blue eyes, delicate features, and charming promise, is in large type and blackest printer's ink set forth most glowingly. Had Mr. Pringle Blowers been a poet instead of a chivalric rice−planter, he might have emblazoned his loss in sentimental rhyme. But Pringle Blowers says poets always make fools of themselves; and, although the south is a sweet and sunny land, he is happy indeed that it is troubled with none of the miscreants. He owned niggers innumerable; but they were only common stock, all of whom he could have lost without feeling any more than ordinary disappointment at the loss of their worth in money. For this one, however, he had a kind of undefined love, which moved his heart most indescribably. Disappointed in the gratification of his desires, he is mortified and maddened to desperation. Why should a slave he had invested so much money in, and felt so like making a lady of, and never would have thought of setting at field labour, run away? He only wanted her for the most aristocratic purpose the south can provide for a beautiful slave. Hence Mr. Pringle Blowers, through the medium of his knowledge of letters, puts forward his placard−a copy of which he inserts in all the most respectable morning journals−in which the fair outlines of his lost woman are simply set forth. He will give three hundred dollars for her apprehension, fifty dollars more for proof to convict any person of harbouring her, and an additional sum for lodging her in any gaol in the country. This large reward Mr. Pringle Blowers will pay in hard cash; and he has no doubt the offering will be quite enough to excite the hunting propensities of fashionable young gentlemen, as well as inveterate negro hunters. Beside this, negro hunting being rather a democratic sport than otherwise, Mr. Pringle Blowers reconciles his feelings with the fact of these sports being uncommonly successful.

The reader will naturally conclude that the offer of this large reward produced some sensation in and about the city. People stopped along the streets, read the curious hand−bill, smiled, and made various remarks. Ladies, always curious to know what is prominent among the current events of the day, sent servants to ascertain what so attractive the posters contained. It was, indeed, a regular bit of self−enjoyed fun for them; for the ladies had all heard of Pringle Blowers, and that a female slave for whose capture he would give three hundred dollars had run away from him they were heartily glad to learn.

The day−police were equally happy to hear of the loss, and anxious to make the capture. In this position it was doubly necessary to be cautious in proceeding to effect the escape of the fair girl. If discovered in the act the stranger might be subjected to a series of inprisonments that would sacrifice his life. Again, he might be assassinated by some disguised hand; or, if an infuriated mob were let loose upon him, no police interference could save his life. As suspicion is ever on the point of giving out its dangerous caprices where a community live fearing one another, so the stranger became sensible of the shafts of suspicion that might at any moment be darted at him. Despatching his schooner on her voyage, he continued for several days walking about the city, as if indifferent to what was passing. He read the curious poster in which was offered the goodly reward for the apprehension of a lost slave, affected great coolness, and even ignorance of the mode by which such articles were recovered.

Fortunate was it for the stranger that he despatched the schooner without the prize he intended to carry off, for no sooner had she got under way and begun to move down the harbour, than she was boarded by four men, who, producing their authority, searched her from stem to stern. Such were their suspicions, that they would not be satisfied until they had opened a few boxes and bales that were stowed away in the hold. This done, the schooner was permitted to continue her voyage, and the stranger, unmolested, continues his walks about the city. A few days pass and the excitement has calmed down. Pringle Blowers, although chagrined at the loss of his valuable piece of woman property, resolves to wait the issue with patience and forbearance. If she, fool like, has made away with herself, he cannot bring her to life; if she be carried off by villainous kidnappers, they must eventually

suffer the consequences. Her beauty will expose their plots. He will absorb his usual requirement of spirit, keep the nerve up, and never despond of regaining her while his reward of three hundred dollars stands before a money−loving public. He would rather have lost two dozen common niggers than this one he set so much by, intended to make so much of, and upon whom he had set his very heart, soul, and burning passions. But there is no profit in grief, no use in giving way to disappointment. Philosophers bear disappointments with fortitude; he must be a philosopher, keep a sharp look out and not despair.

How different is the scene presented at Rosebrook's Villa! There, Annette is seen, prepared to take her departure. Dressed in male attire, with frock coat and trousers setting so neatly, dress boots, white vest, and brightly arranged shirt−bosom, she is the type of perfection of a youthful southron. Franconia has expended her skill in completing the fair girl's toilet, when Mrs. Rosebrook places a pair of green spectacles over her eyes, bids her look in the glass, and tells her she will pass for a planter's son among a million.

"Nobody will know me, now," she answers, viewing herself in the mirror. Her neat setting suit, Panama hat, and green spectacles, give a peculiar air to her lithe figure. And though her emotions are well nigh ready to give forth tears, she cannot suppress a smile at the singular transformation of her person.

"It'll take sharper eyes than policemen's to discover the disguise," says Rosebrook, who, having ordered a carriage to the door, enters the room and takes her kindly by the hand. "Keep up a good heart; don't despond, my child, and the chances are that you'll be safe−you'll be in Wilmington to−morrow morning" he continues: then, turning to Franconia, who will accompany her to that place, he awaits her pleasure. "I am ready!" returns that generous woman, as, arrayed in her travelling dress, she takes Annette by the hand, and is about to proceed to the gate where the carriage waits. Mrs. Rosebrook must take one more fond parting. Laying her right arm over her shoulder, and pressing her to her bosom, she kisses and kisses her fair cheek, bids her remember that God alone is her protector, her guide to a happy future. In freedom may she live to freedom's God; in slavery, hope ever, and trust in his mercy! With this admonition, the excited girl, trembling, leaves the Villa, leaning on Franconia's arm. Bradshaw has the carriage at the door, piled with sundry boxes and portmanteaus, giving it the appearance of a gentleman's travelling equipage. He has orders to drive to the steam−boat landing, where the young invalid planter will embark for New York via Wilmington and the land route. Soon they have taken their seats, and with Rosebrook's good−natured face shining beside Bradshaw, on the front seat, they say their happy adieu! and bound over the road for the steamer.

It is now within fifteen minutes of the starting time. The wharf presents a bustling scene: carriages and coaches are arriving with eager−looking passengers, who, fearing they are a little behind time, stare about as if bewildered, scold heedless drivers, point out heir baggage to awkward porters who run to and fro with trunks and boxes on their heads, and then nervously seek the ticket−office, where they procure the piece of paper that insures them through to New York. Albeit, finding they have quite time enough on their hands, they escort their female voyagers on board, and loiter about in the way of every one else, enjoying that excitement in others which they have fortunately passed through. Here and there about the wharf, leaning their head carelessly over black piles, are sly−looking policemen, who scan every voyager with a searching eye. They are incog., but the initiated recognise them at a glance. The restless leer of that lynx eye discovers their object; anything, from a runaway nigger to a houseless debtor, is to them acceptable prey. Atween decks of the steamer, secured at the end of the wharf, another scene of bustle and confusion presents itself. A passenger is not quite sure his baggage is all on board, and must needs waste his breath in oaths at the dumb porter, who works at his utmost strength, under the direction of Mr. Mate, whose important figure is poised on the wharf. Another wants to "lay over" at Richmond, and is using most abusive language to a mulatto waiter, who has put his trunk on one side of the boat and carpet bag on the other. A third, a fussy old lady with two rosy−faced daughters she is, against her southern principles, taking to the north to be educated, is making a piteous lamentation over the remains of two bonnets−just from the hands of the milliner−hopelessly smashed in her bandbox. The careless porter set it on a pile of baggage, from where it tottled over under the feet of an astonished gentleman, who endeavours to soothe the good lady's feelings with courteous apologies. On the upper deck, heeding no one, but now and then affecting to read a newspaper, as passengers pace to and fro, is the stranger, seated on one of the side seats. The engineer moves his valve now and then, the cross−head ascends, the steam hisses below, the condenser rumbles, the steam from the funnel roars furiously forth, spreading its scalding vapour through the air. Again, the man, almost imperceptibly touches the iron rod with his finger, the magic monster again moves its piston downward, the wheels make a turn, the massive

vessel surges upon her lines, as if eager to press forward on her course. Another gentle touch, and, obeying the summons, the motive power is still; the man subjects the monster with his little finger. He has stopped her near the centre, where, with a slight touch, he can turn back or forward. Again, he lifts a small key, and the steam, with a deafening roar, issues from the escape: he is venting his chest. Simultaneously the second bell sounds forth its clanking medley: two minutes more, and the snake−like craft will be buffeting the waves, on her daily errand. As passengers begin to muster on board, their friends clustering round the capsill of the wharf, obstructing the way, the sturdy figure of Mr. Pringle Blowers may be seen behind a spile near the capsill, his sharp, peering eyes scanning the ship from fore to aft. He is not sure she will get off by this route; common sense tells him that, but there exists a prompting something underneath common sense telling him it's money saved to keep a sharp look−out. And this he does merely to gratify that inert something, knowing at the same time that, having no money, no person will supply her, and she must be concealed in the swamps, where only "niggers" will relieve her necessities. At this moment Rosebrook's carriage may be seen driving to the ticket office at the head of the wharf, where Rosebrook, with great coolness, gets out, steps within the railing, and procures the tickets in his own name. Again taking his seat, the mate, who stands on the capsill of the wharf, now and then casting a glance up, cries out, "Another carriage coming!" Bradshaw cracks his whip, and the horses dash down the wharf, scatter the people who have gathered to see the boat off, as a dozen black porters, at the mate's command, rush round the carriage, seize the baggage, and hurry it on board. Rosebrook, fearing his friends will lose their passage, begs people to clear the gangway, and almost runs on board, his fugitive charge clinging to his arms. The captain stands at the gangway, and recognising the late comer, makes one of his blandest bows: he will send a steward to show them a good state−room. "Keep close till the boat leaves, and remember there is a world before you," Rosebrook says, shaking Annette by the hand, as she returns, "God bless good master!" They are safe in the state−room: he kisses Franconia's cheek, shuts the door, and, hurrying back, regains the wharf just as the last bell strikes, and the gangway is being carried on board.

"Not going along with us, eh?" ejaculates the captain, as, from the capsill, Rosebrook looks round to bid him good−by.

"Not to−day" (he returns, laconically). "Take good care of my friends; the young invalid from Lousiana in particular." Just then he catches the stranger's eye, and, with a significant motion of his fingers, says, "All safe!" With a nod of recognition the stranger makes his adieu; the fastenings are cast away, the faint tinkle of a bell is heard amid the roar of steam; the man at the valves touches the throttle bar; up mounts the piston rod−down it surges again; the revolving wheels rustle the water; the huge craft moves backward easy, and then ahead; a clanking noise denotes the connections are "hooked on," and onward she bounds over the sea. How leaps with joy that heart yearning for freedom, as the words "She's away!" gladden Annette's very soul! Her enraptured feelings gush forth in prayer to her deliverers; it is as a new spring of life, infusing its refreshing waters into desert sands. She seems a new being, with hope, joy, and happiness brightening the future for her. But, alas! how vain are hopes,—how uncertain the future!

Rosebrook watched the steaming craft as she crosses the bar, and dwindles out of sight. "Thou art safe, poor slave," he says to himself, as she passes from view behind the distant peak.

Something touches him on the shoulder as he returns to his carriage. "Ah! this you, Pringle Blowers?" he exclaims, turning round suddenly, as the full face of that important personage presented itself. "Been seeing some friends off to—?"

"No," replies Blowers, with seeming indifference. He is just shying round,—keeping an eye out for a smart kind of "a gal," lost last week.

"Quite a misfortune, that, Blowers! God bless me, I'm sorry," returns Rosebrook, dryly. Rosebrook invites him to get in and ride a short distance. Blowers has not the slightest objection; seats his square frame on the left side of the carriage. "Those were clever posters you put out for the apprehension of that girl, Blowers!"

"Took some genius, I reckon," interrupts Blowers, with broad laugh.

"They say she was very handsome, and, if it be true, I hope you may get her, Blowers," continues Rosebrook, naively.

The disappointed man shakes his head, touches the other on the arm, and says, "Nothing is more sure!"

CHAPTER XLIV. HOW DADDY BOB DEPARTED.

LET us again beg the indulgence of the reader, while we go back to the night when Marston was found dead in his cell, and when that old negro, whose eventful history we shall here close, sat by his bed−side, unconscious that the spirit of master had winged its way to another world. Bob, faithful unto death, remained his lone watcher. Disguising his ownership, he has toiled from day to day that the fruits thereof might relieve master's necessities; and he had shared them with the flowing goodness of a simple heart. In a malarious cell, how happy was he to make his bed on the cold plank beside his master's cot, where he might watch over his declining spirit. Kindness was his by nature,—no cruel law could rob his heart of its treasure: he would follow master to the grave, and lavish it upon the soil that covered him.

Having accompanied Franconia to the Rosebrook Villa, he will return to the prison and join Harry, alone watching over the dead. The city clock strikes the hour of eleven as he leaves the outer gate, and turns into the broad road leading to the city. The scene before him is vamped in still darkness; a murky light now and then sheds its glimmers across the broad road; and as he hurries onward, contemplating the sad spectacle presented in the prison, happy incidents of old plantation life mingle their associations with his thoughts. He muses to himself, and then, as if bewildered, commences humming his favourite tune−"There's a place for old mas'r yet, when all 'um dead and gone!" His soul is free from suspicion: he fears not the savage guardsman's coming; the pure kindliness of his heart is his shield. How often has he scanned this same scene,—paced this same road on his master's errands! How death has changed the circumstances of this his nightly errand! Far away to the east, on his left, the broad landscape seems black and ominous; before him, the sleeping city spreads its panorama, broken and sombre, beneath heavy clouds; the fretted towers on the massive prison frown dimly through the mist to the right, from which a low marshy expanse dwindles into the dark horizon. And ever and anon the forked lightning courses its way through the heavens, now tinging the sombre scene with mellow light, then closing it in deeper darkness.

Onward the old man wends his way. If he be shut out from the prison, he will find shelter at Jane's cabin near by, from whence he may reach the cell early next morning. Presently the dull tramp of horses breaks upon his ear,—the sound sharpening as they advance. Through the dimming haze he sees two mounted guardsmen advancing: the murmuring sound of their conversation floats onward through the air,—their side arms rattle ominously. Now their white cross belts are disclosed; their stalwart figures loom out. Nearer and nearer they approach: as the old man, trembling with fear, remembers he is without a pass, a gruff voice cries out, "Stop there!"

"A prowling nigger!" rejoins another, in a voice scarcely less hoarse. The old man halts in the light of a lamp, as the right−hand guard rides up, and demands his pass.

"Whose nigger are you?" again demands the first voice. "Your pass, or come with us!"

The old man has no pass; he will go to his master, dead in the county prison!

Guardsmen will hear neither falsehoods nor pleading. He doesn't know "whose nigger he is! he is a runaway without home or master," says the left−hand guardsman, as he draws his baton from beneath his coat, and with savage grimace makes a threatening gesture. Again he poises it over the old man's head, as he, with hand uplifted, supplicates mercy. "Nobody's nigger, and without a pass!" he grumbles out, still motioning his baton.

"He says his master is in gaol; that's enough! Stop, now, no more such nonsense!" rejoins the other, as the old man is about to explain. "Not another word." He is good prey, made and provided by the sovereign law of the state. Placing him between their horses, they conduct him in silence forward to the guard−house. He is a harmless captive, in a world where democracy with babbling tongue boasts of equal justice. "A prowler!" exclaims one of the guards− men, as, dismounting in front of the massive building, with frowning facade of stone, they disappear, leading the old man within its great doors, as the glaring gas−light reflects upon his withered features.

"Found prowling on the neck, sir!" says the right−hand guardsman, addressing himself to the captain, a portly−looking man in a military suit, who, with affected importance, casts a look of suspicion at the old man. "Have seen you before, I think?" he enquires.

"Reckon so, mas'r; but neber in dis place," replies Bob, in half−subdued accents.

You are nobody's nigger, give a false account of yourself, and have no home, I hear," interrupts the captain, at the same time ordering a clerkly−looking individual who sits at a desk near an iron railing enclosing a tribune, to make the entry in his book.

"Your name?" demands the clerk.

"Bob!"

"Without owner, or home?"

"My master's cell was my home."

"That won't do, my man!" interrupts the portly−looking captain. "Mr. Clerk" (directing himself to that functionary) "you must enter him−nobody's nigger, without home or master." And as such he is entered upon that high record of a sovereign state−the guard−house calendar. If this record were carried before the just tribunal of heaven, how foul of crime, injustice, and wrong, would its pages be found! The faithful old man has laboured under an assumed ownership. His badge, procured for him through the intercession of Franconia, shows him as the property of Mr. Henry Frazer. That gentleman is many hundred miles away: the old man, ignorant of the barbarous intricacy of the law, feels it to his sorrow. The production of the badge, and the statement, though asserting that Miss Franconia is his friend, show a discrepancy. His statement has no truth for guardsmen; his poor frame is yet worth something, but his oath has no value in law: hence he must march into a cold cell, and there remain till morning.

Before that high functionary, the mayor−whose judgments the Russian Czar might blush to acknowledge or affirm,—he is arraigned at ten o'clock on the following morning. He has plenty of accusers,—no one to plead the justice of his case. A plain story he would tell, did the law and his honour grant the boon. The fatal badge shows him the property of Mr. Henry Frazer: Mr. Henry Frazer is nowhere to be found, and the statement that master was in prison tends to increase the suspicions against him. Against this increasing force of proof, the old man begs his honour will send to the prison, where master will be found,—dead! In his love of clemency that functionary yields to the request. There looks something harmless about the old negro, something that warms his honour's legal coldness. An officer is despatched, and soon returns with a description that corresponds with the old man's. "He waited on Marston, made Marston's cell his home; but, your honour−and I have the assurance of the gaoler−he was not Marston's nigger; all that man's niggers were sold for the benefit of his creditors." So says the official, returning to his august master with cringing servility. His honour, in the fulness of his wisdom, and with every regard for legal straightforwardness (his honour searched into the profoundest depths of the "nigger statutes" while learning the tailoring trade, which he now pursues with great success), is now doubly satisfied that the negro before him is a vagabond−perhaps, and he is more than half inclined to believe he is, the very marauder who has been committing so many depredations about the city. With a profound admonition, wisdom glowing from his very countenance the while, he orders him twenty−nine paddles on his bare posteriors,—is sorry the law does not give him power to extend the number. And with compliments for the lucky fellows who have thus timely relieved the public of such a dangerous outlaw, his honour orders him to be taken away to that prison−house where even−handed democracy has erected a place for torturing the souls of men who love liberty.

He will get the stripes−large, democratic stripes,—generously laid on. How much more he will get remains for a proud state, in its sovereign littleness, to provide. His honour, feeling his duties toward the state discharged, and his precautionary measures for the protection of the people fully exemplified in this awful judgment, orders one of the officers to summon Mr. Ford Fosdick, a distinguished gentleman of the state's own, who, he is quite sure, will not neglect her more important interests. Bob has no interests in this world, nor doth he murmur that he hath not eaten bread for fourteen hours. Kindliness yet lingers in his withered face as he goes forth, yields submission to a state's lnjustice, and bares his back before he eats.

"Return him after administering the dressing," says his honour, directing his remarks to the official about to lead his victim away. That functionary, half turning, replies with a polite bow.

The reader, we feel assured, will excuse a description of this unsavoury dressing, beautifully administered on behalf of a republican state that makes it a means of crushing out the love of liberty. Bob has received his dressing and returned; but he has no tears to shed for democrats who thus degrade him.

Mr. Ford Fosdick, a gentleman of the learned profession, very straight of person, and most bland of manners, is what may be called escheator in ordinary to the state. Keeping a sharp eye on her interests, he has anticipated

the commands of his august master, presents his polite person very unexpectedly in his honour's court−room. Fosdick, in addition to an excellent reputation for being the very best gentleman "nigger grabber" the state ever had, is well thought of in fashionable circles, having fought two duels of the most desperate character. He is of middle stature, with a face finely oval, and to which are added features of much softness, altogether giving him more the appearance of a well−ordained divine, than the medium of those high functions by which the state's "grab−all" of homeless negroes distinguishes himself. If the state tolerated an ignominy, Ford Fosdick—between whom there exists a mutual partnership—found in it an apology for the part he played; for—let no man blush when we tell it—the sum total for which friendless, homeless, and ownerless negroes sold for in the market was equally divided between them. Generous as was this copartnership, there were few well−disposed persons independent enough to sanction it; while here and there an outspoken voice said it was paying a premium for edging Fosdick's already sharp appetite for apprehending the wretched, who—God save the state's honour!—having no means of protecting themselves, would be sold for the sovereign interests of his own pocket, instead of the peace of the dear people, of which the state was ever jealous. Mr. Fosdick is present,—thanks his honour the mayor: he thinks he has seen the negro before; that he is a prowler not a doubt can exist. Quite indifferent as to his own interests, he says the city is literally beset with such vermin: in his own mind, however, he has not a doubt but that something handsome will be realised from the sale of the old fellow. There is now a most fearful case in the city,—a negro belonging to Mr. Grabguy has become mad with disobedience: they have chained him to the floor, but he sets everything at defiance, threatens the lives of all who come near him,—says he will die or be free. Against this there is little hope for old Bob; his crooked story will not suit the high considerations of these amiable worthies of state: he must be siezed and dragged to the workhouse, there to await the result. It is a profitable morning's work for Mr. Ford Fosdick, who makes a large note in his ledger, and will soon carry out a very acceptable item on behalf of his dear self. So, while Bob eats his corn−grits in a cell, and his heart beats high with purity, Mr. Ford Fosdick revels in luxury he thinks not ill−gotten.

Due notice, in accordance with the statutes, is given to all persons whomsoever may claim a piece of property answering the description of Daddy Bob, as herein set forth. Weeks pass, but no one comes to claim Bob. In the eyes of an ignoble law he is a cast out, homeless upon the world; and as such must be sold. He is put up at the man−shambles, and, by order of Mr. Ford Fosdick, sold to Mr. Cordes Kemp for the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars, one half of which sum is the state's own, the other Mr. Ford Fosdick's. Mr. Cordes Kemp had seen Bob working about the wharf, and learned that the old man was of more value than his outward appearance indicated, inasmuch as he was a good carpenter; which we have not before informed the reader. But Bob had never been accustomed to a cruel master: such Cordes Kemp was to the fullest extent of the term. A few months passed, and Bob became heartily sick of his new master, who gave him little to eat, and had nearly ended his life with labour and the lash. Finding he could no longer stand such treatment, he fled to the swamp; and for two years did he make his home among the morasses and hillocks, now making his bed by the trunk of a fallen tree, then seeking shelter in a temporary camp built with the axe he carried away with him. At times he was forced to make food of roots, nuts, and such wild fruit as the woods afforded; and as the ravens found food, so the outcast man did not suffer while an all−wise Providence watched over him. And then he found a kind friend in old Jerushe−Aunt Jerushe, as she was commonly called, who lived on a plantation a few miles from his hiding−place, and met him at night, and shared her coarse meal with him. Jerushe's heart was full of kindness; she would have given him more, but for the want thereof. Full two years did even−handed democracy drive the old man homeless to seek a shelter among the poisonous reptiles of the morass. Mr. Cordes Kemp must regain his property, and to that generous end he puts forth the following extremely southern proclamation, which may be found in all respectable morning journals, on posters hung at the "Rough and Ready," at "Your House," and at "Our House":—

"SEVENTY−FIVE (75) DOLLARS REWARD is offered for the delivery of my old negro carpenter man named BOB, in gaol in Charleston, within a month from this date. The said BOB is a complete carpenter, about sixty−five years of age, has a fine, full, good−natured face, knock−kneed, bald−headed, and ran away about two years ago: he is thought to be harboured in Charleston or James' Island. He was bought of Mr. Ford Fosdick, on behalf of the state. June 28,— CORDES KEMP."

Mr. Cordes Kemp, sorely grieved at the loss of so venerable and valuable a piece of property,—and which he bought of the state, for the rights of which he is a great champion,—will give the above sum in hard cash to the clever fellow who will secure it within a prison, so he may get it. If this cannot be done, he will declare him an

outlaw, offer a premium for the old man's head, and, with the bleeding trophy, demand the premium paid by the state. However, seventy−five dollars is no mean offer for so old a negro, and as the said negro cannot be a fast runner, the difficulty of catching him will not be very great, while the sport will be much more exciting. Romescos and Dan Bengal keep a sharp look−out for all such little chances of making money; and as their dogs are considered the very best and savagest in the country, they feel certain they will be able to deliver the article over to Mr. Kemp in a very few days.

A few days after the appearance of Mr. Cordes Kemp's proclamation, these two worthies may be seen riding along the Camden Road, a sandy level, with little to indicate its tortuous course save a beaten and irregular path through a forest of stately pines. Their reddish−coloured home−spun clothes, set loosely, and their large, felt hats, slouching over their bearded faces, give their figures a brigand−like appearance which excites apprehension. They are heavily armed with rifles, revolvers, and bowie−knives; and as their horses move along at a quick walk, the riders may be heard keeping up an animated discussion on matters of state policy. The state and its policy is a matter of deep interest to slave−dealer and slave−hunter; none discuss them with more pertinacity. And as every great measure is supposed to have some bearing, directly or indirectly, on the right of one class to enslave the other, a never−ceasing political jar is kept up by these worthies, and too often finds its way into the public acts of men who should be far removed above their selfishness.

The horse on which Romescos rides, a sprightly dark−bay, seeming to have an instinctive knowledge of his master's pursuit, pricks his ears erect, and keeps his head turning from one side to the other, as if watching the approach of some object in the forest. A few paces ahead are seven fierce hounds, now scenting about the ground, then scampering through the trees, and again, quickly obeying the call, return to the horses. Not a bark is heard, not a growl escapes them! Nothing could be under more explicit subjection−not even those northern dogs who pollute their own free soil by making it a forest, where the souls of men are humbled, and where, willing allies of the sport, they desecrate that holy sentence, "Our Pilgrim Fathers!"

Presently the lean figure of a man is seen advancing from a thicket in the distance. Rifle in hand he advances a few paces, leans against the trunk of a pine tree, relieves his shoulders of a well−filled haversack, and supports his arms on the stock of his weapon, the muzzle of which he sets in the ground. He will wait the horsemen's coming. With lightning quickness the hounds start suddenly, prick up their ears, make a bound forward. "Hold there!" exclaims Romescos, at the same time directing Bengal's attention to the figure far away to the right. His horse shies, an imprecation quickly follows; the dogs as suddenly obey the word, and crouch back to await another signal.

"Nothing, I reckon!" returns Bengal, coolly, as the figure in the distance is seen with smoking fusee lighting a cigar.

Romescos thinks he is a gentleman returning from hunting in the big swamp, to the north. He has a kind of presentiment, nevertheless, that some lucky prize will turn up before sunset.

"Well, strangers, what luck to day?" enquires the hunter, as they run up their horses. At the same time he gracefully raises a delicate hand, relieves his mouth of the cigar, twists a well− trimmed mustache, and lifts his hunting−cap from off his head, disclosing a finely−chiselled face.

"Not a shy!" replies Romescos, taking a cigar from his side pocket, and motioning his hand: the hunter politely extends his habanna, with which he communicates a light to his own. It is well nigh noon−day, and at the hunter's invitation do they dismount, seat themselves at the foot of the tree, and regale with bread, cheese, and brandy, he draws from his haversack.

"Thought ye'd got game in that," remarks Bengal, measuredly. Ho has scoured the woods, but found little game of the kind he hunts. "Our game is of a different species: you, I take it, hunt niggers, I'm in search of birds."

"Would have no objection to a stray deer or two!" is the reply, as he passes his horn and flask to Romescos, who helps himself to a dose of the liquid, which, he says, smacking his lips, is not bad to take.

"Especially when yer on a hunting excursion!" rejoins Bengal.

"Now," says the gentleman hunter, quietly resuming his cigar, "as you do not hunt my game, nor I yours, I think I can give you a scent that may prove profitable."

"Where away?" interrupts Bengal. Romescos respects the stranger−he has dignity concealed beneath his hunting garb, which the quick eye recognised as it flashed upon him. He gives Bengal a significant wink, the meaning of which he instinctively understands−"Don't be rude,—he belongs to one of the first families!"

The stranger lays his left hand on Romescos' arm, and with the fore finger of his right hand pointing to the south−west, says, "My plantation is nine miles in that direction. I left it this morning, early. In crossing an inlet of the Pedee, I discovered white smoke, far ahead, curling upward through the trees, and expanding itself in the clear blue atmosphere. Feeling sure it indicated the haunt of runaways, I approached it stealthily, and had almost unconsciously come upon a negro, who, suddenly springing from his hiding−place, ran to the water's edge, plunged in, and swam to a little island a few yards in the stream. It did not become me to pursue him, so I passed on heedlessly, lest he might have companions, who would set upon me, and make me an easy prey to their revengeful feelings." As each word fell from the stranger's lips, Romescos and his companion became irresistibly excited.

Again repeating the directions, which the stranger did with great precision, they drank a parting social glass: the mounted huntsmen thanked the pedestrian for his valuable information, gave him a warm shake of the hand, and, as he arranged his haversack, rode off at full gallop in the direction indicated. The dogs, cunning brutes, trained to the state's brutality, mutely kept in advance. "In luck yet!" exclaims Bengal, as they rode onward, in high glee, anticipating the valuable game about to fall into their hands.

"Ho! dogs−and back!" shrieked Romescos, at the top of his shrill voice, his sandy hair hanging in tufts over his little reddened face, now glowing with excitement. Instantly the dogs started off through the thicket, and after making a circle of about a mile, returned with heads up, and eyes fiercely flashing. Trailing in a semicircle ahead they seemed eager for another command.

"Better keep them back," mutters Bengal; and as Romescos gives the word,—"Come back!" they form a trail behind.

Now white fleecy clouds begin to obscure the sun; then it disappears in a murky haze, and is no longer their guide. After two hours' riding they find a wrong turn has led them far away from their course, and to avoid retracing their steps they make a short cut through the thicket. In another hour they have reached the bank of the stream they sought. Dogs, horses, and men, together drink of its limpid waters, and proceed onward. They have yet several miles of travel before reaching the spot designated by the strange hunter; and seeking their way along the bank is a slow and tedious process. The prize−that human outcast, who has no home where democracy rules,—is the all−absorbing object of their pursuit; money is the god of their hellish purpose.

It is near night−fall, when they, somewhat wearied of the day's ride, halt on a little slope that extends into the river, and from which a long view of its course above opens out. It seems a quiet, inviting spot, and so sequestered that Bengal suggests it be made a resting−place for the night.

"Not a whisper," says Romescos, who, having dismounted, is nervously watching some object in the distance. It is a pretty spot, clothed in softest verdure. How suddenly the quick eye of Romescos discovered the white smoke curling above the green foliage! "See! see!" he whispers again, motioning his hand behind, as Bengal stretches his neck, and looks eagerly in the same direction. "Close dogs−close!" he demands, and the dogs crouch back, and coil their sleek bodies at the horses' feet. There, little more than a mile ahead, the treacherous smoke curls lazily upward, spreading a white haze in the blue atmosphere. Daddy Bob has a rude camp there. A few branches serve for a covering, the bare moss is his bed; the fires of his heart would warm it, were nothing more at hand! Near by is the island on which he seeks refuge when the enemy approaches; and from this lone spot−his home for more than two years−has he sent forth many a fervent prayer, beseeching Almighty God to be his shield and his deliverer. It was but yesterday he saw Jerushe, who shared with him her corn−cakes, which, when she does not meet him at his accustomed spot, she places at the foot of a marked tree. Bob had added a few chips to his night fire, (his defence against tormenting mosquitoes), and made his moss bed. Having tamed an owl and a squirrel, they now make his rude camp their home, and share his crumbs. The squirrel nestles above his head, as the owl, moping about the camp entrance, suddenly hoots a warning and flutters its way into the thicket. Starting to his feet with surprise−the squirrel chirping at the sudden commotion−the tramp of horses breaks fearfully upon the old man's ear; bewildered he bounds from the camp. Two water oaks stand a few feet from its entrance, and through them he descries his pursuers bearing down upon him at full speed, the dogs making the very forest echo with their savage yelps. They are close upon him; the island is his only refuge! Suddenly he leaps to the bank, plunges into the stream, and with death−like struggles gains the opposite shore, where he climbs a cedar, as the dogs, eager with savage pursuit, follow in his wake, and are well nigh seizing his extremities ere they cleared their vicious spring. The two horsemen vault to the spot from whence the old man plunged into the water; and while

the dogs make hideous ravings beneath the tree, they sit upon their horses, consulting, as the old man, from the tree top, looks piteously over the scene. Life has few charms for him; death would not be unwelcome.

The tedious journey, and disappointment at seeing the old man's resolution, has excited Romescos' ire. "He's an old rack−not worth much, but he doesn't seem like Kemp's old saw−horse," Romescos remarks to Bengal, as his hawk eye scans the old man perched among the cedar branches. They are not more than forty yards apart, and within speaking distance. Bengal, less excited, thinks it better to secure the old "coon" without letting the dogs taste of him.

"They'll only hold him with a firm grip, when he dismounts, and swim him safe back," grumblingly returns Romescos. "Now! old nig"−Romescos shouts at the top of his voice, directing himself to the old man−"just trot back here−come along!"

The old man shakes his head, and raises his hands, as if pleading for mercy.

"You won't, eh?" returns the angry man, raising his rifle in an attitude of preparation. Bengal reminds Romescos that his horse is not accustomed to firing from the saddle.

"I will larn him, then," is the reply.

"Mas'r," says Bob, putting out his hand and uncovering his bald head, "I can harm no white man. Let me live where 'um is, and die where 'um is."

"None o' that ar kind o' nigger talk;—just put it back here, or ye'll get a plug or two out o' this long Bill." (He points to his rifle.) "Ye'll come down out of that−by heavens you will!"

"Wing him; don't shoot the fool!" suggests Bengal, as the old man, pleading with his pursuers, winds his body half round the tree. Tick! tick! went the cock of Romescos' rifle; he levelled it to his eye,—a sharp whistling report rung through the air, and the body of the old man, shot through the heart, lumbered to the earth, as a deadly shriek sounds high above the echoes over the distant landscape−"M'as'r in heaven take 'um and have mercy on 'um!" gurgles on the air: his body writhes convulsively−the devouring dogs spring savagely upon the ration−all is over with the old slave!

Instantly with the report of the rifle, Romescos' horse darts, vaults toward the oaks, halts suddenly, and, ere he has time to grasp the reins, throws him headlong against one of their trunks. An oath escapes his lips as from the saddle he lifted; not a word more did he lisp, but sank on the ground a corpse. His boon companion, forgetting the dogs in their banquet of flesh, quickly dismounts, seizes the body in his arms, the head hanging carelessly from the shoulders: a few quivering shrugs, and all is over. "Neck broken, and dead!" ejaculates the affrighted companion, resting the dead hunter's back against his left knee, and with his right hand across the breast, moving the head to and fro as if to make sure life has left.

"Poor Anthony,—it's a bad end; but the state should bury him with honours; he ware the best 'un at this kind o' business the state ever had," mutters Bengal, glancing revengefully toward the island, where his democratic dogs are busy in the work of destruction. Then he stretches the lifeless body on the ground, crosses those hands full of blood and treachery, draws a handkerchief from his pocket, spreads it over the ghastly face fast discolouring, as the riderless horse, as if by instinct, bounds back to the spot and suddenly halts over his dead master, where he frets the ground with his hoof, and, with nostrils extended, scents along the body. Having done this, as if in sorrow, he will rest on the ground beside him; slowly he lumbers his body down, his head and neck circled toward that of the lifeless ruffian on the ground.

The disconsolate hunter here leaves his useless companion, swims the stream, recalls the gory−mouthed dogs, looks with satisfaction on the body of the torn slave. "You're settled for," says Bengal, as with his right foot he kicks together the distended and torn limbs. "Not all loss, yet!" he adds, a glow of satisfaction infusing his face. With the ghastly head for proof, he will apply for, and perhaps obtain, the state's reward for the despatch of outlaws; and with the gory trophy he returns across the limpid stream to his hapless companion, who, having watched over during the night, he will convey into the city to−morrow morning. Over his body the very humorous Mr. Brien Moon will hold one of those ceremonies called inquests, for which, fourteen dollars and forty cents being paid into his own pocket, he will order the valueless flesh under the sod, handsomely treating with cigars and drinks those who honour him with their presence.

In the old man's camp, a hatchet, a few bits of corn−bread, (old Jerushe's gift), and two fresh caught fish, are found; they constituted his earthly store. But he was happy, for his heart's impulses beat high above the conflict of a State's wrongs. That spirit so pure has winged its way to another and better world, where, with that of the

monster who wronged nature while making cruelty his pastime, it will appear before a just God, who sits in glory and judgeth justly.

CHAPTER XLV. HOW SLAVEHOLDERS FEAR EACH OTHER.

THE reader will please remember that we left Nicholas, maddened to distraction at the perfidy of which Grabguy makes him the victim, chained to an iron ring in the centre of Graspum's slave pen. In addition to this very popular mode of subduing souls that love liberty, his wife and children are sold from him, the ekings of his toil, so carefully laid up as the boon of his freedom, are confiscated, and the wrong−doer now seeks to cover his character by proclaiming to a public without sympathy that no such convention existed, no such object entertained. Grabguy is a man of position, and lady Grabguy moves well in society no way vulgar; but the slave (the more honourable of the two) hath no voice−he is nothing in the democratic world. Of his origin he knows not; and yet the sting pierces deeper into his burning heart, as he feels that, would justice but listen to his tale, freedom had not been a stranger. No voice in law, no common right of commoners, no power to appeal to the judiciary of his own country, hath he. Overpowered, chained, his very soul tortured with the lash, he still proclaims his resolution−"death or justice!" He will no longer work for him who has stripped away his rights, and while affecting honesty, would crush him bleeding into the earth.

Grabguy will counsel an expedient wherewith further to conceal his perfidy; and to that end, with seeming honesty lady Grabguy would have her fashionable neighbours believe sincere, he will ship the oppressed man to New Orleans, there to be sold.−"Notwithstanding, he is an extremely valuable nigger," he says, affecting superlative indifference.

"I'd rather sell him for a song than he should disturb the peace of the city thus." To New Orleans Mr. Grabguy sends his unsubdued property; but that the threatened sale is only a feint to more effectually dissolve the contract and forfeit the money paid as part of his freedom, he soon becomes fully sensible. Doubly incensed at such conduct the fire of his determination burns more fiercely; if no justice for him be made manifest on earth his spirit is consoled with the knowledge of a reward in heaven. Having tortured for months the unyielding man, Grabguy, with blandest professions of kindness, commands that the lacerated servant be brought back to his domicile. Here, with offers of kindness, and sundry pretexts of his sincerity, the master will pledge his honour to keep faith with his slave. The defrauded wretch knows but too well how little confidence he can place in such promises; to such promises does he turn a deaf ear. Grabguy, if serious, must give him back his wife, his children, and his hard earnings, in which the joyous hope of gaining freedom was centred: that hope had carried him through many trials. Sad is the dilemma in which Mr. Grabguy finds himself placed; simple justice to the man would have long since settled the question.

And now Nicholas is a second time sent to Graspum's pen, where living men are chained to rings of fierce iron for loving freedom and their country. For twenty−two days and nights is he chained to that floor where his soul had before been tortured. Threats of being returned to New Orleans again ring their leaden music in his ears; but they have no terrors for him; his indignant spirit has battled with torture and vanquished its smart—he will defend himself unto death rather than be made the object of a sham sale. A vessel for New Orleans waits in the harbour a fair wind for sailing. On board of her Mr. Grabguy will carry out his resolve; and to which end the reader will please accompany us to a small cell in Graspum's pen, about fourteen by sixteen feet, and seven in height—in the centre of which is chained to a ring that man, once so manly of figure, whose features are now worn down by sorrow or distorted by torture,—as three policemen enter to carry out the order of shipment. The heavy chain and shackle with which his left foot is secured yield to him a circuit of some four feet. As the officials advance his face brightens up with animation; his spirit resumes its fiery action, and with a flashing knife, no one knows by whom provided, he bids them advance no further.

"You must go to the whipping−post, my good fellow! I know it's kind of hard; but obey orders we must. Ye see, I've gin ye good advice, time and agin; but ye won't take it, and so ye must abide the consequences," says one of the officials, who advances before the others, and addresses himself to the chained man.

"I'll go to a whipping−post no more!" exclaims Nicholas, his angry spirit flashing in his face, as in an attitude of defence he presses his right hand into his bosom, and frowns defiantly upon the intruders.

"My name is Monsel, an officer! Not a word of disobedience," returns the officer, in a peremptory voice.

Another suggests that he had better be throated at once. But the chained victim of democracy's rule warns them against advancing another step. "Either must die if you advance. I have counselled death, and will lay my prostrate body on the cold floor rather than be taken from this cell to the whipping−post. It is far better to die defending my right, than to yield my life under the lash! I appeal to you, officers of the state, protectors of the peace, men who love their right as life's boons!" The men hesitate, whisper among themselves, seem at a loss as to what course to pursue. "You are setting the laws of the state at defiance, my good fellow!" rejoins Monsel.

"I care not for the law of the state! Its laws for me are founded in wrong, exercised with injustice!" Turning towards the door, Mr. Monsel despatches his fellow−officers for a reinforcement. That there will be a desperate struggle he has no doubt. The man's gestures show him fully armed; and he is stark mad. During the interim, Mr. Monsel will hold a parley with the boy. He finds, however, that a few smooth words will not subdue him. One of the officials has a rope in his hand, with which he would make a lasso, and, throwing it over his head, secure him an easy captive. Mr. Monsel will not hear of such a cowardly process. He is a wiry man, with stunted features, and has become enured to the perils of negro catching. Hand to hand he has had many an encounter with the brutes, and always came off victor; never did he fail to serve the interests of the state, nor to protect the property of his client. With a sort of bravado he makes another advance. The city esteems him for the valuable services he has rendered its safety; why should he shrink in this emergency?

Our southern readers, in a certain state, will readily recognise the scene we here describe. The chained man, drawing his shining steel from his bosom, says, "You take me not from here, alive." Mr. Monsel's face becomes pale, while Nicholas's flashes angry scowls; an irresistible nervousness seizes him,—for a moment he hesitates, turns half round to see if his companions stand firm. They are close behind, ready for the spring, like sharp−eyed catamounts; while around the door anxious visitors crowd their curious faces. The officers second in command file off to the right and left, draw their revolvers, and present them in the attitude of firing. "Use that knife, and you fall!" exclaims one, with a fearful imprecation. At the next moment he fires, as Monsel rushes upon the chained man, followed by half a dozen officials. An agonising shriek is heard, and Monsel, in guttural accents, mutters, "I am a murdered man−he has murdered me! Oh, my God,—he has murdered me!" Nicholas has plunged the knife into the fleshy part of Monsel's right arm; and while the bloody weapon, wrested from his hand, lies on the floor, an official drags the wounded man from his grasp. As some rise, others fall upon him like infuriated animals, and but for the timely presence of Grabguy and Graspum would have despatched him like a bullock chained to a stake. The presence of these important personages produces a cessation of hostilities; but the victim, disarmed, lies prostrate on the ground, a writhing and distorted body, tortured beyond his strength of endurance. A circle where the struggle ensued is wet with blood, in which Nicholas bathes his poor writhing body until it becomes one crimson mass.

All attention is now directed to the wounded man, who, it is found, although he has bled freely of good red blood, is neither fatally nor seriously wounded. It is merely a flesh wound in the arm, such as young gentlemen of the south frequently inflict upon each other for the purpose of sustaining their character for bravery. But the oppressed slave has raised his hand against a white man,—he must pay the penalty with his life; he no longer can live to keep peaceful citizens in fear and trembling. Prostrate on the floor, the victors gather round him again, as Graspum stoops down and unlocks the shackle from his leg. "It's the Ingin, you see: the very devil wouldn't subdue it, and when once its revenge breaks out you might just as well try to govern a sweeping tornado," Graspum remarks, coolly, as he calls a negro attendant, and orders the body to be drawn from out the puddle of disfiguring gore. Languidly that poor bosom heaves, his eyes half close, and his motionless lips pale as death.

"Had I know'd it when I bargained for him, he would never have pested me in this way, never! But he looked so likely, and had such a quick insight of things,—Ingin's Ingin, though!" says Grabguy.

"The very look might have told you that, my dear fellow; I sold him to you with your eyes open, and, of course, expected you to be the judge," interrupts Graspum, his countenance assuming great commercial seriousness.

Mr. Grabguy politely says, he meant no insinuations. "Come, Nicholas! I told you this would be the end on't," he continues, stooping down and taking him by the shoulders, with an air of commiseration.

The bruised body, as if suddenly inspired with new life, raises itself half up, and with eyes opening, gazes vacantly at those around, at its own hands besmeared with gore; then, with a curl of contempt on his lip, at the

shackle just released from his limb−"Ah, well, it's ended here; this is the last of me, no doubt," he murmurs, and makes another attempt to rise.

"Don't move from where you are!" commands an official, setting his hand firmly against his right shoulder, and pressing him back. He has got the infective crimson on his hands, chafes them one against the other, perpendicularly, as Nicholas looks at him doubtingly. "It's all over—I'll not harm you; take me to a slaughter−house if you will,—I care not," he says, still keeping his eye on the official.

Grabguy, somewhat moved at the sight, would confirm his harmlessness. "You'll give up now, won't you?" he enquires, and before Nicholas has time to answer, turns to the official, saying, "Yes, I know'd he would!"

The official bows his head significantly, but begs to inform Mr. Grabguy, that the negro, having violated the most sacred law of the state, is no longer under his care. He is a prisoner, and must, as the law directs, answer for the heinous crime just committed. Mr. Grabguy, if he please, may forward his demand to the state department, and by yielding all claim to his criminal property, receive its award−two hundred round dollars, or thereabouts.

"Stand back, gentlemen−stand back, I say!" commands the officer, as the crowd from the outside come pressing in, the news of the struggle having circulated through the city with lightning speed. Rumour, ever ready to spread its fears in a slave state, reported an insurrection, and many were they who armed themselves to the very teeth.

The officer, in answer to a question why he does not take the man away, says he has sent for means to secure him. He had scarcely given out the acceptable information, when an official, followed by a negro man, bearing cords over his right arm, makes his appearance. The oppressed man seems subdued, and as they make the first knot with the cord they wind about his neck, he says, sarcastically, "'Twouldn't be much to hang a slave! Now round my hands. Now, with a half hitch, take my legs!" thus mocking, as it were, while they twist the cords about his yielding limbs. Now they draw his head to his knees, and his hands to his feet, forming a curve of his disabled body. "How I bend to your strong ropes, your strong laws, and your still stronger wills! You make good slip−nooses, and better bows of human bodies," he says, mildly, shaking his head contemptuously. The official, with a brutal kick, reminds him that there will be no joking when he swings by the neck, which he certainly will, to the great delight of many.

"I welcome the reality,—by heaven I do, for only in heaven is there justice for me!" With these words falling from his lips, four negro men seize the body, bear it to the door: an excited crowd having assembled, place it upon a common dray, amid shouts and furious imprecations of "D—him, kill him at once!" Soon the dray rolls speedily away for the county prison, followed by the crowd, who utter a medley of yells and groans, as it disappears within the great gates, bearing its captive to a cell of torture.

CHAPTER XLVI. SOUTHERN ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.

IT is just a week since Nicholas committed the heinous offence of wounding officer Monsel in the arm. That distinguished personage, having been well cared for, is−to use a common phrase−about again, as fresh as ever. With Nicholas the case is very different. His bruised and lacerated body, confined in an unhealthy cell, has received little care. Suspicion of treachery has been raised against him; his name has become a terror throughout the city; and all his bad qualities have been magnified five−fold, while not a person can be found to say a word in praise of his good. That he always had some secret villainy in view no one for a moment doubts; that he intended to raise an insurrection among the blacks every one is quite sure; and that confession of all his forelaid evil designs may be extorted from him, the cruellest means have been resorted to.

The day upon which the trial is to take place has arrived. On the south side of Broad Street there stands a small wooden building, the boarding discoloured and decayed, looking as if it had been accidentally dropped between the walls of two brick buildings standing at its sides. In addition, it has the appearance of one side having been set at a higher elevation than the other for some purpose of convenience known only to its occupants. About fifteen feet high, its front possesses a plain door, painted green, two small windows much covered with dust, and a round port−hole over the door. A sheet of tin, tacked above the door, contains, in broad yellow letters, the significant names of "Fetter and Felsh, Attorneys at Law." Again, on a board about the size of a shingle, hanging from a nail at the right side of the door, is "Jabez Fetter, Magistrate." By these unmistakeable signs we feel assured of its being the department where the legal firm of Fetter and Felsh do their customers−that is, where they dispose of an immense amount of legal filth for which the state pays very acceptable fees. Squire Fetter, as he is usually called, is extremely tall and well−formed, and, though straight of person, very crooked in morals. With an oval and ruddy face, nicely trimmed whiskers, soft blue eyes, tolerably good teeth, he is considered rather a handsome man. But (to use a vulgar phrase) he is death on night orgies and nigger trials. He may be seen any day of the week, about twelve o'clock, standing his long figure in the door of his legal domicile, his hat touching the sill, looking up and then down the street, as if waiting the arrival of a victim upon whom to pronounce one of his awful judgments. Felsh is a different species of person, being a short, stunted man, with a flat, inexpressive face. He has very much the appearance of a man who had been clumsily thrown together for any purpose future circumstances might require. Between these worthies and one Hanz Von Vickeinsteighner there has long existed a business connection, which is now being transferred into a fraternity of good fellowship. Hanz Von Vickeinsteighner keeps a small grocery, a few doors below: that is, Von, in a place scarcely large enough to turn his fat sides without coming in contact with the counter, sells onions, lager−beer, and whiskey; the last−named article is sure to be very bad, inasmuch as his customers are principally negroes. Von is considered a very clever fellow, never a very bad citizen, and always on terms of politeness with a great many squires, and other members of the legal profession. A perfect picture of the good−natured Dutchman is Von, as seen standing his square sides in his doorway, stripped to his sleeves, his red cap tipped aside, a crooked grin on his broad fat face, and his hands thrust beneath a white apron into his nether pockets. Von has a great relish for squires and police officers, esteems them the salt of all good, nor ever charges them a cent for his best−brewed lager−beer. There is, however, a small matter of business in the way, which Von, being rather a sharp logician, thinks it quite as well to reconcile with beer. The picture is complete, when of a morning, some exciting negro case being about to be brought forward, Fetter and Von may be seen, as before described, standing importantly easy in their respective doors; while Felsh paces up and down the side−walk, seemingly in deep study. On these occasions it is generally said Von makes the criminal "niggers," Felsh orders them caught and brought before Fletter, and Fetter passes awful judgment upon them. Now and then, Felsh will prosecute on behalf of the state, for which that generous embodiment of bad law is debtor the fees.

The city clock has struck twelve; Fetter stands in his doorway, his countenance wearing an air of great seriousness. Felsh saunters at the outside, now and then making some legal remark on a point of the negro statutes, and at every turn casting his bleared eye up the street. Presently, Nicholas is seen, his hands pinioned,

and a heavy chain about his neck, approaching between two officials. A crowd follows; among it are several patriotic persons who evince an inclination to wrest him from the officials, that they may, according to Judge Lynch's much−used privileges, wreak their vengeance in a summary manner. "The boy Nicholas is to be tried to−day!" has rung through the city: curious lookers−on begin to assemble round the squire's office, and Hanz Von Vickeinsteighner is in great good humour at the prospect of a profitable day at his counter.

"Bring the criminal in!" says Squire Fetter, turning into his office as Nicholas is led in,—still bearing the marks of rough usage. Rows of board seats stretch across the little nook, which is about sixteen feet wide by twenty long, the floor seeming on the verge of giving way under its professional burden. The plaster hangs in broken flakes from the walls, which are exceedingly dingy, and decorated with festoons of melancholy cobwebs. At the farther end is an antique book−case of pine slats, on which are promiscuously thrown sundry venerable−looking works on law, papers, writs, specimens of minerals, branches of coral, aligators' teeth, several ship's blocks, and a bit of damaged fishing−tackle. This is Felsh's repository of antique collections; what many of them have to do with his rough pursuit of the learned profession we leave to the reader's discrimination. It has been intimated by several waggishly−inclined gentlemen, that a valuable record of all the disobedient "niggers" Fetter had condemned to be hung might be found among this confused collection of antiquities. A deal table, covered with a varnished cloth, standing on the right side of the room, and beside which a ponderous arm−chair is raised a few inches, forms Fetter's tribune. Hanging from the wall, close behind this, is a powder−horn and flask, several old swords, a military hat somewhat broken, and sundry other indescribable things, enough to make one's head ache to contemplate.

The office is become crowded to excess, the prisoner (his hands unpinioned, but the heavy chain still about his neck!) is placed in a wooden box fronting the squire's table, as a constable is ordered to close the court. It is quite evident that Fetter has been taking a little too much on the previous night; but, being a "first−rate drinker," his friends find an apology in the arduousness of his legal duties. In answer to a question from Felsh, who has been looking at the prisoner somewhat compassionately, the serving constable says two of the jury of "freeholders" he has summoned have not yet made their appearance. Fetter, who was about to take his seat in the great chair, and open court, politely draws forth his watch, and after addressing a few words to the persons present, on the necessity of keeping order in a court with such high functions, whispers a few words in Felsh's ear, holding his hand to his mouth the while.

"Maintain order in court!" says Fetter, nodding his head to the official; "we will return in five minutes." Soon they are seen passing into Von's crooked establishment, where, joined by a number of very fashionable friends, they "take" of the "hardware" he keeps in a sly place under the counter, in a special bottle for his special customers. Having taken several special glasses, Fetter is much annoyed at sundry remarks made by his friends, who press round him, seeming anxious to instruct him on intricate points of the "nigger statutes." One hopes he will not let the nigger off without a jolly good hanging; another will bet his life Felsh takes care of that small item, for then his claim on the state treasury will be doubled. And now, Fetter finding that Felsh, having imbibed rather freely of the liquid, hath somewhat diminished his brilliant faculties, will take him by the arm and return into court. With all the innate dignity of great jurists they enter their sanctum of justice, as the usher exclaims, "Court! Court!−hats off and cigars out!"

"Jury are present?" enquires Fetter, with great gravity, bowing to one side and then to the other, as he resumes his seat on the tribune.

"Present, yer 'oner;" the officer answers in a deep, gruff voice, as he steps forward and places a volume of the revised statutes before that high jurist. Fetter moves the book to his left, where Felsh has taken his seat. With placid countenance and softest accents, Fetter orders the prisoner at the bar to stand up while our constable calls the names of the jurymen.

Our victim of democracy's even−handed justice obeys the summons, rising as his dark eyes flash angrily, and that hatred wrong which lurks in his bosom seems kindling anew. "James M'Neilty! Terrance M'Quade! Harry Johanna! Baldwin Dobson! Patrick Henessy! Be dad and I have um all now, yer 'oner," ejaculates the official, exultingly, as one by one the "nigger jurymen" respond to the call and take their seats on a wooden slab at the right of his Honour, squire Fetter. "You are, I may be sure, gentlemen, freeholders?" enquires his honour, with a mechanical bow. They answer simultaneously in the affirmative, and then, forming in a half circle, lay their hands on a volume of Byron, which Fetter makes do for a Bible, and subscribe to the sacred oath Felsh administers. By

the Giver of all Good will they return a verdict according to the evidence and the facts. "Gentlemen will take their seats" (the officer must preserve order in the court!) "the prisoner may also sit down," says Felsh, the words falling from his lips with great gravity, as, opening the revised statutes, he rises to address the jury.

"Gentlemen of the Jury!"−suddenly hesitates for a moment−"the solemn duties which you are now called upon to perform" (at this moment Terrance M'Quade draws a small bottle from his pocket, and after helping himself to a portion of its contents passes it to his fellows, much to the surprise of the learned Felsh, who hopes such indecorum will cease) "and they are duties which you owe to the safety of the state as well as to the protection of your own families, are much enhanced by the superior mental condition of the criminal before you." Here Mr. Felsh calls for a volume of Prince's Digest, from which he instructs the jury upon several important points of the law made and provided for making the striking a white person by a slave or person of colour a capital offence. "Your honour, too, will see the case to which I refer−'State and Prudence!'" The learned gentleman extends the book, that his august eyes may have a near view.

"Your word is quite sufficient, Mr. Felsh," returns Fetter, his eyes half closed, as he waves his hand, adding that he is perfectly posted on the case cited. "Page 499, I think you said?" he continues, placing his thumbs in his waistcoat armlets, with an air of indifference.

"Yes, your honour," rejoins Felsh, with a polite bow. His honour, ordering a glass of water mixed with a little brandy, Mr. Felsh continues:—"The case, gentlemen, before you, is that of the 'State v. Nicholas.' This case, gentlemen, and the committal of the heinous crime for which he stands arraigned before you, has excited no small amount of interest in the city. It is one of those peculiar cases where intelligence creeps into the property interest of our noble institution−the institution of slavery−makes the property restless, disobedient to the will and commands of the master, disaffected to the slave population, and dangerous to the peace and the progress of the community. Now, gentlemen" (his honour has dropped into a moderate nap−Mr. Felsh pauses for a moment, and touches him gently on the shoulder, as he suddenly resumes his wonted attention, much to the amusement of those assembled) "you will be told by the witnesses we shall here produce, that the culprit is an exceedingly intelligent and valuable piece of property, and as such might, even now, be made extremely valuable to his master"—Mr. Grabguy is in court, watching his interests!−"who paid a large sum for him, and was more than anxious to place him at the head of his manufacturing establishment, which office he was fully capable of filling. Now, gentlemen−his honour will please observe this point−much as I may consider the heavy loss the master will suffer by the conviction of the prisoner, and which will doubtless be felt severely by him, I cannot help impressing upon you the necessity of overlooking the individual loss to the master, maintaining the law, and preserving the peace of the community and stability of our noble institution. That the state will only allow the master two hundred dollars for his valuable slave you have nothing to do with−you must sink that from your minds, listen to the testimony, and form your verdict in accordance with that and the law. That he is a dangerous slave, has long maintained a disobedience towards his owner, set the authorities at defiance, attempted to create an insurrection, and made a dangerous assault on a white man−which constitutes a capital offence−we shall now call witnesses to prove." The learned gentleman having finished his opening for the prosecution, sits down. After a moment's pause, he orders an attendant to bring something "to take"−"Similar to the squire's!" he ejaculates, hoarsely.

"Gentlemen!" says his honour, as if seized with the recollection of some important appointment, the time for which was close at hand, drawing out his watch, "Call witnesses as fast as possible! The evidence in this case, I reckon, is so direct and positive, that the case can be very summarily despatched."

"I think so, too! yer 'oner," interrupts Terrance M'Quade, starting from his seat among the five jurors. Terrance has had what in vulgar parlance is termed a "tough time" with several of his own stubborn negroes; and having already heard a deal about this very bad case, is prepared to proclaim him fit only to be hanged. His honour reminds Terrance that such remarks from a juror are neither strictly legal nor in place.

The first witness called is Toby, a slave of Terrance M'Quade, who has worked in the same shop with Nicholas. Toby heard him say he got his larnin' when he was young,—that his heart burned for his freedom−that he knew he was no slave by right−that some day would see him a great man; that if all those poor wretches now in slavery knew as much as he did, they would rise up, have their liberties, and proclaim justice without appealing to heaven for it!−"

"I said all that, and more!" interrupted the criminal bondman, rising quickly to his feet, and surveying those around him with a frown of contempt.

"Silence! sit down!" resounds from the officer.

He will sit down, but they cannot quench the fires of his soul; they may deny him the commonest right of his manhood, but they cannot take from him the knowledge that God gave him those rights; they may mock with derision the firm mien with which he disputes the power of his oppressors, and their unjust laws, but they cannot make him less than a man in his own feelings!

His honour, squire Fetter, reminds him that it were better he said nothing, sit down,—or be punished instanter. Turning to Felsh, who is sipping his quencher, he enquires what that gentleman means to prove by the witness Toby?

"His intention to raise an insurrection, yer honour!" Felsh, setting his glass aside, quickly responds, wiping his lips as he adds, "It is essentially necessary, yer honour!"

His honour, leaning forward, places the fore−finger of his right hand to his lip, and making a very learned gesture, says, "Toby has said enough to establish that point."

The next witness is Mr. Brien Calligan, a criminal in the prison, who for his good behaviour has been promoted to the honourable post of under−warden. Mr. Brien Calligan testifies that the prisoner, while in prison, confined in a cell under his supervision, admitted that he intended to kill Mr. Monsel when he inflicted the wound. He must qualify this statement, however, by saying that the prisoner added he was altogether beside himself with rage.

Grabguy, who has been intently watching the proceedings, suddenly springs to his feet. He would like to know if that admission was not extorted from the culprit by cruelty!

Mr. Brien Calligan pauses a moment, looks innocently at the court, as one of the jurors suggests that quite enough evidence has already been put in to warrant a conviction. It's a pity to hang such valuable property; but, being bent on disturbing the peace of the community, what else can be done?

His honour listens with great concern to the juror's remarks, but suggests that Mr. Grabguy had better not interrupt the court with questions. That he has an indirect interest in the issue of the suit, not a doubt exists, but if he be not satisfied with the witness's statement, he has his remedy in the court of appeals, where, upon the ground of testimony having been elicited by coercion or cruelty, a new trial will probably be granted.

Mr. Grabguy would merely suggest to his honour that although sentencing a negro to be hung may be a matter of small consequence to him, yet his position in society gives him a right to be heard with proper respect. Aware that he does not move in that exclusively aristocratic sphere of society awarded to lawyers in general, he is no less entitled to respect, and being a man of honour, and an alderman as well, he shall always insist on that respect.

"Order, order!" demand a dozen voices. His honour's face flashing with indignation, he seizes the statutes, and rising to his feet, is about to throw them with unerring aim at the unhandsome head of the municipal functionary. A commotion here ensues. Felsh is esteemed not a bad fighting man; and rising almost simultaneously, his face like a full moon peeping through a rain cloud, attempts to pacify his colleague, Fetter. The court is foaming with excitement; Mr. Felsh is excited, the jury are excited to take a little more drink, the constables are excited, the audience are excited to amusement; Messrs. Fetter and Felsh's court rocks with excitement: the only unexcited person present is the criminal, who looks calmly on, as if contemplating with horror the debased condition of those in whose hands an unjust law has placed his life.

As the uproar and confusion die away, and the court resumes its dignity, Mr. Grabguy, again asserting his position of a gentleman, says he is not ashamed to declare his conviction to be, that his honour is not in a fit state to try a "nigger" of his: in fact, the truth must be told, he would not have him sit in judgment upon his spaniel.

At this most unwarranted declaration Fetter rises from his judicial chair, his feelings burning with rage, and bounds over the table at Grabguy, prostrating his brother Felsh, tables, benches, chairs, and everything else in his way,—making the confusion complete. Several gentlemen interpose between Fetter; but before he can reach Grabguy, who is no small man in physical strength—which he has developed by fighting his way "through many a crowd" on election days−that municipal dignitary is ejected, sans ceremonie, into the street.

"Justice to me! My honest rights, for which I laboured when he gave me no bread, would have saved him his compunction of conscience: I wanted nothing more," says Nicholas, raising the side of his coarse jacket, and wiping the sweat from his brow.

"Silence there!" demands an official, pointing his tipstaff, and punching him on the shoulder.

Grabguy goes to his home, considering and reconsidering his own course. His heart repeats the admonition,

"Thou art the wrong−doer, Grabguy!" It haunts his very soul; it lays bare the sources from whence the slave's troubles flow; places the seal of aggression on the state. It is a question with him, whether the state, through its laws, or Messrs. Fetter and Felsh, through the justice meted out at their court, play the baser part.

A crowd of anxious persons have gathered about the door, making the very air resound with their shouts of derision. Hans Von Vickeinsteighner, his fat good−natured face shining like a pumpkin on a puncheon, and his red cap dangling above the motley faces of the crowd, moves glibly about, and says they are having a right jolly good time at the law business within.

Fetter, again taking his seat, apologises to the jury, to the persons present, and to his learned brother, Felsh. He is very sorry for this ebullition of passion; but they may be assured it was called forth by the gross insult offered to all present. "Continue the witnesses as fast as possible," he concludes, with a methodical bow.

Mr. Monsel steps forward: he relates the fierce attempt made upon his life; has no doubt the prisoner meant to kill him, and raise an insurrection. "It is quite enough; Mr. Monsel may stand down," interposes Felsh, with an air of dignity.

Paul Vampton, an intelligent negro, next bears testimony. The criminal at the bar (Paul does not believe he has a drop of negro blood in his veins) more than once told him his wife and children were sold from him, his rights stripped from him, the hopes of gaining his freedom for ever gone. Having nothing to live for, he coveted death, because it was more honourable to die in defence of justice, than live the crawling slave of a tyrant's rule.

"I feel constrained to stop the case, gentlemen of the jury," interposes his honour, rising from his seat. "The evidence already adduced is more than sufficient to establish the conviction."

A juror at Terrance M'Quade's right, touches that gentleman on the shoulder: he had just cooled away into a nice sleep: "I think so, too, yer 'oner," rejoins Terrance, in half bewilderment, starting nervously and rubbing his eyes.

A few mumbled words from his honour serve as a charge to the jury. They know the law, and have the evidence before them. "I see not, gentlemen, how you can render a verdict other than guilty; but that, let me here say, I shall leave to your more mature deliberation." With these concluding remarks his honour sips his mixture, and sits down.

Gentlemen of the jury rise from their seats, and form into a circle; Mr. Felsh coolly turns over the leaves of the statutes; the audience mutter to themselves; the prisoner stares vacantly over the scene, as if heedless of the issue.

"Guilty! it's that we've made it; and the divil a thing else we could make out of it," exclaims Terrance M'Quade, as they, after the mature length of two minutes' consultation, turn and face his honour. They pause for a reply.

"Stand up, prisoner!"

"Hats off during the sentence!" rejoins a constable.

"Guilty." His honour rises to his feet with ponderous dignity to pronounce the awful sentence. "Gentlemen, I must needs compliment your verdict; you could have come to no other." His honour bows gracefully to the jury, reminds gentlemen present of the solemn occasion, and will hear what the prisoner has to say for himself.

An angry frown pervades the prisoner's face. He has nothing to say. Burning tears course down his cheeks; but they are not tears of contrition,—Oh, no! he has no such tears to shed. Firmly and resolutely he says, "Guilty! guilty! yes, I am guilty−guilty by the guilty laws of a guilty land. You are powerful−I am weak; you have might−I have right. Mine is not a chosen part. Guilty on earth, my soul will be innocent in heaven; and before a just judge will my cause be proclaimed, before a holy tribunal my verdict received, and by angels my soul be enrolled among the righteous. Your earthly law seals my lips; your black judgment−enough to make heaven frown and earth tremble, fearing justice−crushes the man; but you cannot judge the spirit. In fear and trembling your wrongs will travel broken paths−give no man rest. I am guilty with you; I am innocent in heaven. He who judgeth all things right, receives the innocent soul into his bosom; and He will offer repentance to him who takes the innocent life." He pauses, as his eye, with intense stare, rests upon his honour.

"You are through?" enquires his honour, raising his eyebrows.

"In this court of justice," firmly replies the prisoner.

"Order in the court!" is echoed from several voices.

"Nicholas−Nicholas Grabguy! the offence for which you stand convicted is one for which I might, according to the laws of the land, pronounce a more awful sentence than the one now resolved upon. But the advanced and

enlightened spirit of the age calls for a more humane manner of taking life and inflicting punishments. Never before has it been my lot to pass sentence−although I have pronounced the awful benediction on very many−on so valuable and intelligent a slave. I regret your master's loss as much as I sympathise with your condition; and yet I deplore the hardened and defiant spirit you yet evince. And permit me here to say, that while you manifest such an unyielding spirit there is no hope of pardon. Nicholas! you have been tried before a tribunal of the land, by the laws of your state, and found guilty by a tribunal of competent men. Nothing is now left for me but to pass sentence upon you in accordance with the law. The sentence of the court is, that you be taken hence to the prison from whence you came, and on this day week, at twelve o'clock, from thence to the gallows erected in the yard thereof, and there and then be hanged by the neck until you are dead; and may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

His honour, concluding nervously, orders the jury to be dismissed, and the court adjourned.

How burns the inward hate of the oppressed culprit, as mutely, his hands pinioned, and the heavy chain about his neck, he is led away to his prison−house, followed by a deriding crowd. "Come that happy day, when men will cease to make their wrong fire my very blood!" he says, firmly marching to the place of death.

CHAPTER XLVII. PROSPERITY THE RESULT OF JUSTICE.

TEN years have rolled into the past since the Rosebrook family−moved by a sense of right to enquire into the errors of a bad system of labour−resolved to try the working of a new scheme. There was to be no cutting, nor lashing, nor abusing with overburdening tasks. Education was to regulate the feelings, kindness to expand the sympathies, and justice to bind the affections and stimulate advancement. There were only some fifty negroes on the Rosebrook plantation, but its fame for raising great crops had resounded far and wide. Some planters said it "astonished everything," considering how much the Rosebrooks indulged their slaves. With a third less in number of hands, did they raise more and better cotton than their neighbours; and then everything was so neat and bright about the plantation, and everybody looked so cheerful and sprightly. When Rosebrook's cotton was sent into the market, factors said it was characteristic of his systemised negroes; and when his negroes rolled into the city, as they did on holidays, all brightened up with new clothes, everybody said−There were Rosebrook's dandy, fat, and saucy "niggers." And then the wise prophets, who had all along predicted that Rosebrook's project would never amount to much, said it was all owing to his lady, who was worth her weight in gold at managing negroes. And she did conceive the project, too; and her helping hand was felt like a quickening spring, giving new life to the physical being. That the influence might not be lost upon others of her sex in the same sphere of life, she was ever reasoning upon the result of female sympathy. She felt that, were it exercised properly, it could raise up the menial slave, awaken his inert energies, give him those moral guides which elevate his passive nature, and regenerate that manhood which provides for its own good.

They had promised their people that all children born at and after a given date should be free; that all those over sixty should be nominally free, the only restriction being the conditions imposed by the state law; that slaves under fifteen years of age, and able to do plantation work, should, during the ten years prescribed, be allowed for their extra labour at a given rate, and expected to have the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars set to their credit; that all prime people should be required to work a given number of hours, as per task, for master, beyond which they would be allotted a "patch" for cultivation, the products of which were entrusted to Rosebrook for sale, and the proceeds placed in missus' savings bank to their credit. The people had all fulfilled the required conditions ere the ten years expired; and a good round sum for extra earnings was found in the bank. The Rosebrooks kept faith with their slaves; and the happy result is, that Rosebrook, in addition to the moral security he has founded for the good of his people−and which security is a boon of protection between master and slave−has been doubly repaid by the difference in amount of product, the result of encouragement incited by his enlightened system. The family were bound in affection to their slaves; and the compact has given forth its peaceful products for a good end. Each slave being paid for his or her labour, there is no decline of energy, no disaffection, no clashing of interests, no petulant disobedience. Rosebrook finds his system the much better of the two. It has relieved him of a deal of care; he gets more work for less money; he laughs at his neighbours, who fail to raise as much cotton with double the number of negroes; and he knows that his negroes love instead of fear him. And yet, notwithstanding the proof he has produced, the whole district of planters look upon him with suspicion, consider him rather a dangerous innovator, and say, that while his foolish system cannot be other than precarious to the welfare of the state, time will prove it a monster fallacy.

A happy moment was it when the time rolled round, and the morning of the day upon which Rosebrook would proclaim the freedom of his people broke serenely forth. The cabins looked bright and airy, were sanded and whitewashed, and, surrounded by their neatly attired inhabitants, presented a picturesque appearance. It was to be a great gala−day, and the bright morning atmosphere seemed propitious of the event. Daddy Daniel had got a new set of shiny brass buttons put on his long blue coat, and an extremely broad white cravat for his neck. Daniel was a sort of lawgiver for the plantation, and sat in judgment over all cases brought before him, with great gravity of manner. As to his judgments, they were always pronounced with wondrous solemnity, and in accordance with what he conceived to be the most direct process of administering even−handed justice. Daddy was neither a democrat nor an unjust judge. Believing that it were better to forgive than inflict undue punishments, he would

rather shame the transgressor, dismiss him with a firm admonition to do better, and bid him go, transgress no more!

Harry had prepared a new sermon for the eventful day; and with it he was to make his happy flock remember the duty which they would henceforth owe to those who had been their kind protectors, as well as the promoters of that system which would result in happier days. How vivid of happiness was that scene presented in the plantation church, where master and missus, surrounded by their faithful old slaves, who, with a patriarchal attachment, seemed to view them with reverence, sat listening to the fervent discourse of that once wretched slave, now, by kindness, made a man! Deep, soul−stirring, and affecting to tears, were the words of prayer with which that devout negro invoked the all−protecting hand of Almighty God, that he would guide master and slave through the troubles of this earthly stage, and receive them into his bosom. How in contrast with that waging of passion, and every element of evil that has its source in injustice, so rife of plantation life, was the picture here presented!

The service ended, Rosebrook addresses a few remarks to his people; after which they gather around him and pour forth their gratitude in genial sentiments. Old and young have a "Heaven save master!" for Rosebrook, and a "God bless missus!" for his noble−hearted lady, to whom they cling, shaking her hand with warmest affection.

How enviable to her sex is the position of that woman who labours for the fallen, and whose heart yields its kindred sympathy for the oppressed!

After congratulations and tokens of affection had been exchanged, master, missus, and the people−for such they now were−repaired to the green in front of the plantation mansion, where a sumptuous collation was spread out, to which all sat down in one harmonious circle. Then the festivities of the day−a 4th of July in miniature−ended with a gathering at Dad Daniel's cabin, where he profoundly laid down a system of rules for the future observance of the people.

Six months have passed under the new r,gime; and Rosebrook, feeling that to require labour of his people for a sum much beneath its value must in time become a source from which evil results would flow, awarded them a just and adequate remuneration, and finds it work well. Harry had not been included among those who were enrolled as candidates for the enjoyment offered by the new system; but missus as well as master had confidentially promised him he should be free before many years, and with his family, if he desired, sent to Liberia, to work for the enlightenment of his fellow Africans. Harry was not altogether satisfied that the greater amount of labour to be done by him for the unfortunate of his race was beyond the southern democratic states of America; and, with this doubt instinctively before him, he was not restless for the consummation.

Some three months after the introduction of the new state of affairs, Dad Daniel was observed to have something weighing heavily on his mind. At times he was seen consulting seriously with Harry; but of the purport of these consultations no one, except themselves, was made acquainted. That very many venerable uncles and aunts were curious to know Daddy's secret contemplations was equally evident. At length Daniel called a meeting of his more aged and sagacious brethren, and with sage face made known his cherished project. Absalom and Uncle Cato listened with breathless suspense as the sage sayings fell from his lips. His brethren had all felt the sweet pleasures of justice, right, freedom, and kindness. "Well, den, broderin, is't 'um right in de sight ob de Lord, dat ye forgets dat broder what done so much fo'h ye body and ye soul too?"

"No, No! dat tisn't!" interrupted a dozen voices.

"Well, den!−I know'd, broderin, ye hab got da' bright spirit in ye, and wouldn't say 'twas!" Daniel continues, making a gesture with his left hand, as he raises the spectacles from his eyes with his right, and in his fervency lets them speed across the room. Daniel is only made conscious of his ecstasy when his broken eyes are returned to him. Turning to his brethren, he makes one of his very best apologies, and continues−"Dis ar poposition I'se gwine to put! And dat is, dat all ye broderin ere present put up somefin ob he arnin, and wid dat somefin, and what mas'r gib, too, we sarve dat geman what preach the gospel dat do 'em good wid 'e freedom for sef and family. Tain't right in de sight ob de Lor, nohow, to have preacher slave and congration free: I tell ye dat, my broderin, tain't!" With these sage remarks, Daddy Daniel concluded his proposition, leaned his body forward, spread his hands, and, his wrinkled face filled with comicality, waited the unanimous response which sounded forth in rapturous medley. Each one was to put in his mite, the preacher was to have a fund made up for him, which was to be placed in the hands of missus, and when sufficiently large (master will add his mite) be handed over for the freedom of the clergyman and his family. But missus, ever generous and watchful of their interests,

had learned their intentions, and forestalled their kindness by herself setting them free, and leaving it to their own discretion to go where they will. There were many good men at the south−men whose care of their slaves constituted a bond of good faith; but they failed to carry out means for protecting the slave against the mendacity of the tyrant. None more than Harry had felt how implicated was the state for giving great power to tyrant democracy−that democracy giving him no common right under the laws of the land, unless, indeed, he could change his skin. Ardently as he was attached to the plantation and its people−much as he loved good master and missus, he would prefer a home in happy New England, a peaceful life among its liberty−loving people. To this end the Rosebrooks provided him with money, sent him to the land he had longed to live in. In Connecticut he has a neat and comfortable home, far from the cares of slave life; no bloodhounds seek him there, no cruel slave−dealer haunts his dreams. An intelligent family have grown up around him; their smiles make him happy; they welcome him as a father who will no more be torn from them and sold in a democratic slave mart. And, too, Harry is a hearty worker in the cause of freedom, preaches the gospel, and is the inventor of a system of education by which he hopes to elevate the fallen of his race. He has visited foreign lands, been listened to by dukes and nobles, and enlisted the sympathies of the lofty in the cause of the lowly. And while his appeals on behalf of his race are fervent and fiery, his expositions of the wrongs of slavery are equally fierce; but he is not ungrateful to the good master, whom he would elevate high above the cruel laws he is born and educated to observe. With gratitude and affection does he recur to the generous Rosebrooks; he would hold them forth as an example to the slave world, and emblazon their works on the pages of history, as proof of what can be done. Bright in his eventful life, was the day, when, about to take his departure from the slave world, he bid the Rosebrooks a long, long good by. He vividly remembers how hope seemed lighting up the prospect before him−how good missus shook his hand so motherly−how kindly she spoke to Jane, and how fondly she patted his little ones on the head. "The Rosebrooks," says our restored clergyman, "have nothing to fear save the laws of the state, which may one day make tyrranny crumble beneath its own burden."

CHAPTER XLVIII. IN WHICH THE FATE OF FRANCONIA IS SEEN.

THE reader may remember that in a former chapter we left Annette and Franconia, in company of the stranger, on board the steamer for Wilmington, swiftly gliding on her course. Four bells struck as the surging craft cleared the headlands and shaped her course. The slender invalid, so neat of figure, and whose dress exhibited so much good taste, has been suddenly transformed into a delicate girl of some seventeen summers. As night spreads its shadows over the briny scene, and the steaming craft surges onward over rolling swells, this delicate girl may be seen emerging from her cabin confines, leaning on Franconia's arm as she approaches the promenade deck. Her fawn−coloured dress, setting as neatly as it is chastefully cut, displays a rounded form nicely compact; and, together with a drawn bonnet of green silk, simply arranged, and adding to her fair oval face an air of peculiar delicacy, present her with personal attractions of no ordinary character. And then her soft blue eyes, and her almost golden hair, hanging in thick wavy folds over her carnatic cheeks, add to the symmetry of her features that sweetness which makes modesty more fascinating. And though she has been but a slave, there is a glow of gentleness pervading her countenance, over which a playful smile now sheds a glow of vivacity, as if awakening within her bosom new hopes of the future.

The suddenness with which they embarked served to confuse and dispel all traces of recognition; and even the stranger, as they advanced toward him, hesitated ere he greeted Annette and extended his hand. But they soon joined in conversation, promenaded and mingled with the passengers. Cautious not to enter the main cabin, they remained, supperless, on the upper deck, until near midnight. That social prejudice which acts like a crushing weight upon the slave's mind was no longer to deaden her faculties; no, she seemed like a new being, as, with childish simplicity, her soul bounded forth in rhapsody of praise and thankfulness. Holding Franconia by the hand, she would kiss her, fondle her head on her bosom, and continue to recount the pleasure she anticipated when meeting her long−lost mother. "They'll sell me no more, Franconia, will they?" she would exclaim, looking enquiringly in her face.

"No, my poor child; you won't be worth selling in a land of freedom!" Franconia would answer, jocosely. After charging Maxwell to be a father and a brother to the fugitive girl,—to remember that a double duty was to be performed in his guardianship over the being who had just escaped from slavery, they retired below, and on the following morning found themselves safely landed at Wilmington, where, after remaining about six hours, Franconia bid Annette and Maxwell adieu! saw them on their way to New York, and returned to Charleston by the same steamer.

On reaching her home, she was overjoyed at finding a letter from her parents, who, as set forth, had many years resided on the west coast of Mexico, and had amassed a considerable fortune through a connection with some mining operations. Lorenzo, on the first discovery of gold in California, having joined a marauding party who were traversing that country, was amongst the earliest who enriched themselves from its bountiful yield. They gave up their wild pursuits, and with energy and prudence stored−up their diggings, and resolved to lead a new life. With the result of one year's digging, Lorenzo repaired to San Francisco, entered upon a lucrative business, increased his fortune, and soon became a leading man of the place. The hope that at some day he would have means wherewith to return home, wipe away the stain which blotted his character, and relieve his parents from the troubles into which his follies had brought them, seemed like a guiding star ever before him. And then there was his generous−hearted uncle in the hands of Graspum,—that man who never lost an opportunity of enriching himself while distressing others. And now, by one of those singularities of fortune which give persons long separated a key to each other's wayfaring, Lorenzo had found out the residence of his parents on the west coast of Mexico. Yes; he was with them, enjoying the comforts of their domicile, at the date of their letter. How happy they would be to see their Franconia, to have her with them, and once more enjoy their social re−unions so pleasantly given on brother Marston's plantation! Numberless were the letters they had written her, but not an answer to one had been received. This had been to them a source of great misgiving; and as a last resource they had sent this letter enclosed to a friend, through whose kindness it reached her.

The happy intelligence brought by this letter so overjoyed Franconia that she could with difficulty restrain her feelings. Tears of gladness coursed down her cheeks, as she rested her head on Mrs. Rosebrook's bosom, saying, "Oh, how happy I am! Sweet is the forgiveness which awaits us,—strong is the hope that through darkness carries us into brighter prospects of the future." Her parents were yet alive−happy and prosperous; her brother, again an honourable man, and regretting that error which cost him many a tear, was with them. How inscrutable was the will of an all−wise Providence: but how just! To be ever sanguine, and hope for the best, is a passion none should be ashamed of, she thought. Thus elated in spirits she could not resist the temptation of seeking them out, and enjoying the comforts of their parental roof.

But we must here inform the reader that M'Carstrow no longer acted the part of a husband towards Franconia. His conduct as a debauchee had driven her to seek shelter under the roof of Rosebrook's cottage, while he, a degraded libertine, having wasted his living among cast−out gamblers, mingled only with their despicable society. Stripped of all arts and disguises, and presented in its best form, the result of Franconia's marriage with Colonel M'Carstrow was but one of those very many unhappy connections so characteristic of southern life.

Provided with funds which the generous Rosebrooks kindly furnished her, a fortnight after the receipt of her father's letter found her embarked on board a steamer bound for the Isthmus, from whence she would seek her parents overland. With earnest resolution she had taken a fond leave of the Rosebrooks, and bid adieu to that home and its associations so dear to her childhood; and with God and happy associations her guide and her protector, was bounding over the sea. For three days the gallant ship sped swiftly onward, and the passengers, among whom she made many friends, seemed to enjoy themselves with one accord, mingling together for various amusements, spreading their social influence for the good of all, and, with elated spirits at the bright prospect, anticipating a speedy voyage. All was bright, calm, and cheering−the monster machines working smoothly, pressing the leviathan forward with curling brine at her bows, until the afternoon of the fourth day, when the wind in sharp gusts from the south−west, and the sudden falling of the barometer, admonished the mariner of the approaching heavy weather. At sunset a heavy bank in the west hung its foreboding festoons along the horizon, while light, fleecy clouds gathered over the heavens, and scudded swiftly into the east. Steadily the wind increased, the sea became restless, and the sharp chops thundering at the weather bow, veering the ship from her course, rendering it necessary to keep her head a point nearer the westward, betokened a gale. To leeward were the Bahamas, their dangerous banks spreading awe among the passengers, and exciting the fears of the more timid. On the starboard bow was Key West, with its threatening and deceptive reefs, but far enough ahead to be out of danger. At midnight, the wind, which had increased to a gale, howled in threatening fierceness. Overhead, the leaden clouds hung low their massive folds, and thick spray buried the decks and rigging; beneath, the angry ocean spread out in resistless waves of phosphorous light, and the gallant craft surged to and fro like a thing of life on a plain of rolling fire. Now she yields to the monster wave threatening her bow, over another she rides proudly, and to a third her engines slowly rumble round, as with half−buried deck she careens to its force. The man at the wheel, whose head we see near a glimmering light at the stern, watches anxiously for the word of command, and when received, executes it with quickness. An intruding sea has driven the look−out from the knight−heads to a post at the funnel, where, near the foremast, he clings with tenacious grip. Near him is the first officer, a veteran seaman, who has seen some twenty years' service, receiving orders from the captain, who stands at the weather quarter. Noiselessly the men proceed to execute their duties. There is not that bustle nor display of seamanship, in preparing a steamer for encountering a gale, so necessary in a sailing−ship; and all, save the angry elements, move cautiously on. The engineer, in obedience to the captain's orders, has slowed his engines. The ship can make but little headway against the fierce sea; but still, obedient to her command, it is thought better to maintain power just sufficient to keep her head to the sea. The captain says it is necessary, as well to ease her working as not to strain her machinery. He is supposed the better judge, and to his counsel all give ear. Now and then a more resolute passenger shoots from no one knows where, holds struggling by the jerking shroud, and, wrapt in his storm cloak, his amazed eyes, watching the scudding elements overhead, peer out upon the raging sea: then he mutters, "What an awful sight! how madly grand with briny light!" How sublimely terrific are the elements here combined to wage war against the craft he thought safe from their thunders! She is but a pigmy in their devouring sweep, a feeble prey at their mercy. The starboard wheel rumbles as it turns far out of water; the larboard is buried in a deep sea the ship careens into. Through the fierce drear he sees the black funnel vomiting its fiery vapour high aloft; he hears the chain braces strain and creak in its support; he is jerked from his grasp,

becomes alarmed for his safety, and suddenly disappears. In the cabin he tells his fellow voyagers how the storm rages fearfully: but it needed not his word to confirm the fact: the sudden lurching, creaking of panel−work, swinging to and fro of lamps, sliding from larboard to starboard of furniture, the thumping of the sea against the ship's sides, prostrate passengers made helpless by sea sickness, uncouched and distributed about the floor, moaning females, making those not ill sick with their wailings, timid passengers in piteous accents making their lamentations in state rooms, the half frightened waiter struggling timidly along, and the wind's mournful music as it plays through the shrouds, tell the tale but too forcibly. Hope, fear, and prayer, mingle in curious discord on board this seemingly forlorn ship on an angry sea. Franconia lies prostrate in her narrow berth, now bracing against the panels, then startled by an angry sea striking at her pillow, like death with his warning mallet announcing, "but sixteen inches separate us!"

Daylight dawns forth, much to the relief of mariners and passengers; but neither the wind nor the sea have lessened their fierceness. Slowly and steadily the engines work on; the good ship looks defiantly at each threatening sea, as it sweeps along irresistibly; the yards have been sent down, the topmasts are struck and housed; everything that can render her easy in a sea has been stowed to the snuggest compass; but the broad ocean is spread out a sheet of raging foam. The drenched captain, his whiskers matted with saline, and his face glowing and flushed (he has stood the deck all night), may be seen in the main cabin, cheering and dispelling the fears of his passengers. The storm cannot last−the wind will soon lull−the sea at meridian will be as calm as any mill−pond−he has seen a thousand worse gales; so says the mariner, who will pledge his prophecy on his twenty years' experience. But in this one instance his prophecy failed, for at noon the gale had increased to a hurricane, the ship laboured fearfully, the engines strained and worked unsteadily, while the sea at intervals made a breach of the deck. At two o'clock a more gloomy spectacle presented itself; and despondency seemed to have seized all on board, as a sharp, cone−like sea boarded the ship abaft, carried away the quarter−boats from the starboard davys, and started several stancheons. Scarcely was the work of destruction complete, when the condenser of the larboard engine gave out, rendering the machine useless, and spreading dismay among the passengers. Thus, dragging the wheel in so fearful a sea strained the ship more and more, and rendered her almost unmanageable. Again a heavy, clanking noise was heard, the steam rumbled from the funnel, thick vapour escaped from the hatchways, the starboard engine stopped, and consternation reigned triumphant, as a man in oily fustian approached the captain and announced both engines disabled. The unmanageable monster now rolled and surged at the sweep of each succeeding sea, which threatened to engulph her in its sway. A piece of canvas is set in the main rigging, and her helm put hard down, in the hope of keeping her head to the wind. But she obeys not its direction. Suddenly she yaws off into the trough of the sea, lurches broad on, and ere she regains her way, a fierce sea sweeps the house from the decks, carrying those within it into a watery grave. Shrieks and moans, for a moment, mingle their painful discord with the murmuring wind, and all is buried in the roar of the elements. By bracing the fore−yard hard−a−starboard the unwieldy wreck is got before the wind; but the smoke−funnel has followed the house, and so complete is the work of demolition that it is with difficulty she can be kept afloat. Those who were in the main, or lower cabin, startled at the sudden crash which had removed the house above, and leaving the passages open, exposing them to the rushing water that invaded their state−rooms, seek the deck, where a more dismal sight is presented in the fragments of wreck spread from knight−head to taffrail. The anxious captain, having descended from the upper deck a few minutes before the dire calamity, is saved to his passengers, with whom and his men he labours to make safe what remains of his noble ship. Now more at ease in the sea, with canvas brought from the store−rooms, are the hatches and companions battened down, the splintered stancheons cleared away, and extra pumps prepared for clearing the water fast gaining in the lower hold. Lumbering moves the heavy mass over the mounting surge; but a serious leak having sprung in the bow, consternation and alarm seem on the point of adding to the sources of danger. "Coolness is our safeguard," says the captain. Indeed, the exercise of that all−important virtue when destruction threatens would have saved thousands from watery graves.

His admonition was heeded,—all worked cheerfully, and for some time the water was kept within bounds of subjection. As night approached the sea became calmer, a bright streak gleamed along the western horizon; hearts that had sorrowed gladdened with joy, as the murky clouds overhead chased quickly into the east and dissolved, and the blue arch of heaven−hung with pearly stars of hope−shed its peaceful glows over the murmuring sea.

Again the night was passed in incessant labour of pumping and clearing up the dismantled hull; but when daylight appeared, the wind having veered and increased, the sea ran in short swells, rocking the unwieldly hull,

and fearfully straining every timber in its frame. The leak now increased rapidly, as also did the water in the hold, now beyond their exertions to clear. At ten o'clock all hopes of keeping the wreck afloat had disappeared; and the last alternative of a watery grave, or launching upon the broad ocean, presented its stern terms for their acceptance. A council decided to adopt the latter, when, as the hulk began to settle in the sea, and with no little danger of swamping, boats were launched, supplied with such stores as were at hand, the passengers and crew embarked, and the frail barks sent away with their hapless freight to seek a haven of safety. The leviathan hulk soon disappeared from sight. Franconia, with twenty−five fellow unfortunates, five of whom were females, had embarked in the mate's boat, which now shaped her course for Nassau, the wind having veered into the north−west, and that seeming the nearest and most available point. The clothing they stood in was all they saved; but with that readiness to protect the female, so characteristic and noble of the sailor, the mate and his men lightened the sufferings of the women by giving them a portion of their own: incasing them with their jackets and fearnoughts, they would shield them from the night chill. For five days were sufferings endured without a murmur that can only be appreciated by those who have passed through shipwreck, or, tossed upon the ocean in an open boat, been left to stare in the face grim hunger and death. At noonday they sighted land ahead; and as each eager eye strained for the welcome sight, it seemed rising from the ocean in a dim line of haze. Slowly, as they neared, did it come bolder and bolder to view, until it shone out a long belt of white panoramic banks. Low, and to the unpractised eye deceptive of distance, the mate pronounced it not many miles off, and, the wind freshening fair, kept the little bark steadily on her course, hoping thereby to gain it before night came on: but the sun sank in a heavy cloud when yet some four miles intervened. Distinctly they saw a cluster of houses on a projecting point nearly ahead; but not a sail was off shore, to which the increasing wind was driving them with great violence.

And now that object which had been sighted with so much welcome in the morning−that had cheered many a drooping heart, and seemed a haven of safety, threatened their destruction. The water shoaled; the sea broke and surged in sharp cones; the little craft tippled and yawed confusedly; the counter eddies twirled and whirled in foaming concaves; and leaden clouds again hung their threatening festoons over the awful sea. To lay her head to the sea was impracticable−an attempt to "lay−to" under the little sail would be madness; onward she rode, hurrying to an inevitable fate. Away she swept through the white crests, as the wind murmured and the sea roared, and the anxious countenance of the mate, still guiding the craft with a steady hand, seemed masked in watchfulness. His hand remained firm to the helm, his eyes peered into the black prospect ahead: but not a word did he utter.

It was near ten o'clock, when a noise as of thunder rolling in the distance, and re−echoing in booming accents, broke fearfully upon their ears. The sea, every moment threatening to engulph the little craft, to sweep its freight of human beings into eternity, and to seal for ever all traces of their fate, was now the lesser enemy. Not a word had escaped the lips of a being on board for several minutes; all seemed resigned to whatever fate Providence awarded.

"The beach roars, Mr. Slade−"

The mate interrupted before the seaman in the sheets had time to finish his sentence: "I have not been deaf to the breakers; but there is no hope for us but upon the beach; and may heaven save us there! Passengers, be calm! let me enjoin you to remain firm to your places, and, if it be God's will that we strike, the curling surf may be our deliverer. If it carry you to the sand in its sweep, press quickly and resolutely forward, lest it drag you back in its grasp, and bury you beneath its angry surge. Be firm, and hope for the best!" he said, with great firmness. The man who first spoke sat near Franconia, and during the five days they had been in the boat exhibited great sympathy and kindness of heart. He had served her with food, and, though a common sailor, displayed those traits of tenderness for the suffering which it were well if those in higher spheres of life did but imitate. As the mate ceased speaking, the man took his pilot coat from his shoulder and placed it about Franconia's, saying, "I will save this lady, or die with her in the very same sea."

"That's well done, Mr. Higgins!" (for such was the man's name). "Let the hardiest not forget the females who have shown so much fortitude under trying circumstances; let the strong not forget the weak, but all save who can," returned the mate, as he scanned through the stormy elements ahead, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the point.

Drenched with the briny spray that swept over the little bark, never did woman exhibit fortitude more resolute. Franconia thanked the man for his solicitude, laid her hand nervously upon his arm, and, through the dark,

watched his countenance as if her fate was in its changes.

The din and murmur of the surf now rose high above the wail of the sea. Fearful and gloomy, a fretted shore stood out before them, extending from a bold jut on the starboard hand away into the darkness on the left. Beneath it the angry surf beat and lashed against the beach in a sheet of white foam, roaring in dismal cadences.

"Hadn't you better put her broad on, Mr. Slade?" enquired the young seaman, peering along the line of surf that bordered the shore with its deluging bank.

"Ask no questions!" returned the mate, in a firm voice: "Act to the moment, when she strikes−I will act until then." At the moment a terrific rumbling broke forth; the din of elements seemed in battle conflict; the little bark, as if by some unforeseen force, swept through the lashing surge, over a high curling wave, and with a fearful crash lay buried in the boiling sand. Agonising shrieks sounded amid the rage of elements; and then fainter and fainter they died away on the wind's murmurs. Another moment, and the young sailor might have been seen, Franconia's slender form in his arms, struggling against the devouring surf; but how vain against the fierce monster were his noble efforts! The receding surge swept them far from the shore, and buried them in its folds,—a watery grave received the fair form of one whose life of love had been spotless, just, and holy. The white wave was her winding−sheet,—the wind sang a requiem over her watery grave,—and a just God received her spirit, and enthroned it high among the angels.

Of the twenty−seven who embarked in the little craft, but two gained the beach, where they stood drenched and forlorn, as if contemplating the raging surf that had but a minute before swallowed up their fellow voyagers. The boat had driven on a flat sandy beach some two miles from the point on which stood the cluster of dwellings before described; and from which two bright lights glimmered, like beacons to guide the forlorn mariner. For them, the escaped men−one a passenger, the other a seaman−shaped their course, wet, and sad at heart.

CHAPTER XLIX. IN WHICH IS A SAD RECOGNITION.

THE mate did not mistake his position, for the jut of land we described in the last chapter is but a few hours' ride from Nassau, and the houses are inhabited by wreckers. With desponding hearts did our unfortunates approach one of the rude cabins, from the window of which a faint light glimmered, and hesitate at the door, as if doubting the reception they were about to receive. The roaring of the beach, and the sharp whistling of the wind, as in clouds it scattered the sand through the air, drowned what sound might otherwise be heard from within. "This cabin seems deserted," says one, as he taps on the door a second time. "No, that cannot be!" returns the other, peering through a small window into the barrack−like room. It was from this window the light shone, and, being a bleak November night, a wood fire blazed on the great hearth, shedding its lurid glows over everything around. It is the pale, saline light of wreckwood. A large binnacle lamp, of copper, hung from the centre of the ceiling, its murky light mingling in curious contrast to the pale shadows of the wreckwood fire. Rude chains, and chests, and boxes, and ropes, and canvas, and broken bolts of copper, and pieces of valuable wood, and various nautical relics−all indicating the trade of shipwreck, lie or stand promiscuously about the room; while in the centre is a table surrounded by chairs, some of which are turned aside, as if the occupants had just left. Again, there may be seen hanging from the unplastered walls numerous teeth of fish, bones and jaws of sharks, fins and flukes of curious species, heads of the Floridian mamalukes, and preserved dolphins−all is interspersed here and there with coloured prints, illustrative of Jack's leaving or returning to his favourite Mary, with a lingering farewell or fond embrace.

Louder and louder, assured of some living being within they knock at the door, until a hoarse voice rather roars than speaks−"Aye, aye! hold hard a bit! I'se bearin' a hand!" The sound came as if from the clouds, for not a living being was visible. A pause followed; then suddenly a pair of dingy legs and feet descended from a small opening above the window, which, until that moment, had escaped their notice. The sight was, indeed, not the most encouraging to weak nerves. Clumsily lowered the legs, the feet making a ladder of cleets of wood nailed to the window, until the burly figure of the wrecker, encased with red shirt and blue trousers, stood out full to view. Over his head stood bristly hair in jagged tufts; and as he drew his brawny hand over the broad disc of his sun−scorched face, winking and twisting his eyes in the glare, there stood boldly outlined on his features the index of his profession. He shrugged his shoulders, gathered his nether garments quickly about him, paused as if half confused and half overjoyed, then ran to the fire−place, threw into a heap the charred wood with a long wooden poker, and sought the door, saying—"Avast heavin a bit, Tom!" Having removed a wooden bar, he stands in the opening, braving out the storm. "A screachin nor'easter this, Tom—what'r ye sighted away, eh!" he concludes. He is—to use a vulgar term—aghast with surprise. It was Tom Dasher's watch to−night; but no Tom stands before him. "Hallo!—From whence came you?" he enquires of the stranger, with an air of anxious surprise. He bids them come in, for the wind carries the sand rushing into his domicile.

"We are shipwrecked men in distress," says the passenger—the wrecker, with an air of kindness, motioning them to sit down: "Our party have been swallowed up in the surf a short distance below, and we are the only survivors here seeking shelter."

"Zounds you say—God be merciful!" interrupts the hardy wrecker, ere the stranger had time to finish his sentence. "It was Tom's look−out to−night. Its ollers the way wi' him—he gits turned in, and sleeps as niver a body see'd, and when time comes to unbunk himself, one disn't know whether 'ts wind or Tom's snoarin cracks hardest. Well, well,—God help us! Think ye now, if wife and I, didn't, in a half sort of dream, fancy folks murmuring and crying on the beach about twelve, say. But the wind and the surf kept up such a piping, and Tom said ther war nought a sight at sundown." With a warm expression of good intention did our hardy host set about the preparing something to cheer their drooping spirits. "Be at home there wi' me," says he; "and if things b'nt as fine as they might be, remember we're poor folks, and have many a hard knock on the reefs for what we drag out. Excuse the bits o' things ye may see about; and wife 'll be down in a fip and do the vary best she can fo'h ye." He had a warm heart concealed beneath that rough exterior; he had long followed the daring profession, seen much

suffering, lightened many a sorrowing heart. Bustling about among old boxes and bags, he soon drew forth a lot of blankets and quilts, which he spread upon the broad brick hearth, at the same time keeping up a series of questions they found difficult to answer, so rapidly were they put. They had indeed fallen into the hands of a good Samaritan, who would dress their wounds with his best balms.

"An' now I tak it ye must be famished; so my old woman must get up an' help mak ye comfortable," says he, bringing forth a black tea−kettle, and filling it from a pail that stood on a shelf near the fire−frame. He will hang it on the fire. He had no need of calling the good dame; for as suddenly as mysteriously does the chubby figure of a motherly−looking female of some forty years shoot from the before described opening, and greeting the strangers with a hearty welcome, set about preparing something to relieve their exhaustion. A gentle smile pervades her little red face, so simply expressive; her peaked cap shines so brightly in contrast with the black ribbon with which she secures it under her mole−bedecked chin; and her short homespun frock sets so comely, showing her thick knit stockings, and her feet well protected in calfskin laces, with heels a trooper might not despise; and then, she spreads her little table with a heartiness that adds its value to simple goodness,—her invitingly clean cups and saucers, and knives and forks, as she spreads them, look so cheerful. The kettle begins to sing, and the steam fumes from the spout, and the hardy wrecker brings his bottle of old Jamaica, and his sugar; and such a bowl of hot punch was never made before. "Come now," he says, "ye're in my little place; the wrecker as don't make the distressed comfortable aneath his ruf 's a disgrace to the craft." And now he hands each a mug of steaming punch, which they welcomely receive, a glow of satisfaction bespreading his face, telling with what sincerity he gives it. Ere they commenced sipping, the good dame brought pilot bread and set it before them; and while she returned to preparing her supper the wrecker draws his wooden seat by their side, and with ears attentive listens to the passenger as he recites the disaster.

"Only two out of twenty−seven saved−a sorry place that gulf!" he exclaims; "you bear away, wife. Ah, many a good body's bones, too, have whitened the beach beside us; many 's the bold fellow has been dashed upon it to die unknown," he continues, with serious face. "And war ner onny wemen amang ye, good man?" interposes the good dame.

"Seven; they have all passed into eternity!" rejoins the seaman, who, till then, had been a mute looker−on.

"Poor souls! how they mun' 'ave suffered!" she sighs, shaking her head, and leaning against the great fire frame, as her eyes fill with tears. The wrecker must needs acquaint Tom Dasher, bring him to his aid, and, though the storm yet rages, go search the beating surf where roll the unfortunates. Nay, the good dame will herself execute the errand of mercy, while he supplies the strangers with dry clothes; she will bring Tom hither. She fears not the tempest while her soul warms to do good; she will comfort the distressed who seek shelter under her roof. With the best his rough wardrobe affords does the wrecker clothe them, while his good wife, getting Tom up, relates her story, and hastens back with him to her domicile. Tom is an intrepid seafarer, has spent some seven years wrecking, saved many a life from the grasp of the grand Bahama, and laid up a good bit of money lest some stormy day may overtake him and make the wife a widow.

"This is a hard case, Stores!" says Tom, addressing himself to our wrecker, as with sharp, hairy face, and keen black eyes, his countenance assumes great seriousness. Giving his sou'−wester a cant back on his head, running his left hand deep into the pocket of his pea−jacket, and supplying his mouth with tobacco from his right, he stands his tall figure carelessly before the fire, and in a contemplative mood remains silent for a few minutes.

"Aye, but somethin' mun' be done, Tom," says the first wrecker, breaking silence.

"Yes; as my name is Tom Dasher, there must. We must go to the beach, and see what it's turned up,—what there is to be seen, an' the like o' that." Then, turning to the strangers, he continued, "Pity yer skipper hadn't a headed her two points further suthard, rounded the point just above here a bit, and made a lee under the bend. Our craft lies there now,—as snug as Tompkins' wife in her chamber!"

"Yes, but, Tom! ye dinna think as the poor folks could know all things," speaks up the woman, as Tom was about to add a few items more, merely to give the strangers some evidence of his skill.

"Aye, aye,—all right; I didn't get the balance on't just then," returned Tom, nodding his head with an air of satisfaction.

A nice supper of broiled fish, and toast, and tea, and hot rum punch−of which Tom helped himself without stint−was set out, the strangers invited to draw up, and all partook of the plain but cheering fare. As daylight was fast approaching, the two wreckers dispatched their meal before the others, and sought the spot on the beach

described as where the fatal wreck took place, while the good dame put the shipwrecked to sleep in the attic, and covered them with her warmest rugs and blankets.

Not a vestige of the wreck was to be seen−not a fragment to mark the spot where but a few hours before twenty−five souls were hurried into eternity. They stood and stood, scanning over the angry ocean into the gloom: nothing save the wail of the wind and the sea's roar greeted their ears. Tom Dasher thinks either they have been borne out into the fathomless caves, or the men are knaves with false stories in their mouths.

Stores,—for such is our good man's name−turning from the spot, says daylight will disclose a different scene; with the wind as it is the bodies will be drawn into the eddy on the point, and thrown ashore by the under−current, for burial. "Poor creatures! there's no help for them now;" he adds, sighing, as they wend their way back to the cabin, where the good dame waits their coming. Their search was in vain; having no news to bring her, she must be contented until morning. If the bodies wash ashore, the good woman of the Humane Society will come down from the town, and see them decently buried. Stores has several times spoken of this good woman; were she a ministering angel he could not speak of her name with more reverence. For years, he tells us, has she been a harbinger of good, ever relieving the sick and needy, cheering the downcast, protecting the unfortunate. Her name has become a symbol of compassion; she mingles with the richest and the poorest, and none know her but to love and esteem her. "And she, too, is an American lady!" Stores says, exultingly. And to judge from his praise, we should say, if her many noble deeds were recorded on fair marble, it would not add one jot to that impression of her goodness made on the hearts of the people among whom she lives.

"Ah, man! she's a good woman, and everybody loves and looks up to her. And she's worth loving, too, because she's so kind," adds the good dame, significantly canting her head.

Daylight was now breaking in the east, and as there seemed no chance of making a search on the bank that day, such was the fierceness of the wind, the two men drank again of the punch, spread their blankets before the fire, lay their hardy figures down, and were soon in a profound sleep. The woman, more watchful, coiled herself in a corner of the room on some sail−cloth, but did not sleep.

At ten o'clock they were aroused by the neighbours, who, in great anxiety, had come to inform them of an event they were already conscious of,—adding, however, as an evidence of what had taken place, that sixteen male and three female bodies, borne to the rips at the point, had been thrown upon the shore. The denizens of the point were indeed in a state of excitement; a messenger had been sent into the town for the coroner, which said functionary soon spread the news about, creating no little commotion among the inhabitants, many of whom repaired to the scene of the disaster.

When it became known that two witnesses to the dire misfortune had been spared to tell the tale, and were now at Stores' house, the excitement calmed into sympathy. The wrecker's little village resounded with curious enquiries, and few were they who would be satisfied without a recital of the sad tale by the rescued men.

Carefully they brought the dead bodies from the shore, and laid them in an untenanted house, to await the coroner's order. Among them was the slender form of Franconia, the dark dress in which she was clad but little torn, and the rings yet remaining on her fingers. "How with fortitude she bore the suffering!" said the rescued passenger, gazing on her blanched features as they laid her on the floor: the wrecker's wife covered her with a white sheet, and spread a pillow carefully beneath her head.

"Yes!" returns the unfortunate seaman, who stood by his side, "she seemed of great goodness and gentleness. She said nothing, bore everything without a murmur; she was Higgins' pet; and I'll lay he died trying to save her, for never a braver fellow than Jack Higgins stood trick at a wheel."

The coroner arrives as the last corpse is brought from the sand: he holds his brief inquest, orders them buried, and retires. Soon, three ladies−Stores' wife tells us they are of the Humane Society−make their appearance in search of the deceased. They enter Stores' house, greet his good dame familiarly, and remain seated while she relates what has happened. One of the three is tall and stately of figure, and dressed with that quiet taste so becoming a lady. And while to the less observing eye no visible superiority over the others is discernible, it is evident they view her in such a light, always yielding to her counsels. Beneath a silk bonnet trimmed with great neatness, is disclosed a finely oval face, glowing with features of much regularity, large dark eyes of great softness, and silky hair, laid in heavy wavy folds across a beautifully arched brow−to which is added a sweet smile that ever and anon plays over her slightly olive countenance. There, boldly outlined, is the unmistakeable guide to a frank and gentle nature. For several minutes does she listen to the honest woman's recital of the sad

event, which is suspended by the passenger making his appearance. The wrecker's wife introduces him by motioning her hand, and saying, "This is the kind lady of whose goodness I spoke so last night." Anxiously does she gather from the stranger each and every incident of the voyage: this done, she will go to the house where lay the dead, our good Dame Stores leading the way, talking from the very honesty of her heart the while. In a small dilapidated dwelling on the bleak sands, the dead lay. Children and old men linger about the door,—now they make strange mutterings, and walk away, as if in fear. Our messengers of mercy have entered the abode of the dead. The wrecker's wife says, "They are to be buried to−morrow, ma'am;" while the lady, with singular firmness, glances her eye along the row of male bodies, counting them one by one. She has brought shrouds, in which to bury them like Christians.

"Them three females is here, ma'am," says Dame Stores, touching the lady on the elbow, as she proceeds to uncover the bodies. The passenger did, indeed, tell our Lady of Mercy there was one handsome lady from Carolina. One by one she views their blanched and besanded features.

"A bonny figure that, mum; I lay she's bin a handsome in her day," with honest simplicity remarks Dame Stores, as, bent over the lifeless body of Franconia, she turns back the sheet, carefully. "Yes," is the quick reply: the philanthropic woman's keen eye scans along the body from head to foot. Dame Stores will part the silken hair from off that cold brow, and smooth it with her hand. Suddenly our lady's eyes dart forth anxiety; she recognises some familiar feature, and trembles. The rescued seaman had been quietly viewing the bodies, as if to distinguish their different persons, when a wrecker, who had assisted in removing the bodies, entered the room and approached him, "Ah!" exclaims the seaman, suddenly, "yonder's poor Jack Higgins." He points to a besanded body at the right, the arms torn and bent partly over the breast, adding, "Jack had a good heart, he had." Turning half round, the wrecker replies, "That 'un had this 'un fast grappled in his arms; it was a time afore we got 'um apart."

"Was it this body?" enquires the lady, looking at the lifeless form before her. He says, "That same, ma'am; an' it looked as if he had tried to save the slender woman." He points to the body which Dame Stores has just uncovered. The good lady kneels over the body: her face suddenly becomes pale; her lips purple and quiver; she seems sinking with nervous excitement, as tremulously she seizes the blanched hand in her own. Cold and frigid, it will not yield to her touch "That face−those brows, those pearly teeth, those lips so delicate,—those hands,—those deathless emblems! how like Franconia they seem," she ejaculates frantically, the bystanders looking on with surprise. "And are they not my Franconia's−my dear deliverer's?" she continues. She smooths the cold hands, and chafes them in her own. The rings thereon were a present from Marston. "Those features like unto chiselled marble are hers; I am not deceived: no! oh no! it cannot be a dream" (in sorrow she shakes her head as the tears begin to moisten her cheeks), "she received my letter, and was on her way seeking me." Again she smooths and smooths her left hand over those pallid cheeks, her right still pressing the cold hand of the corpse, as her emotions burst forth in agonising sobs.

The wrecker's wife loosens the dress from about deceased's neck−bares that bosom once so fair and beautiful. A small locket, attached to a plain black necklace, lies upon it, like a moat on a snowy surface. Nervously does the good woman grasp it, and opening it behold a miniature of Marston, a facsimile of which is in her own possession. "Somethin' more 'ere, mum," says Dame Stores, drawing from beneath a lace stomacher the lap of her chemise, on which is written in indelible ink−"Franconia M'Carstrow." The doubt no longer lent its aid to hope; the lady's sorrowing heart can no longer withstand the shock. Weeping tears of anguish, she says, "May the God of all goodness preserve her pure spirit, for it is my Franconia! she who was my saviour; she it was who snatched me from death, and put my feet on the dry land of freedom, and gave me−ah, me!" she shrieked,—and fell swooning over the lifeless body, ere Dame Stores had time to clasp her in her arms.

My reader can scarcely have failed to recognise in this messenger of mercy,—this good woman who had so ennobled herself by seeking the sufferer and relieving his wants, and who makes light the cares of the lowly, the person of that slave−mother, Clotilda. Having drank of the bitterness of slavery, she the more earnestly cheers the desponding. That lifeless form, once so bright of beauty, so buoyant of heart and joyous of spirit, is Franconia; she it was who delivered the slave−mother from the yoke of bondage, set her feet on freedom's heights, and on her head invoked its genial blessings. Her soul had yearned for the slave's good; she had been a mother to Annette, and dared snatch her from him who made the slave a wretch,—democracy his boast! It was Franconia who placed the miniature of Marston about Clotilda's neck on the night she effected her escape,—bid her God speed into

freedom. All that once so abounded in goodness now lies cold in death. Eternity has closed her lips with its strong seal,—no longer shall her soul be harassed with the wrongs of a slave world: no! her pure spirit has ascended among the angels.

We will not longer pain the reader's feelings with details of this sad recognition, but inform him that the body was removed to Clotilda's peaceful habitation, from whence, with becoming ceremony, it was buried on the following day. A small marble tablet, standing in a sequestered churchyard near the outskirts of Nassau, and on which the traveller may read these simple words:—"Franconia, my friend, lies here!" over which, in a circle, is chiseled the figure of an angel descending, and beneath, "How happy in Heaven are the Good!" marks the spot where her ashes rest in peace.

CHAPTER L. IN WHICH A DANGEROUS PRINCIPLE IS ILLUSTRATED.

SHOULD the sagacious reader be disappointed in our hero Nicholas, who, instead of being represented as a model of disinterestedness, perilling his life to save others, sacrificing his own interests for the cause of liberty, and wasting on hardened mankind all those amiable qualities which belong only to angels, but with which heroes are generally invested for the happy purpose of pleasing the lover of romance, has evinced little else than an unbending will, he will find a palliation in that condition of life to which his oppressors have forced him to submit. Had Nicholas enjoyed his liberty, many incidents of a purely disinterested character might have been recorded to his fame, for indeed he had noble traits. That we have not put fiery words into his mouth, with which to execrate the tyrant, while invoking the vengeance of heaven−and, too, that we are guilty of the crime of thus suddenly transferring him from boyhood to manhood, nor have hanged him to please the envious and vicious,—will find excuse with the indulgent reader, who will be kind enough to consider that it is our business to relate facts as they are, to the performance of which−unthankful though it may be−we have drawn from the abundance of material placed in our hand by the southern world. We may misname characters and transpose scenes, but southern manners and customs we have transcribed from nature, to which stern book we have religiously adhered. And, too (if the reader will pardon the digression), though we never have agreed with our very best admirers of the gallows, some of whom hold it a means of correcting morals−nor, are yet ready to yield assent to the opinions of the many, so popularly laid down in favour of what we consider a medium of very unwholesome influence, we readily admit the existence of many persons who have well merited a very good hanging. But, were the same rules of evidence admissible in a court of law when a thief is on trial, applied against the practice of "publicly hanging," there would be little difficulty in convicting it of inciting to crime. Not only does the problem of complex philosophy−the reader may make the philosophy to suit his taste−presented in the contrariety of scenes on and about the gallows offer something irreconcileable to ordinary minds, but gives to the humorous large means with which to feast their love of the ludicrous. On the scaffold of destruction, our good brothers of the clergy would, pointing to the "awful example," assure the motley assembly gathered beneath, that he hath purified that soul, which will surely be accepted in heaven; but, he can in no wise condescend to let it, still directing the flesh, live on the less pure platform of earth. With eager eyes, the mass beneath him, their morbid appetites curiously distended, heed not the good admonition; nay, the curious wait in breathless suspense the launching a human being into eternity; the vicious are busy in crime the while; the heedless make gay the holiday. Sum up the invention and perpetration of crime beneath the gallows on one of those singular gala−days, and the culprit expiating his guilt at the rope's end, as an "awful warning," will indeed have disclosed a shallow mockery. Taking this view of the hanging question, though we would deprive no man of his enjoyment, we deem it highly improper that our hero should die by any other means than that which the chivalrous sons of the south declared "actually necessary."

But before proceeding further with Nicholas, it may be proper here to state that Annette and the stranger, in whose hands we left her, have arrived safe at New York. Maxwell−for such is his name−is with his uncle engaged in a lucrative commercial business; while Annette, for reasons we shall hereafter explain, instead of forthwith seeking the arms of an affectionate mother, is being educated at a female seminary in a village situated on the left bank of the Hudson River.

In returning to Nicholas, the reader will remember that Grabguy was something of a philosopher, the all−important functions of which medium he invoked on the occasion of his ejectment from Fetter's court, for an interference which might at that moment have been taken as evidence of repentance. The truth, however, was, that Grabguy, in the exercise of his philosophy, found the cash value of his slave about to be obliterated by the carrying out of Fetter's awful sentence. Here there rose that strange complexity which the physical action and mental force of slave property, acting in contrariety, so often produce. The physical of the slave was very valuable, and could be made to yield; but the mental being all powerful to oppose, completely annulled the monetary worth. But by allowing the lacerations to heal, sending him to New Orleans, and making a positive sale,

some thousand or twelve hundred dollars might be saved; whereas, did Fetter's judgment take effect, Mr. Grabguy must content himself with the state's more humble award of two hundred dollars, less the trouble of getting. In this democratic perplexity did our economical alderman find himself placed, when, again invoking his philosophy−not in virtue of any sympathetic admonition, for sympathy was not of Grabguy−he soon found means of protecting his interests. To this end he sought and obtained an order from the Court of Appeals, which grave judiciary, after duly considering the evidence on which the criminal was convicted before Fetter's tribunal, was of opinion that evidence had been improperly extorted by cruelty; and, in accordance with that opinion, ordered a new trial, which said trial would be dististinguished above that at Fetter's court by being presided over by a judicial magistrate. This distinguished functionary, the judicial magistrate, who generally hears the appeals from Fetter's court, is a man of the name of Fairweather Fuddle, a clever wag, whose great good−nature is only equalled by the rotundity of his person, which is not a bad portraiture of our much−abused Sir John Falstaff, as represented by the heavy men of our country theatres. Now, to enter upon an analysis of the vast difference between Fetter's court in ordinary, and Fuddle's court in judiciary, would require the aid of more philosophy than we are capable of summoning; nor would the sagacious reader be enlightened thereby, inasmuch as the learned of our own atmosphere have spent much study on the question without arriving at any favourable result. Very low people, and intelligent negroes— whose simple mode of solving difficult problems frequently produces results nearest the truth—do say without fear or trembling that the distinction between these great courts exists in the fact of Justice Fuddle drinking the more perfect brandy. Now, whether the quality of brandy has anything to do with the purity of ideas, the character of the judiciary, or the tempering of the sentences, we will leave to the reader's discrimination; but true it is, that, while Fetter's judgments are always for the state, Fuddle leans to mercy and the master's interests. Again, were Fuddle to evince that partiality for the gallows which has become a trait of character with his legal brother, it would avail him nothing, inasmuch as by confirming Fetter's judgments the fees would alike remain that gentleman's. If, then, the reader reason on the philosophy of self−interest, he may find the fees, which are in no wise small, founding the great distinction between the courts of Messrs. Fuddle and Fetter; for by reversing Fetter's judgments fees accrue to Fuddle's own court, and belong to his own well−lined pocket; whereas, did he confirm them, not one cent of fees could he claim. The state should without delay remedy this great wrong, and give its judicial gentlemen a fair chance of proving their judgments well founded in contrariety. We should not, forsooth, forget to mention that Fuddle, in his love of decorum—though he scarce ever sat in judgment without absorbing his punch the while—never permitted in his forum the use of those knock−down arguments which were always a prelude to Fetter's judgments.

Before Fuddle's court, then, Grabguy has succeeded in getting a hearing for his convicted property, still mentally obstinate. Not the least doubt has he of procuring a judgment tempered by mercy; for, having well drunk Fuddle on the previous night, and improved the opportunity for completely winning his distinguished consideration, he has not the slightest apprehension of being many months deprived of his property merely to satisfy injured justice. And, too, the evidence upon which Nicholas was convicted in Fetter's court, of an attempt to create an insurrection—the most fatal charge against him—was so imperfect that the means of overthrowing it can be purchased of any of the attendant constables for a mere trifle,—oaths with such fellows being worth about sixty−two and a half cents each.

If the reader will be pleased to fancy the trial before Fetter's tribunal—before described—with the knock−down arguments omitted, he will have a pretty clear idea of that now proceeding before Fuddle's; and having such will excuse our entering into details. Having heard the case with most, learned patience, the virtue of which has been well sustained by goodly potions of Paul and Brown's perfect "London Dock," Fuddle, with grave deportment, receives from the hands of the clerical−looking clerk−a broken−down gentleman of great legal ability−the charge he is about to make the jury. "Gentlemen," he says, "I might, without any detriment to perfect impunity, place the very highest encomiums on the capabilities displayed in the seriousness you have given to this all−important case, in which the state has such deep and constitutional interests; but that I need not do here. The state having placed in my possession such responsible functions, no one more than me can feel the importance of the position; and which position has always been made the judicial medium of equity and mercy. I hold moderation to be the essential part of the judiciary, gentlemen! And here I would say" (Fuddle directs himself to his gentlemanly five) "and your intelligence will bear me out in the statement, that the trial below seems to have been in error from beginning to end. I say this−understand, gentlemen!—with all deference to my learned brother,

Fetter, whose judgments, in the exercise of the powers in me invested, and with that respect for legal equity by which this court is distinguished, it has become me so often to reverse. On the charge of creating an insurrection—rather an absurdity, by the way—you must discharge the prisoner, there being no valid proof; whereas the charge of maiming or raising his hand to a white man, though clearly proved, and according to the statutes a capital offence, could not in the spirit of mercy which now prevails in our judiciary—and, here, let me say, which is emulated by that high state of civilisation for which the people of this state are distinguished—be carried rigidly into effect. There is only this one point, then, of maiming a white gentleman, with intention—Ah! yes (a pause) the intention the court thinks it as well not to mind! open to you for a conviction. Upon this point you will render your verdict, guilty; only adding a recommendation to the mercy of the court." With this admonition, our august Mr. Fuddle, his face glowing in importance, sits down to his mixture of Paul and Brown's best. A few moments' pause—during which Fetter enters looking very anxious—and the jury have made up their verdict, which they submit on a slip of paper to the clerk, who in turn presents it to Fuddle. That functionary being busily engaged with his punch, is made conscious of the document waiting his pleasure by the audience bursting into a roar of laughter at the comical picture presented in the earnestness with which he regards his punch−some of which is streaming into his bosom−and disregards the paper held for some minutes in the clerk's hand, which is in close proximity with his nasal organ. Starting suddenly, he lets the goblet fall to the floor, his face flushing like a broad moon in harvest−time, takes the paper in his fingers with a bow, making three of the same nature to his audience, as Fetter looks over the circular railing in front of the dock, his face wearing a facetious smile. "Nigger boy will clear away the break,—prisoner at the bar will stand up for the sentence, and the attending constable will reduce order!" speaks Fuddle, relieving his pocket of a red kerchief with which he will wipe his capacious mouth. These requests being complied with, he continues−having adjusted his glasses most learnedly−making a gesture with his right hand—"I hold in my hand the solemn verdict of an intelligent jury, who, after worthy and most mature deliberation, find the prisoner at the bar, Nicholas Grabguy, guilty of the heinous offence of raising his hand to a white man, whom he severely maimed with a sharp−edged tool; and the jury in their wisdom, recognising the fact of their verdict involving capital punishment, have, in the exercise of that enlightened spirit which is inseparable from our age, recommended him to the mercy of this court, and, in the discretion of that power in me invested, I shall now pronounce sentence. Prepare, then, ye lovers of civilisation, ye friends of humanity, ye who would temper the laws of our land of freedom to the circumstance of offences—prepare, I say, to have your ears and hearts made glad over the swelling sound of this most enlightened sentence of a court, where judgments are tempered with mercy." Our hero, a chain hanging loosely from his left arm, stands forward in the dock, his manly deportment evincing a stern resolution to meet his fate unsubdued. Fuddle continues:—"There is no appeal from this court!" (he forgot the court of a brighter world) "and a reversing the decision of the court below, I sentence the prisoner to four years' imprisonment with hard labour, two months' solitary confinement in each year, and thirty blows with the paddle, on the first day of each month until the expiration of the sentence." Such, reader, was Fuddle's merciful sentence upon one whose only crime was a love of freedom and justice. Nicholas bowed to the sentence; Mr. Grabguy expressed surprise, but no further appeal on earth was open to him; Squire Fetter laughed immeasurably; and the officer led his victim away to the place of durance vile.

To this prison, then, must we go with our hero. In this magnificent establishment, its princely exterior seeming like a modern fort with frowning bastions, are some four hundred souls for sale and punishment. Among them Nicholas is initiated, having, for the time being, received his first installment of blows, and takes his first lesson in the act of breaking stone, which profession is exclusively reserved for criminals of his class. Among the notable characters connected with this establishment is Philip Fladge, the wily superintendent, whose power over the criminals is next to absolute. Nicholas has been under Philip's guardianship but a few months, when it is found that he may be turned into an investment which will require only the outlay of kindness and amelioration on his part to become extremely profitable. Forthwith a convention is entered into, the high contracting parties being Nicholas and himself. Mr. Fladge stipulates on his part that the said Nicholas, condemned by Fairweather Fuddle's court to such punishments as are set forth in the calendar, shall be exempt from all such punishments, have the free use of the yard, comfortable apartments to live in, and be invested with a sort of foremanship over his fellow criminals; in consideration of which it is stipulated on the part of Nicholas that he do work at the more desirable profession of stucco−making, together with the execution of orders for sculpture, the proceeds of which were to

be considered the property of Fladge, he allowing the generous stipend of one shilling a week to the artist. Here, then, Mr. Fladge becomes sensible of the fact that some good always come of great evils, for indeed his criminal was so far roving a mine of wealth that he only hoped it might be his fortune to receive many more such enemies of the state: he cared not whether they came from Fetter or Fuddle's court. With sense enough to keep his heart−burnings well stored away in his own bosom, Nicholas soon became a sort of privileged character. But if he said little, he felt much; nor did he fail to occupy every leisure moment in inciting his brother bondmen to a love of freedom. So far had he gained complete control over their feelings, that scarce two months of his sentence had expired ere they would have followed his lead to death or freedom.

Among those human souls stored for sale was one Sal Stiles, an olive wench of great beauty, and daughter of one of the very first families. This Sal Stiles, who was indeed one of the most charming creatures to look upon, had cousins whom the little world of Charleston viewed as great belles; but these said belles were never known to ring out a word in favour of poor Sal, who was, forsooth, only what−in our vulgar parlance−is called a well−conditioned and very marketable woman. Considering, then, that Nicholas had been separated by Grabguy from his wife and children, the indulgent reader, we feel assured, will excuse our hero for falling passionately in love with this woman. That it was stipulated in the convention between himself and Fladge, he should take her unto himself, we are not justified in asserting; nevertheless, that that functionary encouraged the passion rather than prevented their meetings is a fact our little world will not pretend to deny.

CHAPTER LI. A CONTINUATION OF THE LAST CHAPTER.

A YEAR and two months have rolled by, since Nicholas, a convict, took up his abode within the frowning walls of a prison: thus much of Fuddle's merciful sentence has he served out. In the dreary hours of night, fast secured in his granite cell, has he cherished, and even in his dreams contemplated, the means of escaping into that freedom for which his soul yearns. But, dearly does he love Sal Stiles, to whose keeping he confides the secret of his ambition; several times might he, having secured the confidence of Fladge, have effected his own escape; but the admonitions of a faithful heart bid him not leave her behind in slavery. To that admonition of his bosom did he yield, and resolve never to leave her until he secured her freedom. A few days after he had disclosed to her his resolution, the tall figure of Guy Grantham, a broker of slaves by profession, appeared in the prison yard, for the purpose of carrying away the woman, whom he had sold for the Washington market, where her charms would indeed be of much value during the session, when congress−men most do riot. Already were the inseparable chains about her hands, and the miserable woman, about to be led away, bathed in grief. Nicholas, in his studies, had just finished a piece of scroll−work for Mrs. Fladge, as a companion approached him in great haste, and whispered the word of trouble−"they're taking her away"−in his ear. Quick as lightning did the anger of his very soul break forth like a tempest: he rushed from his place of labour, vaulted as it were to the guard gate, seized the woman as she stepped on the threshold in her exit, drew her back with great force, and in a defiant attitude, drawing a long stiletto from his belt, placed himself between her and her destroyer. "Foes of the innocent, your chains were not made for this woman; never shall you bear her from this; not, at least, while I have arm to defend her, and a soul that cares not for your vengeance!" spake he, with curling contempt on his lip, as his adversaries stood aghast with fear and trembling. "Nay!−do not advance one step, or by the God of justice I make ye feel the length of this steel!" he continued, as Grantham nervously motioned an attempt to advance. Holding the woman with his left hand pressed backward, he brandished his stiletto in the faces of his opponents with his right. This was rebellion in its most legal acceptation, and would have justified the summary process Grantham was about adopting for the disposal of the instigator, at whose head he levelled his revolver, and, without effect, snapped two caps, as Nicholas bared his bosom with the taunt—"Coward, shoot!" Mr. Fladge, who was now made sensible of the error his indulgence had committed, could not permit Grantham the happy display of his bravery; no, he has called to his aid some ten subguardsmen, and addressing the resolute Grantham, bids him lay aside his weapon. Albeit he confesses his surprise at such strange insolence and interference; but, being responsible for the life, thinks it well to hold a parley before taking it. Forsooth his words fall useless on the ears of Nicholas, as defiantly he encircles the woman's waist with his left arm, bears her away to the block, dashes the chains from her hands, and, spurning the honied words of Fladge, hurls them in the air, crying: "You have murdered the flesh;—would you chain the soul?" As he spoke, the guard, having ascended the watch tower, rings out the first alarm peal. "Dogs of savage might! ring your alarms; I care not," he continued, casting a sardonic glance at the tower as the sound died away on his ear. His pursuers now made a rush upon him, but ere they had secured him he seized a heavy bludgeon, and repelling their attack, found some hundred of his companions, armed with stone hammers, rallying in his defence. Seeing this formidable force thus suddenly come to his rescue, Mr. Fladge and his force were compelled to fall back before the advance. Gallantly did Nicholas lead on his sable band, as the woman sought refuge in one of the cells, Mr. Fladge and his posse retreating into the guard−house. Nicholas, now in full possession of the citadel, and with consternation and confusion triumphant within the walls, found it somewhat difficult to restrain his forces from taking possession of the guardhouse, and putting to death those who had sought shelter therein. Calmly but firmly did he appeal to them, and beseech them not to commit an outrage against life. As he had placed himself between the woman and her pursuers, so did he place himself before a file of his sable companions, who, with battle hammers extended, rushed for the great gates, as the second alarm rung out its solemn peal. Counselling his compatriots to stand firm, he gathered them together in the centre of the square, and addressed them in a fervent tone, the purport of which was, that having thus suddenly and unexpectedly become plunged into what would be viewed by the laws of the land as insurrection, they must stand

on the defensive, and remember it were better to die in defence of right than live under the ignorance and sorrow of slavery.

While our hero−whose singular exploit we have divested of that dramatic effect presented in the original−addressed his forlorn band in the area of the prison, strange indeed was the scene of confusion presenting along the streets of the city. The alarm peals had not died ineffectual on the air, for as a messenger was despatched to warn the civil authorities of the sad dilemma at the prison, the great bell of St. Michael's church answered the warning peal with two loud rings; and simultaneously the city re−echoed the report of a bloody insurrection. On the long line of wharfs half circling the city, stood men aghast with fright; to the west all was quiet about the battery; to the south, the long rampart of dark moving pines that bordered on that side the calm surface of a harbour of unsurpassed beauty, seemed sleeping in its wonted peacefulness; to the east, as if rising from the sea to mar the beauty of the scene, stood fort Sumpter's sombre bastions, still and quiet like a monster reposing; while retracing along the north side of the harbour, no sign of trouble flutters from Fort Moultrie or Castle Pinkney−no, their savage embrasures are closed, and peace hangs in mists over their dark walls. The feud is in the city of democrats, wherein there are few who know not the nature of the warning peal; nor, indeed, act on such occasions like a world in fear, waiting but the tap of the watchman's baton ere it rushes to bloodshed.

In the busy portion of the city have men gathered at the corners of the street to hold confused controversy; with anxious countenances and most earnest gesticulations do they discuss the most certain means of safety. Ladies, in fright, speedily seek their homes, now asking questions of a passerby, whose intense excitement has carried off his power of speech, then shunning every luckless negro who chances in their way. The rumour of an insurrection, however falsely founded, turns every negro (of skin there is no distinction) into an enemy; whilst the second sound of the alarm peal makes him a bloody votary, who it needs but the booming of the cannon ere he be put to the sword. Guardsmen, with side−arms and cross−belts, are eager and confused, moving to and fro with heavy tread; merchants and men of more easy professions hasten from their labours, seek their homes, prepare weapons for the conflict, and endeavour to soothe the fears of their excited families, beseeching protection. That a deadly struggle is near at hand no one doubts, for men have gathered on the house−tops to watch the moving mass, bearing on its face the unmistakeable evidence of fear and anxiety, as it sweeps along the streets. Now the grotesque group is bespotted with forms half dressed in military garb; then a dark platoon of savage faces and ragged figures brings up the rear; and quickly catching the sound "To the Workhouse!" onward it presses to the scene of tumult. Firemen in curious habiliment, and half−accoutred artillerymen, at the alarm peal's call are rallying to their stations, as if some devouring element, about to break over the city, demanded their strongest arm; while eager and confused heads, protruded from green, masking shutters, and in terror, would know whither lies the scene of the outbreak. Alarm has beset the little world, which now moves a medley of fear and trembling.

The clock in St. Michael's tall spire has just struck two, as, in the arena of the prison, Nicholas is seen, halted in front of his little band, calmly awaiting the advance of his adversaries, who, fearing to open the great gates, have scaled the long line of wall on the north side. Suddenly the sound of an imploring voice breaks upon his ear, and his left hand is firmly grasped, as starting with surprise he turns and beholds the slave woman, her hair hanging loosely over her shoulders, and her face bathed in tears. With simple but earnest words does she admonish him against his fatal resolution. Fast, and in the bitter anguish of her soul, fall her implorings; she would have him yield and save his life, that she may love him still. Her words would melt his resolution, had he not taken the rash step. "In my soul do I love thee, woman!" he says, raising her gently to her feet, and imprinting a kiss upon her olive brow; "but rather would I die a hero than live a crawling slave: nay, I will love thee in heaven!" The woman has drawn his attention from his adversaries, when, in that which seems a propitious moment, they rush down from the walls, and ere a cry from his band warn him of the danger, have well nigh surprised and secured him. With two shots of a revolver pierced through the fleshy part of his left arm, does he bound from the grasp of his pursuers, rally his men, and charge upon the miscreants with undaunted courage. Short but deadly is the struggle that here ensues; far, indeed, shrieks and horrid groans rend the very air; but the miscreants are driven back from whence they came, leaving on the ground five dead bodies to atone for treble the number dead of our hero's band. In the savage conflict did the woman receive a fatal bullet, and now lies writhing in the agonies of death (a victim of oppression in a land of liberty) at our hero's feet. Not a moment is there to spare, that he may soothe her dying agonies, for a thundering at the great gates is heard, the bristling of fire−arms falls upon his ear, and the drums of the military without beat to the charge. Simultaneously the great gates swing

back, a solid body of citizen soldiery, ready to rush in, is disclosed, and our hero, as if by instinct moved to rashness, cries aloud to his forces, who, following his lead, dash recklessly into the soldiery, scatter it in amazement, and sweep triumphantly into the street. The first line of soldiery did not yield to the impetuous charge without effect, for seven dead bodies, strewn between the portals of the gate, account for the sharp report of their rifles. Wild with rage, and not knowing whither to go, or for what object they have rushed from the bounds of their prison house, our forlorn band, still flourishing their battle hammers, have scarcely reached the second line of military, stationed, in war order, a few squares from the prison, when our hero and nine of his forlorn band fall pierced through the hearts with rifle bullets. Our Nicholas has a sudden end; he dies, muttering, "My cause was only justice!" as twenty democratic bayonets cut into shreds his quivering body. Oh, Grabguy! thou wilt one day be made to atone for this thy guilt. Justice to thy slave had saved the city its foreboding of horror, and us the recital of a bloody tragedy we would spare the feelings of our readers by ending here.

Having informed the reader that Ellen Juvarna was mother of Nicholas, whom she bore unto Marston, we will now draw aside the veil, that he may know her real origin and be the better prepared to appreciate the fate of her child. This name, then, was a fictitious one, which she had been compelled to take by Romescos, who stole her from her father, Neamathla, a Creek Indian. In 1820, this brave warrior ruled chief of the Mickasookees, a tribe of brave Indians settled on the borders of the lake of that name, in Florida. Old in deeds of valour, Neamathla sank into the grave in the happy belief that his daughter, the long−lost Nasarge, had been carried into captivity by chiefs of a hostile tribe, in whose chivalrous spirit she would find protection, and religious respect for her caste. Could that proud spirit have condescended to suppose her languishing in the hands of mercenary slave−dealers, his tomahawk had been first dipped in the blood of the miscreant, to avenge the foul deed. From Romescos, Nasarge, who had scarce seen her twelve summers, passed into the hands of one Silenus, who sold her to Marston, for that purpose a fair slave seems born to in our democratic world.

And now again must we beg the indulgence of the reader, while we turn to the counter−scene of this chapter. The influence of that consternation which had spread throughout the city, was not long in finding its way to the citadel, a massive fort commanding the city from the east. On the plat in front are three brass field−pieces, which a few artillery−men have wheeled out, loaded, and made ready to belch forth that awful signal, which the initiated translate thus:—"Proceed to the massacre! Dip deep your knives in the heart of every negro!"

Certain alarm bells are rung in case of an insurrection of the negroes, which, if accompanied by the firing of three guns at the citadel, is the signal for an onslaught of the whites. The author, on asking a gentleman why he exhibited so much fear, or why he deemed it necessary to put to the sword his faithful servants, answered,—"Slaves, no matter of what colour, sympathise with each other in their general condition of slavery. I could not, then, leave my family to the caprice of their feelings, while I sought the scene of action to aid in suppressing the outbreak." At the alarm−bell's first tap were the guns made ready−at the second peal were matchlocks lighted−and nervous men waited in breathless suspense the third and last signal peal from the Guard Tower. But, in a moment that had nearly proved fatal to thousands, and as the crash of musketry echoed in the air, a confused gunner applied the match: two vivid flashes issued from the cannon, their peals booming successively over the city. It was at that moment, citizens who had sought in their domiciles the better protection of their families might be seen in the tragic attitude of holding savage pistols and glistening daggers at the breasts of their terrified but faithful servants,—those, perhaps, whose only crime was sincerity, and an earnest attachment to master's interests. The booming of a third cannon, and they had fallen, victims of fear, at the feet of their deluded victors. Happily, an act of heroism (which we would record to the fame of the hero) saved the city that bloody climax we sicken while contemplating. Ere the third gun belched its order of death, a mounted officer, sensible of the result that gun would produce, dashed before its angry mouth, and at the top of his voice cried out−"In Heaven's name, lay your matchlock down: save the city!" Then galloping to the trail, the gunner standing motionless at the intrepid sight, he snatched the fiery torch from his hand, and dismounting, quenched it on the ground. Thus did he save the city that awful massacre the misdirected laws of a democratic state would have been accountable for to civilisation and the world.

CHAPTER LII. IN WHICH ARE PLEASURES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.

IN a former chapter of this narrative, have we described our fair fugitive, Annette, as possessing charms of no ordinary kind; indeed, she was fair and beautiful, and even in the slave world was by many called the lovely blonde. In a word, to have been deeply enamoured of her would have reflected the highest credit on the taste and sentiment of any gallant gentleman. Seeming strange would it be, then, if the stranger to whose care we confided her (and hereafter to be called Montague, that being his Christian name) should render himself liable to the charge of stupidity did these attractions not make a deep impression on his heart. And here we would not have the reader lay so grave a charge at his door; for, be it known, ye who are not insensible to love's electric force, that scarce had they reached New York, ere Montague began to look upon Annette with that species of compassion which so often, in the workings of nature's mystery, turns the sympathies of the heart into purest love. The misery or happiness of this poor girl he viewed as dependent on himself: this, forsooth, was strengthened by the sad recital of her struggles, which caused his sympathies to flow in mutual fellowship with her sorrows. As he esteemed her gentleness, so was he enamoured of her charms; but her sorrows carried the captive arrow into his bosom, where she fastened it with holding forth that wrist broken in defence of her virtue: nay, more, he could not refrain a caress, as in the simplicity of her heart she looked in his face smilingly, and said she would he were the father of her future in this life. But, when did not slavery interpose its barbarous obstacles?−when did it not claim for itself the interests of federal power, and the nation's indulgence?−when did it not regard with coldest indifference the good or ill of all beyond its own limits? The slave world loves itself; but, though self−love may now and then give out a degree of virtue, slavery has none to lead those beyond its own atmosphere. To avoid, then, the terrors to which, even on the free soil of the north, a fugitive slave is constantly liable, as also that serpent−like prejudice—for into the puritanic regions of New England, forsooth, does slavery spread its more refined objections to colour—which makes the manners of one class cold and icy, while acting like a dagger in the hearts of the other, was it necessary to change her name. How many of my fair readers, then, will recur to and recognise in the lovely Sylvia De Lacy—whose vivacity made them joyous in their school days, and whose charms all envied−the person of Annette Mazatlin. Nothing could be more true than that the pretty blonde, Sylvia De Lacy, who passed at school as the daughter of a rich Bahamian, was but the humble slave of our worthy wag, Mr. Pringle Blowers. But we beg the reader to remember that, as Sylvia De Lacy, with her many gallant admirers, she is a far different person from Annette the slave.

Clotilda is made acquainted with the steps Montague has taken in behalf of his charge, as also of a further intention he will carry out at the expiration of two years; which said intention is neither more nor less than the making Sylvia De Lacy his bride ere her school days have ended. In the earnestness of a heart teeming of joy, does Clotilda respond to the disclosures she is pleased to term glad tidings. Oft and fervently has she invoked the All−protecting hand to save her child from the licentious snares of slavery; and now that she is rescued, her soul can rest satisfied. How her heart rejoices to learn that her slave child will hereafter be happy in this life! ever will she pray that peace and prosperity reward their virtues. Her own prospects brighten with the thought that she may, ere long, see them under her own comfortable roof, and bestow a mother's love on the head of her long−lost child.

And now my reader will please to suppose these two years of school−days passed−that nuptial ceremony in which so many mingled their congratulations, and showered blandest smiles upon the fair bride, celebrated in a princely mansion not far from the aristocratic Union Square of New York−and our happy couple launched upon that path of matrimony some facetious old gentlemen have been pleased to describe as so crooked that others fear to journey upon it. They were indeed a happy couple, with each future prospect golden of fortune's sunshine. Did we describe in detail the reign of happiness portended on the bright day of that nuptial ceremony, how many would recognise the gay figures of those who enlivened the scene−how deceptive would seem the fair face of events−how obscured would be presented the life of a slave in this our world of freedom−how false that democracy so boastful of its even−handed rule!

Two years have rolled into the past, since Montague led the fair Sylvia to the altar. Pringle Blowers has

pocketed the loss of his beauty, the happy couple have lost all thought of slavery, and a little responsibility coming in due time adds to make their happiness complete. Now the house to which Montague was connected in New York had an agent in New Orleans; which agent was his brother. In the course of time, then, and as the avenues of business expanded, was it deemed necessary to establish a branch house at Memphis, the affairs of which it was agreed should be conducted by Montague. To this new scene of life my reader will please suppose our happy couple, having journeyed by railroad to Cincinnatti, and with hearts gladdened of hope for the future, now gliding down that river of gorgeous banks, on board the good steamer bearing its name. As our young mother again enters the atmosphere of slavery, misgivings force themselves irresistibly upon her feelings. The very face of nature wears a sluggish air; the fresh, bright offspring of northern energy, so forcibly illustrated in the many cheerful looking villages here and there dotting its free soil, is nowhere to be seen,—society again puts forth its blighting distinctions: there is the man−owner's iron deportment contrasting with the abjectness of his slave: forcibly does the change recall scenes of the past. But, with the certain satisfaction that no one will recognize the slave in her, do those misgivings give way to the happier contemplation of her new home affording the means of extending a succouring hand to some poor mortal, suffering in that condition of life through which she herself has passed.

After a pleasant passage, then, do we find them comfortably settled in Memphis, that city of notorious character, where the venerable Lynch presides judge over all state cases, and administers summary justice according to the most independent of bar rules. Montague pursues the ordinary routine of a flourishing business, and moves among the very best society of the little fashionable world; with which his Sylvia, being the fair belle of the place, is not only a great favourite, but much sought after and caressed. Gentle as a slave, so was she an affectionate mother and dutiful wife. Some twelve months passed pleasantly at their new home, when there came to the city a Jew of the name of Salamons Finch. This Finch, who was "runner" to a commercial firm in the city of Charleston (he was lank of person, with sallow, craven features), knew Annette when but a child. Indeed, he was a clerk of Graspum when that gentleman sold the fair slave to Gurdoin Choicewest; in addition to which he had apartments at Lady Tuttlewell's most fashionable house, where the little doll−like thing used to be so sprightly in waiting at table. The quick eye of this harpy, as may readily be supposed, was not long in detecting the person of Annette the slave in our fair mother; which grand discovery he as soon communicated to Montague, pluming himself a generous fellow for being first to disclose what he supposed a valuable secret. Indeed, such was the force of association on this fellow, that he could not bring his mind to believe such a match possible, unless the fair fugitive (of the circumstances of whose escape he was well posted) had, by the exercise of strategy, imposed herself on the gentleman. The reader may easily picture to himself the contempt in which Montague held the fellow's generous expos,; but he as readily became sensible of the nature of the recognition, and of its placing him in a dangerous position. At first he thought of sending his wife and child immediately to her mother, in Nassau; but having intimations from the fellow that the matter might be reconciled with golden eagles, he chose rather to adopt that plan of procuring peace and quietness. With a goodly number of these gold eagles, then, did he from time to time purchase the knave's secrecy; but, with that singular propensity so characteristic of the race, was he soon found making improper advances to the wife of the man whose money he received for keeping secret her early history. This so exasperated Montague, that in addition to sealing the fellow's lips with the gold coin, he threatened his back with stripes of the raw hide, in payment of his insolence. Albeit, nothing but the fear of exposure, the consequences of which must prove fatal, caused him to bear with pain the insult while withholding payment of this well−merited debt. With keen instincts, and a somewhat cultivated taste for the beautiful, Finch might with becoming modesty have pleaded them in extenuation of his conduct; but the truth was, he almost unconsciously found himself deeply enamoured of the fair woman, without being able to look upon her as a being elevated above that menial sphere his vulgar mind conditioned for her when in slavery. Here, then, the reader will more readily conceive than we can describe the grievous annoyances our otherwise happy couple were subjected to; nor, if a freeman's blood course in his veins, can he fail to picture the punishment it so dearly merited. However, it came to pass that in the course of a few months this fellow disappeared suddenly, and nearly at the same time was Montague summoned to New Orleans to direct some complicated affairs of his brother, who lay a victim to that fearful scourge which so often devastates that city of balmy breezes. After due preparations for an absence of some two months, Montague set out on his journey; but had not been forty−eight hours gone, when Finch again made his appearance, and taking advantage of a husband's absence, pressed his advances with

grossest insult, threatening at the same time to convey information of the discovery to Pringle Blowers. Successively did these importunities fail to effect Mr. Finch's purpose; but he was of an indomitable temper, and had strong faith in that maxim of his race, which may be transcribed thus:—"If one effort fail you, try another." To carry out this principle, then, did Finch draw from the cunning inventive of his brain a plan which he could not doubt for a moment would be successful. The reader may blush while we record the fact, of Finch, deeming a partner necessary to the gaining his purpose, finding a willing accomplice in one of Montague's clerks, to whom he disclosed the secret of the fair woman being nothing more than a fugitive slave, whose shame they would share if the plan proved successful. This ingenious plan, so old that none but a fellow of this stamp would have adopted it, was nothing more than the intercepting by the aid of the clerk all Montague's letters to his wife. By this they came in possession of the nature of his family affairs; and after permitting the receipt of two letters by Sylvia, possessed themselves of her answers that they might be the better able to carry out the evil of their scheme. After sufficient time had passed, did Sylvia receive a letter, duly posted at New Orleans, purporting to have been written by a clerk in the employ of the firm, and informing her, having acknowledged becomingly the receipt of her letter, that Montague had been seized with the epidemic, and now lay in a precarious state. Much concerned was she at the painful intelligence; but she almost as soon found consolation in the assurances of the clerk who brought her the letter, and, to strengthen his own cause, told her he had seen a captain just arrived up, who had met her husband a day after the date of the letter, quite well. Indeed, this was necessary to that functionary's next move, for he was the conspirator of Finch, and the author of the letter which had caused so much sadness to the woman who now sought his advice. In suspense did the anxious woman wait the coming tidings of her affectionate husband: alas! in a few days was the sad news of his death by the fatal scourge brought to her in an envelope with broad black border and appropriate seal. Overwhelmed with grief, the good woman read the letter, describing her Montague to have died happy, as the conspirator looked on with indifference. The confidential clerk of the firm had again performed a painful and unexpected duty. The good man died, said he, invoking a blessing on the head of his child, and asking heaven to protect his wife; to which he would add, that the affairs of the house were in the worst possible condition, there not being assets to pay a fraction of the debts. And here we would beg the reader to use his imagination, and save us the description of much that followed. Not all their threats nor persuasions, however, could induce her to yield to their designs; defiantly did she repulse the advances of the crawling Finch; nobly did she spurn his persuasions; firmly did she, heedless of his threat to acquaint Pringle Blowers of her whereabouts, bid him be gone from her door. The fellow did go, grievously disappointed; and, whether from malice or mercenary motives we will not charge, sought and obtained from Pringle Blowers, in exchange for his valuable discovery, a promise of the original reward. Shudder not, reader, while we tell it! It was not many days ere the notorious Blowers set out for Memphis, recovered his lost property, who, like a lamb panting in the grasp of a pursuing wolf, was, with her young child, dragged back, a wretch, into the melancholy waste of slavery. Long and loudly was the grand discovery resounded through the little world of Memphis; not in sympathy for the slave, for many hearts were made glad with joy over what the fashionable were pleased to term a fortunate disclosure and a happy removal. Many very grave gentlemen said the miscreant who dared impose a slave on society, well merited punishment at the hands of the venerable Lynch,—a judge of that city whose celebrity is almost world wide.

CHAPTER LIII. A FAMILIAR SCENE, IN WHICH PRINGLE BLOWERS HAS BUSINESS.

OF a bright morning, not many days after Pringle Blowers returned with his fair slave to Charleston (which said slave he would not sell for gold), there sat on a little bench at the entrance gate of the "upper workhouse," the brusque figure of a man, whose coarse and firmly knit frame, to which were added hard and weather−stained features, indicated his having seen some fifty summers. But, if he was brusque of figure and coarse of deportment, he had a good soft heart in the right place; nor did he fail to exercise its virtues while pursuing the duties of a repulsive profession; albeit, he was keeper of the establishment, and superintended all punishments. Leisurely he smoked of a black pipe; and with shirt sleeves rolled up, a grey felt hat almost covering his dark, flashing eyes, and his arms easily folded, did he seem contemplating the calm loveliness of morning. Now he exhaled the curling fume, then scanned away over the bright landscape to the east, and again cast curious glances up and down the broad road stretching in front of his prison to the north and south. It was not long before a carriage and pair appeared on the hill to the south, advancing at a slow pace towards the city. The keeper's keen eye rested upon it intently, as it neared, bearing in a back seat what seemed to be a lady fine of figure and deportment; while on the front drove a figure of great rotundity, the broad, full face shining out like a ripe pumpkin in a sun shower. "It's Pringle Blowers, I do believe in my soul! but it's seeming strange how he's got a lady to ride with him," mused the man, who, still watching the approach, had quite forgotten the escape of the fair slave. The man was not mistaken, for as he touched his hat, on the carriage arriving opposite the gate, it halted, and there, sure enough, was our valiant democrat, who, placing his whip in the socket, crooked his finger and beckoned the keeper. "Broadman!" said he, (for that was the man's name) "I'ze a bit of something in your way of business this morning." The honest functionary, with seeming surprise, again touching his hat as he approached the vehicle, replied: "Your servant, sir!" Blowers motioned his hand to the woman, whose tears were now, to Broadman's surprise, seen coursing down her pale cheeks. To use a vulgar phrase, Broadman was entirely "taken aback" by the singularity of Blowers' manner; for the woman, whose dress and deportment the honest man conceived to be nothing less than that of a lady of one of the "first families," obeying the motion, began to descend from the carriage. "Now, Broadman," continued Blowers, arranging his reins, and with clumsy air making his descent over the fore wheels, "take that 'ar wench o' mine, and, by the State's custom, give her the extent of the law, well laid on."

The author here writes the incident as given by the prison−keeper. The man hesitated, as if doubting his senses; rather would he have been courteous to what he still viewed as a lady, than extend his rude hand to lead her away.

"Pardon me, Sir! but you cannot mean what you say," nervously spoke the man, as in doubt he exchanged glances first with the fair woman and then with Blowers. "I means just what I says," returned that gentleman, peremptorily; "you'ze hearn o' that 'un afore. She's a nigger o' mine, what runned away more nor six years ago; come, do the job for her, and no fussing over't." "Nigger!" interrupted the man, in surprise. "Yes!" rejoined Blowers, emphasising his assurance with oaths, of which he had a never−failing supply, "that's the cussed white nigger what's gin me all the bother. The whiter niggers is, the more devil's in em; and that ar' one's got devil enough for a whole plantation; 'tisn't the licks I cares about, but it's the humblin' on her feelings by being punished in the workhouse!" The man of duty was now brought to his senses, when, seeing Blowers was inclined to relieve his anger on what he was pleased to consider the stupidity of a keeper, he took the weeping but resolute woman by the arm, and called a negro attendant, into whose charge he handed her, with an order to "put her in the slings." Soon she disappeared within the gate, following the mulatto man. And here we will again spare the reader's feelings, by omitting much that followed. Blowers and Broadman follow the hapless woman, as she proceeds through a narrow passage leading to the punishment room, and when about half way to that place of torture, a small, square door opens on the right, into a dingy office, the keeper says is where he keeps his accounts with the State, which derives a large revenue from the punishments. Into this does the worthy man invite his patron, whom

he would have be seated while the criminal is got "all right" in the slings. Fain would Blowers go and attend the business himself; but Broadman saying "that cannot be," he draws from his pocket a small flask, and, seemingly contented, invites him to join in "somethin" he says is the very choicest. Broadman has no objection to encouraging this evidence of good feeling, which he will take advantage of to introduce the dialogue that follows. "Good sir," says he, "you will pardon what I am about to say, for indeed I feel the weakness of my position when addressing you, fortune having made a wide distinction between us; but judge me not because I am coarse of flesh, nor have polished manners, for I have a heart that feels for the unfortunate." Here Blowers interrupted the keeper by saying he would hear no chicken−hearted interpositions. "Remember, keeper," he added, "you must not presume on the small familiarity I have condescended to admit in drinking with you. I hold no controversies with prison−keepers (again he gulps his brandy) or their subs; being a servant of the state, I order you to give that wench the extent of the law. She shall disclose the secret of her escape, or I'll have her life; I'm a man what won't stand no nonsense, I am!" The keeper, rejoining, hopes he will pardon the seeming presumption; but, forsooth, notwithstanding necessity has driven him to seek a livelihood in his repulsive occupation, there is a duty of the heart he cannot betray, though the bread of his maintenance be taken from him. Blowers again assumes his dignity, rises from his seat, scowls significantly at the keeper, and says he will go put through the business with his own hands. "Good friend," says Broadman, arresting Blowers' progress, "by the state's ruling you are my patron; nevertheless, within these walls I am master, and whatever you may bring here for punishment shall have the benefit of my discretion. I loathe the law that forces me to, in such cases, overrule the admo− nitions of my heart. I, sir, am low of this world,—good! but, in regret do I say it, I have by a slave mother two fair daughters, who in the very core of my heart I love; nor would I, imitating the baser examples of our aristocracy, sell them hapless outcasts for life." Here Blowers again interrupted by allowing his passion to manifest itself in a few very fashionable oaths; to which he added, that he (pacing the room several times) would no longer give ear to such nonsense from a man of Broadman's position,—which was neither socially nor politically grand. "No doubt, good sir, my humble and somewhat repulsive calling does not meet your distinguished consideration; but I am, nevertheless, a man. And what I was about to say−I hope you will grant me a hearing−was, that having these two daughters−poverty only prevents my purchasing them−has made me sensible of these slaves having delicate textures. The unhappy possession of these daughters has caused me to reflect−to study constitutions, and their capacity to endure punishments. The woman it has pleased you to bring here for chastisement, I take it, is not coarse of flesh; but is one of those unfortunates whom kindness might reform, while the lash never fails to destroy. Why, then, not consider her in the light of a friendless wretch, whom it were better to save, than sink in shame? One word more and I am done" (Blowers was about to cut short the conversation); "the extent of the law being nothing less than twenty blows of the paddle, is most severe punishment for a woman of fine flesh to withstand on her naked loins. Nor, let me say−and here I speak from twelve years' experience−can the lady−I beg pardon, the slave you bring me!−bear these blows: no, my lips never spoke truer when I say she'll quiver and sink in spasms ere the second blow is laid on." Here−some twenty minutes having passed since the fair slave was led into the punishment room−Blowers cut short the conversation which had failed to thaw his resolution, by saying Broadman had bored his ears in spinning out his long song, and if he were unwilling to fulfil the duties of his office, such should be reported to the authorities, who would not permit workhouse−keepers so to modify their ordnances that black and white niggers have different punishments. "Nay, sir!" says the honest man, with an air of earnestness, as he rises from his seat; "follow me, and with the reality will I prove the truth of my words." Here he proceeds to that place of torments, the punishment−room, followed by Blowers; who says, with singular indifference−"Can do the job in five minutes; then I'll leave her with you for two, three, or four days or so. Then if she's civilly humbled down, I'll send my nigger fellow, Joe, with an order for her. Joe'll be the fellow's name; now, mind that: but you know my Joe, I reckon?" The keeper led the way, but made no reply; for indeed he knew nothing of his Joe, there being innumerable niggers of that name. As the men left the little office, and were sauntering up the passage, our worthy friend Rosebrook might be seen entering in search of Broadman; when, discovering Blowers in his company, and hearing the significant words, he shot into a niche, unobserved by them, and calling a negro attendant, learned the nature of his visit. And here it becomes necessary that we discover to the reader the fact of Rosebrook having been apprised of the forlorn woman's return, and her perilous position in the hands of Pringle Blowers; and, further, that the communication was effected by the negro man Pompe, who we have before described in connection with Montague at the time of his landing from the witch−like schooner.

This Pompe was sold to Blowers but a few months before Annette's recovery, and acting upon the force of that sympathy which exists among fellow slaves of a plantation, soon renewed old acquaintance, gained her confidence, and, cunningly eluding the owner's watchfulness, conveyed for her a letter to the Rosebrooks. In truth, Pompe had an inveterate hatred of Blowers, and under the incitement would not have hesitated to stake his life in defence of the fair woman. Now, the exacting reader may question Rosebrook's intrepidity in not proceeding at once to the rescue of the victim; but when we say that he was ignorant of the positive order given the keeper, and only caught distinctly the words−"I'll send my nigger fellow, Joe, with an order for her!" they may discover an excuse for his hastily withdrawing from the establishment. Indeed, that my reader may withhold his censure, it may be well to add that he did this in order to devise more strategical means of effecting her escape.

And now, ye who have nerves−let them not be shaken; let not your emotions rise, ye who have souls, and love the blessings of liberty; let not mothers nor fathers weep over democracy's wrongs; nor let man charge us with picturing the horrors of a black romance when we introduce the spectacle in the room of punishments: such, be it known, is not our business, nor would we trifle unjustly with the errors of society; but, if chivalry have blushes, we do not object to their being used here. The keeper, followed by Blowers, enters a small room at the further end of the passage. It is some sixteen feet long by twelve wide, and proportionately high of ceiling. The pale light of a tallow candle, suspended from the ceiling by a wire, and from which large flakes of the melted grease lay cone−like on the pine floor, discloses the gloom, and discovers hanging from the walls, grim with smoke, sundry curious caps, cords, leathern cats, and the more improved paddles of wood, with flat blades. The very gloom of the place might excite the timid; but the reflection of how many tortures it has been the scene, and the mysterious stillness pervading its singularly decorated walls, add still more to increase apprehension. A plank, some two feet wide, and raised a few inches, stretches across the floor, and is secured at each end with cleets. About midway of this are ropes securing the victim's feet; and through the dim light is disclosed the half nude body of our fair girl, suspended by the wrists, which are clasped in bands of cord, that, being further secured to a pulley block, is hauled taut by a tackle. Suddenly the wretched woman gives vent to her feelings, and in paroxysms of grief sways her poor body to and fro, imploring mercy! "Nay, master! think that I am a woman−that I have a heart to feel and bleed; that I am a mother and a wife, though a slave. Let your deeds be done quickly, or end me and save me this shame!" she supplicates, as the bitter, burning anguish of her goaded soul gives out its flood of sorrow. Chivalry, forsooth, lies cold and unmoved−Blowers has no relish for such inconsistency;—such whinings, he says, will not serve southern principles. The mulatto attendant has secured the fall, and stands a few feet behind Blowers and the keeper, as that functionary says, laying his coarse hands on the woman's loins, "How silky!" The mulatto man shakes his head, revengefully, making a grimace, as Broadman, having selected the smallest paddle (reminding us of the curious sympathy now budding between the autocratic knout and democratic lash) again addresses Blowers. "I doubt, sir," he says, "if the woman stand a blow. Necessity 's a hard master, sir; and in this very act is the test more trying than I have ever known it. I dissemble myself when I see a wretch of fine flesh−a woman with tender senses, in distress, and I am made the instrument of adding to her suffering. Indeed, sir, when I contemplate the cause of such wretchedness, and the poverty forcing me to remain in this situation, no imagination can represent the horror of my feelings."

"We have no demand on your feelings, my man! we want your duty−what the state put you here to perform," interrupted Blowers, placing his thumbs in his vest, and making a step backward. Another second, and the attendant lighted a hand−lamp,—a sharp, slapping blow was heard, a death−like shriek followed; the flesh quivered and contracted into a discoloured and inflamed pustule; the body writhed a few seconds in convulsive spasms; a low moaning followed, and that fair form hung swooning in the slings, as the keeper, in fright, cried out, at the top of his voice, to the attendant—"Lower away the fall!" As if the fiend had not yet gratified his passion, no sooner was the seemingly lifeless body lowered clumsily to the floor, than he grasped the weapon from Broadman's hand, and like a tiger seeking its banquet of flesh, was about to administer a second blow. But Broadman had a good heart, the admonitions of which soared high above the state's mandate: seizing Blowers in his arms, he ejected him from the door, ran back to the prostrate woman, released her bruised limbs from the fastenings, gathered her to his arms; and with nervous hands and anxious face did he draw from his pocket the well−timed hartshorn, by the application of which he sought to restore her, as the mulatto man stood by, bathing her temples with cold water. "Ah! shame on the thing called a man who could abuse a sweet creature of fine flesh, like thee! it's not many has such a pretty sweet face," says Broadman, with an air of compassion, resting her

shoulder against his bended knee as he encircles it with his left arm, and looks upon the pale features, tears glistening in his honest eyes. We might say with Broadman—"It's not the finest, nor the polished of flesh, that hath the softest hearts." But, reader, having performed our duty, let us drop the curtain over this sad but true scene; and when you have conjectured the third and fourth acts of the drama, join with us in hoping the chivalry of our State may yet awake to a sense of its position, that, when we again raise it, a pleasanter prospect may be presented.

CHAPTER LIV. IN WHICH ARE DISCOVERIES AND PLEASANT SCENES.

ST. PATRICK'S night closed the day on which the scenes of the foregoing chapter were enacted; and that patron saint being of aristocratic descent, which caused him to be held in high esteem by our "very first families," than among whom better admirers could nowhere be found, his anniversary was sure to be celebrated with much feasting and drinking. But while this homage to the good saint made glad the hearts of thousands−while the city seemed radiant of joy, and reeling men from Hibernia's gorgeous hall found in him an excuse for their revelries—there sat in the box of a caf,, situated on the west side of Meeting Street, two men who seemed to have a deeper interest at heart than that of the Saint's joy on his road to paradise. The one was a shortish man, coarse of figure, and whose browned features and figured hands bespoke him a sailor; the other was delicate of figure, with pale, careworn countenance and nervous demeanour. Upon the marble slab, on which they rested their elbows, sat a bottle of old Madeira, from which they sipped leisurely, now and then modulating their conversation into whispers. Then the man of brown features spoke out more at ease, as if they had concluded the preliminaries of some important business.

"Well, well,—now isn't that strange?" said he, sighing as he spread his brawny hands upon the white marble. "Natur's a curious mystery, though" (he looked intently at the other): "why, more nor twenty years have rolled over since I did that bit of a good turn, and here I is the very same old Jack Hardweather, skipper of the Maggy Bell. But for all that—and I'd have folks know it!—the Maggy's as trim a little craft as ever lay to on a sou'−easter; and she can show as clean a pair of heels as any other—barring her old top timbers complain now and then—to the best cutter as ever shook Uncle Sam's rags." His hard features softened, as in the earnest of his heart he spoke. He extended his hand across the table, grasping firmly that of his nervous friend, and continued—"And it was no other witch than the taunt Maggy Bell that landed that good woman safe on the free sands of old Bahama!" The Maggy, he tells the other, is now at the wharf, where the good wife, Molly Hardweather, keeps ship while the boys take a turn ashore.

"There's always a wise provision to relieve one's feelings when sorrow comes unexpectedly," returns the nervous man, his hand trembling as he draws forth the money to pay the waiter who answered his call.

"Yes!" quickly rejoined the other, "but keep up a good heart, like a sailor hard upon a lee shore, and all 'll be bright and sunny in a day or two. And now we'll just make a tack down the bay−street−and sight the Maggy. There's a small drop of somethin' in the locker, that'll help to keep up yer spirits, I reckon—a body's spirits has to be tautened now and then, as ye do a bobstay,—and the wife (she's a good sort of a body, though I say it) will do the best she can in her hard way to make ye less troubled at heart. Molly Hardweather has had some hard ups and downs in life, knows well the cares of a mother, and has had twins twice; yes"−adds the hardy seafarer−"we arn't polished folks, nor high of blood, but we've got hearts, and as every true heart hates slavery, so do we, though we are forced to dissemble our real feelings for the sake of peace in the trade." Here the delicate man took the sailor's arm, and sallied out to seek the little Maggy Bell, the former saying the meeting was as strange as grateful to his very soul. Down Market Street, shaded in darkness, they wended their way, and after reaching the wharf, passed along between long lines of cotton bales, piled eight and ten feet high, to the end, where lay motionless the pretty Maggy Bell, as clipper−like a craft as ever spread canvas. The light from the cabin shed its faint gleams over the quarter−deck, as Hardweather halted on the capsill, and with a sailor's pride run his quick black eye along her pirate−like hull, then aloft along the rigging. Exultingly, he says, "She is the sauciest witch that ever faced sea or showed a clean pair of heels. The Maggy Bell!"−he pats his friend on the shoulder−"why, sir, she has−just between ourselves now−slided many a poor slave off into freedom; but folks here don't think it of me. Now, if I reckon right"−he bites his tobacco, and extends it to the stranger−"and I believe I do, it's twenty years since the Maggy, of one dark night, skimmed it by that point, with Fort Pinkney on it, yonder, that good creature on board." He points to the murky mass, scarce visible in the distance, to the east. "And now she's one of the noblest women that ever broke bread to the poor; and she's right comfortable off, now,—alwa's has a smile, and a kind word, and something good for old Jack Hardweather whenever she sees him. Lord bless yer soul!"−here he shakes his head

earnestly, and says he never was a lubber−"Jack Hardweather didn't care about the soft shot for his locker; it was my heart that felt the kindness. Indeed, it always jumps and jerks like a bobstay in a head sea, when I meets her. And then, when I thinks how 'twas me done the good turn, and no thanks to nobody! You hearn of me 'afore, eh" (he turns to his companion, who measuredly answers in the affirmative). "Well, then, my name's Skipper Jack Hardweather, known all along the coast; but, seeing how the world and navigation's got shortened down, they call me old Jack Splitwater. I suppose it's by the way of convenience, and so neither wife nor me have a bit of objection." Here the conversation was interrupted by the good wife's round, cheery face shooting suddenly from out the companion−way, and enjoining our friend Jack to come away aboard, her high peaked cap shining like snow on a dark surface. The truth was, that Splitwater, as he was styled, had become so much absorbed in excitement as to forget the length of his yarn. "Come away, now!" says the good wife, "everybody's left the Maggy to−night; and ther's na knowin' what 'd a' become 'un her if a'h hadn't looked right sharp, for ther' wer' a muckle ship a'mast run her dune; an' if she just had, the Maggy wad na mar bene seen!" The good wife shakes her head; her rich Scotch tongue sounding on the still air, as with apprehension her chubby face shines in the light of the candle she holds before it with her right hand. Skipper Splitwater will see his friend on board, he says, as they follow her down the companion−ladder. "Wife thinks as much of the Maggy−and would, I believe in my soul, cry her life out if anything happened till her: wife's a good body aboard a ship, and can take a trick at the wheel just as well as Harry Span the mate." Skipper Splitwater leads the way into a little dingy cabin, a partition running athwart ships dividing it into two apartments; the former being where Skipper Hardweather "sleeps his crew" and cooks his mess, the sternmost where he receives his friends. This latter place, into which he conducts the nervous man, is lumbered with boxes, chests, charts, camp−seats, log lines, and rusty quadrants, and sundry marine relics which only the inveterate coaster could conceive a use for. But the good wife Molly, whose canny face bears the wrinkles of some forty summers, and whose round, short figure is so simply set off with bright plaid frock and apron of gingham check, in taste well adapted to her humble position, is as clean and tidy as ever was picture of mine Vrow Vardenstein. Nevertheless,—we know the reader will join us in the sentiment−that which gave the air of domestic happiness a completeness hitherto unnoticed, was a wee responsibility, as seen sprawling and kicking goodnaturedly on the white pillow of the starboard berth, where its two peering eyes shone forth as bright as new−polished pearls. The little darling is just a year old, Dame Hardweather tells us; it's a twin,—the other died, and, she knows full well, has gone to heaven. Here she takes the little cherub in her lap, and having made her best courtesy as Hardweather introduces her to his nervous friend, seats herself on the locker, and commences suckling it, while he points to the very place on the larboard side where Clotilda−"Ah! I just caught the name," he says,—used to sit and sorrow for her child. "And then," he continues, "on the quarter−deck she'd go and give such longing looks back, like as if she wanted to see it; and when she couldn't, she'd turn away and sigh so. And this, Molly," he continues, "is the self−same child my friend here, who I am as happy to meet as a body can be, wants me to carry off from these wolves of slavery; and if I don't, then my name's not Jack Splitwater!" So saying, he bustles about, tells the nervous man he must excuse the want of finery, that he has been a hard coaster for God knows how many years, and the little place is all he can afford; for indeed he is poor, but expects a better place one of these days. Then he draws forth from a little nook in the stern locker a bottle, which he says contains pure stuff, and of which he invites his visitor to partake, that he may keep up a good heart, still hoping for the best. The nervous man declines his kind invitation,—he has too much at heart, and the sight of the child so reminds him of his own now blighted in slavery. The good woman now becoming deeply concerned, Hardweather must needs recount the story, and explain the strange man's troubles, which he does in simple language; but, as the yarn is somewhat long, the reader must excuse our not transcribing it here. With anxious face and listening ears did the woman absorb every word; and when the earnest skipper concluded with grasping firmly the man's hand, and saying−"Just you scheme the strategy, and if I don't carry it out my name aint Jack Hardweather!" would she fain have had him go on. "Lack a day, good man!" she rejoined, fondling closer to her bosom the little suckling; "get ye the wee bairn and bring it hither, and I'll mak it t'uther twin−na body'll kno't! and da ye ken hoo ye may mak the bonny wife sik a body that nane but foxes wad ken her. Just mak her a brae young sailor, and the Maggy Bell 'll do the rest on't." Hardweather here interrupted Molly's suggestion which was, indeed, most fortunate, and albeit supplied the initiative to the strategy afterwards adopted−for slavery opens wide the field of strategy−by reminding the stranger that she had a long Scotch head. The night had now well advanced; the stranger shook the woman's hand firmly, and bade her good night, as a tear gushed into his eyes. The scene was indeed simple, but

touching. The hard mariner will accompany his friend to the wharf; and then as he again turns on the capsill, he cannot bid him good night without adding a few words more in praise of the little Maggy Bell, whose name is inscribed in gilt letters upon the flash−board of her stern. Holding his hand, he says: "Now, keep the heart up right! and in a day or two we'll have all aboard, and be in the stream waiting for a fair breeze−then the Maggy 'll play her part. Bless yer soul! the little craft and me's coasted down the coast nobody knows how many years; and she knows every nook, creek, reef, and point, just as well as I does. Just give her a double−reefed mainsail, and the lug of a standing jib, and in my soul I believe she'd make the passage without compass, chart, or a hand aboard. By the word of an old sailor, such a craft is the Maggy Bell. And when the Spanish and English and French all got mixed up about who owned Florida, the Maggy and me's coasted along them keys when, blowing a screecher, them Ingins' balls flew so, a body had to hold the hair on his head; but never a bit did the Maggy mind it." The stranger's heart was too full of cares to respond to the generous man's simplicity; shaking his hand fervently, he bid him good night, and disappeared up the wharf.

We apprehend little difficulty to the reader in discovering the person of Montague in our nervous man, who, in the absence of intelligence from his wife, was led to suspect some foul play. Nor were his suspicions unfounded; for, on returning to Memphis, which he did in great haste, he found his home desolate, his wife and child borne back into slavery, and himself threatened with Lynch law. The grief which threatened to overwhelm him at finding those he so dearly loved hurled back into bondage, was not enough to appease a community tenacious of its colour. No! he must leave his business, until the arrival of some one from New York, to the clerk who so perfidiously betrayed him. With sickened heart, then, does he−only too glad to escape the fury of an unreasoning mob−seek that place of bondage into which the captives have been carried; nay, more, he left the excited little world (reporting his destination to be New York) fully resolved to rescue them at the hazard of his life, and for ever leave the country. Scarcely necessary then, will it be for us to inform the reader, that, having sought out the Rosebrooks, he has counselled their advice, and joined them in devising means of relief. Blowers had declared, on his sacred honour, he would not sell the captives for their weight in gold.

Rosebrook had no sooner received Annette's letter from the hand of Pompe than he repaired to Blowers' plantation−as well to sound that gentleman's disposition to sell his captives, as a necessary precaution against the dangers he had incurred through his participation in the fair girl's escape; for albeit the disclosure might be extorted from her by cruelty. But Blowers was too much of a gentleman to condescend to sell his captive; nor would he listen to arguments in her behalf. Nevertheless, we will not underrate Blowers' character, that the reader may suppose him devoid of compassion; for−be it recorded to his fame−he did, on the morning following that on which the punishment we have described in the foregoing chapter took place, send the child, whose long and piercing cries he could no longer endure, to the arms of its poor disconsolate mother, whom he hoped would take good care of it.

Now, let not the reader restrain his fancy, but imagine, if he can, Pringle Blowers' disappointment and state of perturbation, when, three days after the punishment, he presented himself at Broadman's establishment, and was informed by that functionary that the fair mother was non est. With honest face did Broadman assert his ignorance of wrong. That he had not betrayed his duty he would satisfy the enraged man, by producing the very order on which he delivered them to Joe! "Yes, Joe was his name!" continues the honest man; "and he asserted his ownership, and told a straightforward story, and didn't look roguish." He passes the order over to Blowers, who, having examined it very cautiously, says: "Forgery, forgery!−'tis, by the Eternal!" Turning his fat sides, he approaches the window, and by the light reads each successive word. It is written in a scrawl precisely like his own; but, forsooth, it cannot be his. However, deeming it little becoming a man of his standing to parley with Broadman, he quickly makes his exit, and, like a locomotive at half speed, exhausting his perturbation the while, does he seek his way into the city, where he discovers his loss to the police. We have in another part of our history described Blowers as something of a wag; indeed, waggery was not the least trait in his curious character, nor was he at all cautious in the exercise of it; and, upon the principle that those who give must take, did he render himself a fit object for those who indulge in that sort of pastime to level their wit upon. On this occasion, Blowers had not spent many hours in the city ere he had all its convenient corners very fantastically decorated with large blue placards, whereon was inscribed the loss of his valuable woman, and the offer of the increased sum of four hundred dollars for her apprehension. The placards were wonderful curiosities, and very characteristic of Blowers, who in this instance excited no small amount of merriment among the city wags, each of whom cracked a joke at

his expense. Now it was not that those waggish spirits said of his placard things exceedingly annoying to his sensitive feelings, but that every prig made him the butt of his borrowed wit. One quizzed him with want of gallantry,—another told him what the ladies said of his oss,—a third pitied him, but hoped he might get back his property; and then, Tom Span, the dandy lawyer, laconically told him that to love a fair slave was a business he must learn over again; and Sprout, the cotton−broker, said there was a law against ornamenting the city with blue placards and type of such uncommon size. In this interminable perplexity, and to avoid the last−named difficulty, did he invoke the genius of the "bill−sticker," who obliterated the blue placards by covering them over with brown ones, the performance of which, Blowers himself superintended. This made the matter still worse, for with jocose smile did every wag say he had hung the city in mourning for his loss; which singular proceeding the ladies had one and all solemnly protested against. Now, Blowers regard for the ladies was proverbial; nor will it disparage his character to say that no one was more sensitive of their opinions concerning himself. In this unhappy position, then, which he might have avoided had he exercised more calmly his philosophy, did his perturbation get the better of him;—an object of ridicule for every wag, and in ill−favour with the very first ladies, never was perplexed man's temper so near the exploding point of high pressure. And here, forsooth, disgusted within the whole city, nor at all pleased with the result of his inventive genius, he sought relief in strong drinks and a week of dissipation; in which sad condition we must leave him to the reader's sympathy.

As some of our fair readers may be a little prudish, or exacting of character, and as we are peculiarly sensitive of the reputation some of the characters embodied in this history should bear to the very end, we deem it prudent here not to disclose the nature of the little forgery which was perpetrated at Blowers' expense, nor the means by which it was so cleverly carried out, to the release of the fair captives, who must now be got out of the city. Should we, in the performance of this very desirable duty, fail to please the reader's taste for hair−breadth escapes, unnatural heroism, and sublime disinterestedness, an excuse may be found in our lack of soul to appreciate those virtues of romance. We have no taste for breathless suspenses, no love of terror: we deal not in tragedy, nor traffic in dramatic effects. But as the simplest strategy is often the most successful of results, so did it prove in this particular case; for, be it known, that on the morning of the twenty−fourth of March,—, was Molly Hardweather's suggestion adopted and effectually carried out, to the gratification of sundry interested persons. Calm and bright was that morning; Charleston harbour and its pretty banks seemed radiant of loveliness: the phantom−like Maggy Bell, with mainsail and jib spread motionless in the air, swung gently at anchor midway the stream; and Dame Hardweather sat in the dingy cabin, her little chubby face beaming contentment as she nursed the "t'other twin." The brusque figure of old Jack, immersed in watchfulness, paced to and fro the Maggy's deck; and in the city as trim a young sailor as ever served signal halliards on board man−o'−war, might be seen, his canvas bag slung over his shoulder, carelessly plodding along through the busy street, for the landing at the market slip. Soon the Maggy's flying jib was run up, then the foresail followed and hung loose by the throat. Near the wheel, as if in contemplation, sat Montague, while Hardweather continued his pacing, now glancing aloft, then to seaward, as if invoking Boreas' all−welcome aid, and again watching intently in the direction of the slip. A few minutes more and a boat glided from the wharf, and rowed away for the little craft, which it soon reached, and on board of which the young sailor flung his bag, clambered over the rail, and seemed happy, as old Jack put out his brawny hand, saying: "Come youngster, bear a hand now, and set about brightening up the coppers!" We need not here discover the hearts that leaped with joy just then; we need not describe the anxiety that found relief when the young sailor set foot on the Maggy's deck; nor need we describe those eyes on shore that in tears watched the slender form as it disappeared from sight. Just then a breeze wafted from the north, the anchor was hove up, the sails trimmed home, and slowly seaward moved the little bark. As she drifted rather than sailed past Fort Pinkney, two burly officials, as is the custom, boarded to search for hapless fugitives; but, having great confidence in the honesty of Skipper Splitwater, who never failed to give them of his best cheer, they drank a pleasant passage to him, made a cursory search, a note of the names of all on board (Jack saying Tom Bolt was the young sailor's), and left quite satisfied. Indeed, there was nothing to excite their suspicions, for the good dame sat nursing the "twa twins," nor left aught to discover the discrepancy between their ages, if we except a pair of little red feet that dangled out from beneath the fringe of a plaid shawl. And the young sailor, who it is hardly necessary to inform the reader is Annette, was busy with his cooking. And now the little craft, free upon the wave, increased her speed as her topsails spread out, and glided swiftly seaward, heaven tempering the winds to her well−worn sails. God speed the Maggy Bell as she vaults over the sea; and may she never want water under keel, slaves to carry into

freedom, or a good Dame Hardweather to make cheerful the little cabin! say we.

And now, reader, join us in taking a fond farewell of the Rosebrooks, who have so nobly played their part, to the shame of those who stubbornly refuse to profit by their example. They played no inactive part in the final escape; but discretion forbids our disclosing its minuti‘. They sought to give unto others that liquid of life to which they owed their own prosperity and happiness; nor did selfish motive incite them to action. No; they sought peace and prosperity for the state; they would bind in lasting fellowship that union so mighty of states, which the world with mingled admiration and distrust watches; which in kindred compact must be mightier, which divided must fall! And while taking leave of them, hoping their future may be brightened with joys−and, too, though it may not comport with the interests of our southern friends, that their inventive genius may never want objects upon which to illustrate itself so happily−let us not forget to shake old Jack Hardweather warmly by the hand, invoking for him many fair winds and profitable voyages. A big heart enamelled of "coarse flesh" is his; but with his warm functions he has done much good; may he be rich in heaven's rewards, for he is poor in earth's!

CHAPTER LV. IN WHICH IS A HAPPY MEETING, SOME CURIOUS FACTS DEVELOPED, AND CLOTILDA'S HISTORY DISCLOSED.

IT was seven days after the sailing of the Maggy Bell, as described in the foregoing chapter, that Montague was seen sitting in the comfortably furnished parlour of a neat cottage in the suburbs of Nassau. The coal fire burned brightly in a polished grate; the carpets and rugs, and lolling mats, indicated of care and comfort; the tabbied furniture and chastely worked ottomans, and sofas, and chairs, and inlaid workstands, seem bright of regularity and taste; and the window curtains of lace and damask, and the scroll cornices from which they flowingly hung, and the little landscape paintings that hung upon the satin−papered walls, and the soft light that issued from two girandoles on the mantel−piece of figured marble, all lent their cheering aid to make complete the radiant picture of a happy home. But Montague sat nervous with anxiety. "Mother won't be a minute!" said a pert little fellow of some seven summers, who played with his hands as he sat on the sofa, and asked questions his emotions forbid answering. On an ottoman near the cheerful fire, sat, with happy faces, the prettily dressed figures of a boy and girl, older in age than the first; while by the side of Montague sat Maxwell, whose manly countenance we transcribed in the early part of our narrative, and to whom Montague had in part related the sad events of the four months past, as he heaved a sigh, saying, "How happy must he die who careth for the slave!" Ere the words had escaped his lips, the door opened, and the graceful form of a beautiful woman entered, her finely oval but pensive face made more expressive by the olive that shaded it, and those deep soul−like eyes that now sparkled in gentleness, and again flashed with apprehension. Nervously she paused and set her eyes with intense stare on Montague; then vaulted into his arms and embraced him, crying, "Is not my Annette here?" as a tear stole down her cheeks. Her quick eye detected trouble in his deportment; she grasped his left hand firmly in her right, and with quivering frame besought him to keep her no longer in the agony of suspense. "Why thus suddenly have you come? ah!−you disclose a deep−rooted trouble in not forewarning me! tell me all and relieve my feelings!" she ejaculated, in broken accents. "I was driven from that country because I loved nature and obeyed its laws. My very soul loved its greatness, and would have done battle for its glories−yea, I loved it for the many blessings it hath for the favoured; but one dark stain on its bright escutcheon so betrayed justice, that no home was there for me−none for the wife I had married in lawful wedlock." Here the woman, in agonising throbs, interrupted him by enquiring why he said there was no home for the wife he had married in lawful wedlock−was not the land of the puritans free? "Nay!" he answered, in a measured tone, shaking his head, "it is bestained not with their crimes−for dearly do they love justice and regard the rights of man−but with the dark deeds of the man−seller, who, heedless of their feelings, and despising their moral rectitude, would make solitary those happy homes that brighten in greatness over its soil." Again, frantic of anxiety, did the woman interrupt him: "Heavens!−she is not dragged back into slavery?" she enquired, her emotions rising beyond her power of restraint, as she drew bitter pangs from painful truths. With countenance bathed in trouble did Montague return her solicitous glance, and speak. "Into slavery" he muttered, in half choked accents "was she hurled back." He had not finished the sentence ere anxiety burst its bounds, and the anxious woman shrieked, and fell swooning in his arms. Even yet her olive face was beautefully pale. The cheerful parlour now rung with confusion, servants bustled about in fright, the youthful family shrieked in fear, the father sought to restore the fond mother, as Montague chafed her right hand in his. Let us leave to the reader's conjecture a scene his fancy may depict better than we can describe, and pass to one more pleasant of results. Some half an hour had transpired, when, as if in strange bewilderment, Clotilda opened her eyes and seemed conscious of her position. A deep crimson shaded her olive cheeks, as in luxurious ease she lay upon the couch, her flushed face and her thick wavy hair, so prettily parted over her classic brow, curiously contrasting with the snow−white pillow on which it rested. A pale and emaciated girl sat beside her, smoothing her brow with her left hand, laying the right gently on the almost motionless bosom, kissing the crimsoning cheek, and lisping rather than speaking, "Mother, mother, oh mother!−it's only me." And then the wet courses on her cheeks told how the fountain of her soul had overflown. Calmly and vacantly the woman gazed on the fair girl, with whom she had been left alone. Then she raised her left hand to her brow,

sighed, and seemed sinking into a tranquil sleep. "Mother! mother! I am once more with my mother!" again ejaculates the fair girl, sobbing audibly; "do you not know me, mother?" Clotilda started as if suddenly surprised. "Do I dream?" she muttered, raising herself on her elbow, as her great soft eyes wandered about the room. She would know who called her mother. "'Tis me," said the fair girl, returning her glances, "do you not know your Annette−your slave child?" Indeed the fair girl was not of that bright countenance she had anticipated meeting, for though the punishment had little soiled her flesh the dagger of disgrace had cut deep into her heart, and spread its poison over her soul. "This my Annette!" exclaimed Clotilda, throwing her arms about the fair girl's neck, drawing her frantically to her bosom, and bathing her cheeks with her tears of joy. "Yes, yes, 'tis my long−lost child; 'tis she for whom my soul has longed−God has been merciful, rescued her from the yawning death of slavery, and given her back to her mother! Oh, no, I do not dream−it is my child,—my Annette!" she continued. Long and affectionately did they mingle their tears and kisses. And now a fond mother's joy seemed complete, a child's sorrow ended, and a happy family were made happier. Again the family gathered into the room, where, as of one accord, they poured out their affectionate congratulations. One after another were the children enjoined to greet Annette, kiss her, and call her sister. To them the meeting was as strange as to the parents it was radiant of joy. "Mother!" said the little boy, as he took Annette by the hand and called her sister, and kissed her as she kissed him, "was you married before you was married to father?" The affectionate mother had no answer to make; she might have found one in the ignominy of the slave world. And now, when the measure of joy seemed full−when the bitterness of the past dwindled away like a dream, and when the future like a beacon hung out its light of promise,—Clotilda drew from a small workstand a discoloured paper written over in Greek characters, scarce intelligible. "Annette!" said she, "my mother gave me this when last I saw her. The chains were then about her hands, and she was about to be led away to the far south slave market: by it did I discover my history." Here she unfolded its defaced pages, lifted her eyes upwards invokingly, and continued—"To speak the crimes of great men is to hazard an oblivion for yourself, to bring upon you the indifference of the multitude; but great men are often greatest in crime−for so it proved with those who completed my mother's destruction. Give ear, then, ye grave senators, and if ye have hearts of fathers, lend them! listen, ye queen mothers of my country, whose sons and daughters are yet travelling the world's uncertainties! listen, ye fathers, who have souls above Mammon's golden grasp, and sons in whom ye put your trust! listen, ye brothers, whose pride brightens in a sister's virtue! listen, ye sisters, who enjoy paternal affections, and feel that one day you may grace a country's social life! listen, ye philanthropists, ye men of the world, who love your country, and whose hearts yearn for its liberties−ye men sensitive of our great Republic's honour, nor seek to traffic in the small gains of power when larger ones await you; and, above all, lend your hearts, ye brothers of the clergy in the slave church, and give ear while I tell who I am, and pray ye, as ye love the soul of woman, to seek out those who, like unto what I was, now wither in slavery. My grandfather's name was Iznard Maldonard, a Minorcan, who in the year 1767 (some four years after Florida was by the king of Spain ceded to Great Britain) emigrated with one Dr. Turnbull−whose name has since shone on the pages of history−to that land of sunshine and promise; for, indeed, Florida is the Italy of America. In that year did numerous of the English aristocracy conceive plans as various as inconsistent for the population and improvement of the colony. With a worthy motive did Lord Rolle draw from the purlieus of London [Footnote: See Williams' History of Florida, page 188.] State Papers, three hundred wretched females, whose condition he would better by reforming and making aid in founding settlements. This his lordship found no easy task; but the climate relieved him of the perplexity he had brought upon himself, for to it did they all fall victims in a very short time. But Turnbull, with motive less commendable, obtained a grant of his government, and, for the sum of four hundred pounds, (being then in the Peleponnesus) was the governor of Modon bribed into a permission to convey sundry Greek families to Florida, for colonization. Returning from Modon with a number of families, he touched at the islands of Corsica and Minorca, added another vessel to his fleet, and increased the number of his settlers to fifteen hundred. With exciting promises did he decoy them to his land of Egypt, which proved a bondage to his shame. He would give them lands, free passages, good provisions and clothing; but none of these promises did he keep. A long passage of four months found many victims to its hardships, and those who arrived safe were emaciated by sickness. Into the interior were these taken; and there they founded a settlement called New Smyrna, the land for which−some sixty thousand acres−was granted by the governor of Florida. Faithfully and earnestly did they labour for the promised reward, and in less than five years had more than three thousand acres of land in the highest state of cultivation; but, as Turnbull's prosperity increased, so did the demon avarice;

and men, women, and children, were reduced to the most abject slavery. Tasks greater than they could perform were assigned them, and a few Italians and negroes made overseers and drivers. For food the labourers were allotted seven quarts of corn per week. Many who had lived in affluence in their own country were compelled to wear osnaburgs, and go bare−foot through the year. More than nine years were those valuable settlers kept in this state of slavery, the cruelties inflicted upon them surpassing in enormity those which so stigmatised the savage Spaniards of St. Domingo. Drivers were compelled to beat and lacerate those who had not performed their tasks; many were left naked, tied all night to trees, that mosquitoes might suck their blood, and the suffering wretches become swollen from torture. Some, to end their troubles, wandered off, and died of starvation in the forest, and, including the natural increase, less than six hundred souls were left at the end of nine years. But, be it known to those whose hearts and ears I have before invoked, that many children of these unfortunate parents were fair and beautiful, which valuable charms singularly excited the cupidity of the tyrant, who betook himself to selling them for purposes most infamous. A child overhearing the conversation of three English gentlemen who made an excursion to the settlement, and being quick of ear, conveyed the purport of it to his mother, who, in the night, summoned a council of her confidants to concoct the means of gaining more intelligence. The boy heard the visitors, who stood in the great mansion, which was of stone, say, "Did the wretches know their rights they had not suffered such enormities of slavery." It was resolved that three ask for long tasks, under the pretext of gaining time to catch turtle on the coast; but having gained the desired time, they set off for St. Augustine, which they reached, after swimming rivers and delving almost impenetrable morasses. They sought the attorney−general of the province, Mr. Younge,—I speak his name with reverence−and with an earnest zeal did he espouse the cause of this betrayed people. At that time, Governor Grant−since strongly suspected of being concerned with Turnbull in the slavery of the Greeks and Minorcans−had just been superseded by Tonyn, who now had it in his power to rebuke a tyrant, and render justice to a long−injured people. Again, on the return of the envoys, who bore good tidings, did they meet in secret, and choose one Pallicier, a Greek, their leader. This man had been master mechanic of the mansion. With wooden spears were the men armed and formed into two lines, the women, children, and old men in the centre; and thus did they set off from the place of bondage to seek freedom. In vain did the tyrant−whose name democracy has enshrined with its glories−pursue them, and exhaust persuasion to procure their return. For three days did they wander the woods, delve morasses, and swim rivers, ere they reached the haven of St. Augustine, where, being provided with provisions, their case was tried, and, albeit, though Turnbull interposed all the perfidy wealth could purchase, their fredeom established. But alas! not so well was it with those fair daughters whom the tyrant sold slaves to a life of infamy, and for whose offspring, now in the bitterness of bondage, do we plead. Scores of these female children were sold by the tyrant; but either the people were drunk of joy over their own liberty, and forgot to demand the return of their children, or the good Younge felt forcibly his weakness to bring to justice the rich and great−for the law is weak where slavery makes men great−so as to make him disgorge the ill−gotten treasure he might have concealed, but the proof of which nothing was easier than to obliterate.

"Maldonard, then, was my grandfather; and, with my grandmother and three children, was of those who suffered the cruelties I have detailed. Two of his children were girls, fair and beautiful, whom the tyrant, under the pretext of bettering their condition in another colony, sold away into slavery. One was my dear mother." Here tears coursed down the woman's cheeks. "And she, though I blush to tell it, was sold to Rovero, who was indeed my father as well as Franconia's. But I was years older than Franconia−I visit her grave by day, and dream of her by night;—nor was it strange that she should trace the cause of similarity in our features. Forsooth, it was that singular discovery−of which I was long ignorant−coupled with the virtues of a great soul, that incited her to effect my escape. Rovero, ere he married Franconia's mother, sold Sylvia Maldonard, who was my mother; and may angels bring glad tidings of her spirit! Yes, true is it that my poor mother was sold to one Silenus, of whom Marston bought my body while heaven guarded the soul: but here would I drop the curtain over the scene, for Maldonard is dead; and in the grave of his Italian wife, ere he gained his freedom, was he buried." Here again the fond mother, as she concluded, lifted her eyes invokingly, fondled her long−lost child to her bosom,—smiled upon her, kissed her, and was happy.

CHAPTER LVI. IN WHICH A PLOT IS DISCLOSED, AND THE MAN−SELLER MADE TO PAY THE PENALTY OF HIS CRIMES.

WHILE the scenes which we have detailed in the foregoing chapter were being enacted at Nassau, there stood in the portico of a massive dwelling, fronting what in Charleston is called the "Battery Promenade," the tall and stately figure of a man, wrapped in a costly black cloak, the folds of which lay carelessly about his neck and shoulders. For some minutes did he stand, hesitating, and watching up and down the broad walk in front. The gas−light overhead shed its glare upon the freestone walls−for the night was dark−and, as he turned, discovered the fine features of a frank and open countenance, to which the flashing of two great intelligent eyes, a long silvery beard, and a flowing moustache, all shaded by the broad brim of a black felt hat, lent their aid to make impressive. Closer he muffled his face in the folds of his cloak, and spoke. "Time!" said he, in a voice musical and clear, "hath worn little on his great mansion; like his heart, it is of good stone." The mansion, indeed, was of princely front, with chiselled fa‡ade and great doric windows of deep fluted mouldings, grand in outline. Now a small hand stole from beneath his cloak, rapped gently upon the carved door of black walnut, and rang the bell. Soon the door swung open, and a negro in a black coat, white vest, and handkerchief of great stiffness, and nether garments of flashy stripes, politely bowed him into a hall of great splendour. Rows of statuary stood in alcoves along its sides; the walls dazzled with bright coloured paintings in massive gilt frames; highly coloured and badly blended mythological designs spread along the ceiling: the figure of a female, with pearly tears gushing from her eyes, as on bended knee she besought mercy of the winged angel perched above her, stood beside the broad stairway at the further end of the hall−strangely emblematical of the many thousand souls the man−seller had made weep in the bitterness of slavery; the softest rugs and costly Turkey carpets, with which its floor was spread, yielded lightly to the footfall, as the jetting lights of a great chandelier shed refulgence over the whole: indeed, what there lacked of taste was made up with air of opulence. The negro exhibited some surprise at the stranger's dress and manner, for he affected ease and indifference. "Is your master at leisure?" said he. "Business, or a friend?" inquired the negro, making one of his best bows, and drawing back his left foot. "Both," was the quick reply. "I, boy, am a gentleman!" "I sees dat, mas'r," rejoined the boy, accompanying his answer with another bow, and requesting the stranger's name, as he motioned him into a spacious drawing−room on the right, still more gorgeously furnished.

"My name is Major Blank: your master knows my name: I would see him quickly!" again spoke the stranger, as the boy promptly disappeared to make the announcement. The heavy satin−damask curtains, of finest texture, that adorned the windows; the fresco−paintings of the walls; the elaborate gilding that here and there in bad taste relieved the cornices; the massive pictures that hung in gauze−covered frames upon the walls; the chastely designed carpets, and lolls, and rugs, with which the floor gave out its brilliancy; the costly tapestry of the curiously carved furniture that stood here and there about the room; and the soft light of a curiously constructed chandelier, suspended from the left hand of an angel in bronze, the said angel having its wings pinioned to the ceiling, its body in the attitude of descending, and its right hand gracefully raised above the globe, spreading its prismatic glows over the whole, did indeed make the scene resplendent of luxury. The man carelessly seated himself at a table that stood in the centre of the room, threw the hat he had declined yielding to the negro on the floor beside him, rested the elbow of his left arm on the table, and his head in his hand, as with the fingers of his right hand did he fret the long silvery beard that bedecked his chin, and contemplate with eager gaze the scene around him. "Yea, the man−seller hath, with his spoils of greed, gotten him a gorgeous mansion; even he liveth like a prince, his head resteth more in peace, and because he hath great wealth of crime men seek to honour him. The rich criminal hath few to fear; but hard is the fate of him who hath not the wherewith to be aught but a poor one!" he muttered to himself, as the door opened, and the well−rounded figure of Graspum whisked into the room. The negro bowed politely, and closed the door after him, as the stranger's eye flashed upon his old acquaintance, who, bedecked somewhat extravagantly, and with a forced smile on his subtle countenance, advanced rubbing his hands one over the other, making several methodical bows, to which the stranger rose, as he

said, "Most happy am I to see you, Major! Major Blake, I believe, I have the pleasure of receiving?" Here the stranger interpolated by saying his name was not Blake, but Blank: the other apologised, said he was just entertaining a small but very select circle of friends; nevertheless, always chose to follow the maxim of "business before pleasure." Again he bustled about, worked his fingers with a mechanical air, frisked them through his hair, with which he covered the bald surface of his head, kept his little keen eyes leering apprehensively on what he deemed a ripe customer, whom he bid keep his seat. To an invitation to lay off his cloak the stranger replied that it was of no consequence. "A planter just locating, if I may be permitted to suggest?" enquired Graspum, taking his seat on the opposite side of the table. "No!" returned the other, emphatically; "but I have some special business in your line." The man of business, his face reddening of anxiety, rose quickly from his seat, advanced to what seemed a rosewood cabinet elaborately carved, but which was in reality an iron safe encased with ornamental wood, and from it drew forth a tin case, saying, as he returned and set it upon the table, "Lots from one to five were sold yesterday at almost fabulous prices−never was the demand for prime people better; but we have Lots (here he began to disgorge invoices) six, seven, eight, and nine left; all containing the primest of people! Yes, sir, let me assure you, the very choicest of the market." He would have the customer examine the invoices himself, and in the morning the live stock may be seen at his yard. "You cherish no evil in your breast, in opposition to the command of Him who reproved the wrong of malice; but you still cling to the sale of men, which you conceive no harm, eh, Graspum?" returned the stranger, knitting his brows, as a curl of fierce hatred set upon his lip. With an air of surprise did Graspum hesitate for a moment, and then, with a measured smile, said, "Why, Lord bless you! it would be a dishonour for a man of my celebrity in business to let a day escape without a sale; within the last ten days I have sold a thousand people, or more,—provided you throw in the old ones!" Here he again frisked his fingers, and leaned back in his chair, as his face resumed an air of satisfaction. The stranger interrupted as the man−seller was about to enquire the number and texture of the people he desired. "Graspum," said he, with significant firmness, setting his eyes upon him with intense stare,—"I want neither your men, nor your women, nor your little children; but, have you a record of souls you have sunk in the bitterness of slavery in that box"−here the stranger paused, and pointed at the box on the table−"keep it until you knock for admittance at the gates of eternity." It was not until this moment that he could bring his mind, which had been absorbed in the mysteries of man−selling, to regard the stranger in any other light than that of a customer. "Pardon me, sir!" said he, somewhat nervously, "but you speak with great familiarity." The stranger would not be considered intrusive. "Then you have forgotten me, Graspum?" exclaimed the man, with an ominous laugh. As if deeply offended at such familiarity, the man−seller shook his head rebukingly, and replied by saying he had an advantage of him not comprehensible. "Then have you sent my dearest relatives to an untimely grave, driven me from the home of my childhood, and made a hundred wretches swim a sea of sorrow; and yet you do not know me?" Indeed, the charges here recounted would have least served to aid the recognition, for they belonged only to one case among many scores that might have been enumerated. He shook his head in reply. For a minute did they,—the stranger scowling sarcastically upon his adversary (for such he now was),—gaze upon each other, until Graspum's eyes drooped and his face turned pale. "I have seen you; but at this moment cannot place you," he replied, drawing back his chair a pace. "It were well had you never known me!" was the stranger's rejoinder, spoken in significant accents, as he deliberately drew from beneath his cloak a revolver, which he laid on the table, warning his adversary that it were well he move cautiously. Graspum affects not to comprehend such importune demeanor, or conjecture what has brought him hither. Trembling in fright, and immersed in the sweat of his cowardice, he would proclaim aloud his apprehension; to which medium of salvation he makes an attempt to reach the door. But the stranger is too quick for him: "Calm your fears, Graspum," he says; "act not the child, but meet the consequences like a hero: strange is it, that you, who have sold twenty thousand souls, should shrink at the yielding up of one life!" concludes he, placing his back firmly against the door, and commanding Graspum to resume his seat. Having locked the door and placed the key in his pocket, he paced twice or thrice up and down the floor, seemingly in deep contemplation, and heaved a sigh. "Graspum!" he ejaculated, suddenly turning towards that terrified gentleman; "in that same iron chest have you another box, the same containing papers which are to me of more value than all your invoices of souls. Go! bring it hither!" Tremblingly did the man−seller obey the command, drew from the chest an antiquated box, and placed it hesitatingly upon the table. "I will get the key, if you will kindly permit me," he said, bowing, as the sweat fell from his chin upon the carpet. The stranger says it wants no key; he breaks it open with his hands. "You have long stored it with goodly papers; let us see of what

they are made," said he. Here Graspum commenced drawing forth package after package of papers, the inscriptions on which were eagerly observed by the stranger's keen eye. At length there came out a package of letters, superscribed in the stranger's own hand, and directed to Hugh Marston. "How came you by these?" enquired the stranger, grasping them quickly: "Ah, Graspum, I have heard all! Never mind,—continue!" he resumed. Presently there came forth a package addressed to "Franconia M'Carstrow," some of which the stranger recognised as superscribed by his mother, others by Clotilda, for she could write when a slave. Graspum would put this last aside; but in an angry tone did the stranger demand it, as his passion had well nigh got the better of his resolution. "How the deep and damning infamy discovers itself! Ah, Graspum, for the dross of this world hast thou betrayed the innocent. Through thine emissaries has thus intercepted these letters, and felt safe in thy guilt. And still you know not who I am?" Indeed, the man−seller was too much beside himself with terror to have recognised even a near friend. "My name is Lorenzo,—he who more than twenty years ago you beguiled into crime. There is concealed beneath those papers a bond that bears on its face the secret of the many sorrows brought upon my family." "Lorenzo!" interrupted Graspum, as he let fall a package of papers, and sat aghast and trembling. "Yes," replied the other, "you cannot mistake me, though time hath laid a heavy hand upon my brow. Now is your infamy complete!" Here the stranger drew forth the identical bond we have described in the early part of our history, as being signed by Marston, at his mansion, on the night previous to Lorenzo's departure. Bidding the man−seller move not an inch, he spread the document before him, and commanded him to read the contents. This he had not resolution to do. "Graspum!" spoke Lorenzo, his countenance flushed in passion; "you can see, if you cannot read; look ye upon the words of that paper (here he traced the lines with the forefinger of his right hand as he stood over the wretched miscreant) and tell me if it be honourable to spare the life of one who would commit so foul a deed. On the night you consummated my shame, forced me to relieve you by procuring my uncle's signature to a document not then filled up, or made complete, how little did I conjecture the germs of villainy so deep in your heart as to betray the confidence I reposed in you. You, in your avarice, changed the tenor of that instrument, made the amount more than double that which I had injudiciously become indebted to you, and transcribed it in the instrument, in legal phraseology, which you made a death−warrant to my nearest and dearest relatives. Read it, miscreant! read it! Read on it sixty−two thousand dollars, the cause of your anxiety to hurry me out of the city into a foreign land. I returned to seek a sister, to relieve my uncle, to live an honourable man on that home so dear in my boyhood, so bright of that which was pleasant in the past, to make glad the hearts of my aged parents, and to receive the sweet forgiveness of those who honoured me when fortune smiled; but you have left me none of these boons−nay, you would have me again wander an outcast upon the world!" And now, as the miscreant fell tremblingly on his knees, and beseeching that mercy which he had denied so many, Lorenzo's frenzy surmounted all his resolution. With agitated hand he seized his revolver, saying, "I will go hence stained with a miscreant's blood." Another moment, and the loud shriek of the man−seller echoed forth, the sharp report of a pistol rung ominously through the mansion; and quivering to the ground fell dead a wretch who had tortured ten thousand souls, as Lorenzo disappeared and was seen no more.