

The Gilded Age, Part 1.

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) and Charles Dudley Warner

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THE GILDED AGE

A Tale of Today

by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner

1873

Part 1.

PREFACE.

This book was not written for private circulation among friends; it was not written to cheer and instruct a diseased relative of the author's; it was not thrown off during intervals of wearing labor to amuse an idle hour. It was not written for any of these reasons, and therefore it is submitted without the usual apologies.

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It will be seen that it deals with an entirely ideal state of society; and the chief embarrassment of the writers in this realm of the imagination has been the want of illustrative examples. In a State where there is no fever of speculation, no inflamed desire for sudden wealth, where the poor are all simple-minded and contented, and the rich are all honest and generous, where society is in a condition of primitive purity and politics is the occupation of only the capable and the patriotic, there are necessarily no materials for such a history as we have constructed out of an ideal commonwealth.

No apology is needed for following the learned custom of placing attractive scraps of literature at the heads of our chapters. It has been truly observed by Wagner that such headings, with their vague suggestions of the matter which is to follow them, pleasantly inflame the reader's interest without wholly satisfying his curiosity, and we will hope that it may be found to be so in the present case.

Our quotations are set in a vast number of tongues; this is done for the reason that very few foreign nations among whom the book will circulate can read in any language but their own; whereas we do not write for a particular class or sect or nation, but to take in the whole world.

We do not object to criticism; and we do not expect that the critic will read the book before writing a notice of it: We do not even expect the reviewer of the book will say that he has not read it. No, we have no anticipations of anything unusual in this age of criticism. But if the Jupiter, Who passes his opinion on the novel, ever happens to peruse it in some weary moment of his subsequent life, we hope that he will not be the victim of a remorse bitter but too late.

One word more. This is--what it pretends to be a joint production, in the conception of the story, the exposition of the characters, and in its literal composition. There is scarcely a chapter that does not bear the marks of the two writers of the book. S. L. C.
C. D. W.

[Etext Editor's Note: The following chapters were written by Mark Twain: 1-11, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 32-34, 36, 37, 42, 43, 45, 51-53, 57, 59-62; and portions of 35, 49, and 56. See Twain's letter to Dr. John Brown Feb. 28, 1874 D.W.]

CHAPTER I.

June 18--. Squire Hawkins sat upon the pyramid of large blocks, called the "stile," in front of his house, contemplating the morning.

The locality was Obedstown, East Tennessee. You would not know that Obedstown stood on the top of a mountain, for there was nothing about the landscape to indicate it--but it did: a mountain that stretched abroad over whole counties, and rose very gradually. The district was called the "Knobs of East Tennessee," and had a reputation like Nazareth, as far as turning out any good thing was concerned.

The Squire's house was a double log cabin, in a state of decay; two or three gaunt hounds lay asleep about the threshold, and lifted their heads

sadly whenever Mrs. Hawkins or the children stepped in and out over their bodies. Rubbish was scattered about the grassless yard; a bench stood near the door with a tin wash basin on it and a pail of water and a gourd; a cat had begun to drink from the pail, but the exertion was overtaking her energies, and she had stopped to rest. There was an ash-hopper by the fence, and an iron pot, for soft-soap-boiling, near it.

This dwelling constituted one-fifteenth of Obedstown; the other fourteen houses were scattered about among the tall pine trees and among the corn-fields in such a way that a man might stand in the midst of the city and not know but that he was in the country if he only depended on his eyes for information.

"Squire" Hawkins got his title from being postmaster of Obedstown--not that the title properly belonged to the office, but because in those regions the chief citizens always must have titles of some sort, and so the usual courtesy had been extended to Hawkins. The mail was monthly, and sometimes amounted to as much as three or four letters at a single delivery. Even a rush like this did not fill up the postmaster's whole month, though, and therefore he "kept store" in the intervals.

The Squire was contemplating the morning. It was balmy and tranquil, the vagrant breezes were laden with the odor of flowers, the murmur of bees was in the air, there was everywhere that suggestion of repose that summer woodlands bring to the senses, and the vague, pleasurable melancholy that such a time and such surroundings inspire.

Presently the United States mail arrived, on horseback. There was but one letter, and it was for the postmaster. The long-legged youth who carried the mail tarried an hour to talk, for there was no hurry; and in a little while the male population of the village had assembled to help. As a general thing, they were dressed in homespun "jeans," blue or yellow--here were no other varieties of it; all wore one suspender and sometimes two--yarn ones knitted at home,--some wore vests, but few wore coats. Such coats and vests as did appear, however, were rather picturesque than otherwise, for they were made of tolerably fanciful patterns of calico--a fashion which prevails thereto this day among those of the community who have tastes above the common level and are able to afford style. Every individual arrived with his hands in his pockets; a hand came out occasionally for a purpose, but it always went back again after service; and if it was the head that was served, just the cant that the dilapidated straw hat got by being uplifted and rooted under, was retained until the next call altered the inclination; many' hats were present, but none were erect and no two were canted just alike. We are speaking impartially of men, youths and boys. And we are also speaking of these three estates when we say that every individual was either chewing natural leaf tobacco prepared on his own premises, or smoking the same in a corn-cob pipe. Few of the men wore whiskers; none wore moustaches; some had a thick jungle of hair under the chin and hiding the throat--the only pattern recognized there as being the correct thing in whiskers; but no part of any individual's face had seen a razor for a week.

These neighbors stood a few moments looking at the mail carrier reflectively while he talked; but fatigue soon began to show itself, and one after another they climbed up and occupied the top rail of the fence, hump-shouldered and grave, like a company of buzzards assembled for supper and listening for the death-rattle. Old Damrell said:

"Tha hain't no news 'bout the jedge, hit ain't likely?"

"Cain't tell for sartin; some thinks he's gwyne to be 'long toreckly, and some thinks 'e hain't. Russ Mosely he tote ole Hanks he mought git to Obeds tomorrer or nex' day he reckoned."

"Well, I wisht I knowed. I got a 'prime sow and pigs in the, cote-house, and I hain't got no place for to put 'em. If the jedge is a gwyne to hold cote, I got to roust 'em out, I reckon. But tomorrer'll do, I 'spect."

The speaker bunched his thick lips together like the stem-end of a tomato and shot a bumble-bee dead that had lit on a weed seven feet away. One after another the several chewers expressed a charge of tobacco juice and delivered it at the deceased with steady, aim and faultless accuracy.

"What's a stirrin', down 'bout the Forks?" continued Old Damrell.

"Well, I dunno, skasely. Ole, Drake Higgins he's ben down to Shelby las' week. Tuck his crap down; couldn't git shet o' the most uv it; hit wasn't no time for to sell, he say, so he 'fotch it back agin, 'lowin' to wait tell fall. Talks 'bout goin' to Mozouri--lots uv 'ems talkin' that-away down thar, Ole Higgins say. Cain't make a livin' here no mo', sich times as these. Si Higgins he's ben over to Kaintuck n' married a high-toned gal thar, outen the fust families, an' he's come back to the Forks with jist a hell's-mint o' whoop-jamboree notions, folks says. He's tuck an' fixed up the ole house like they does in Kaintuck, he say, an' tha's ben folks come cler from Turpentine for to see it. He's tuck an gawmed it all over on the inside with plarsterin'."

"What's plasterin'?"

"I dono. Hit's what he calls it. 'Ole Mam Higgins, she tole me. She say she wasn't gwyne to hang out in no sich a dern hole like a hog. Says it's mud, or some sich kind o' nastiness that sticks on n' covers up everything. Plarsterin', Si calls it."

This marvel was discussed at considerable length; and almost with animation. But presently there was a dog-fight over in the neighborhood of the blacksmith shop, and the visitors slid off their perch like so many turtles and strode to the battle-field with an interest bordering on eagerness. The Squire remained, and read his letter. Then he sighed, and sat long in meditation. At intervals he said:

"Missouri. Missouri. Well, well, well, everything is so uncertain."

At last he said:

"I believe I'll do it.--A man will just rot, here. My house my yard, everything around me, in fact, shows' that I am becoming one of these cattle--and I used to be thrifty in other times."

He was not more than thirty-five, but he had a worn look that made him seem older. He left the stile, entered that part of his house which was the store, traded a quart of thick molasses for a coonskin and a cake of beeswax, to an old dame in linsey-woolsey, put his letter away, an went into the kitchen. His wife was there, constructing some dried apple pies; a slovenly urchin of ten was dreaming over a rude weather-vane of his own contriving; his small sister, close upon four years of age, was

sopping corn-bread in some gravy left in the bottom of a frying-pan and trying hard not to sop over a finger-mark that divided the pan through the middle--for the other side belonged to the brother, whose musings made him forget his stomach for the moment; a negro woman was busy cooking, at a vast fire-place. Shiftlessness and poverty reigned in the place.

"Nancy, I've made up my mind. The world is done with me, and perhaps I ought to be done with it. But no matter--I can wait. I am going to Missouri. I won't stay in this dead country and decay with it. I've had it on my mind sometime. I'm going to sell out here for whatever I can get, and buy a wagon and team and put you and the children in it and start."

"Anywhere that suits you, suits me, Si. And the children can't be any worse off in Missouri than, they are here, I reckon."

Motioning his wife to a private conference in their own room, Hawkins said: "No, they'll be better off. I've looked out for them, Nancy," and his face lighted. "Do you see these papers? Well, they are evidence that I have taken up Seventy-five Thousand Acres of Land in this county --think what an enormous fortune it will be some day! Why, Nancy, enormous don't express it--the word's too tame! I tell your Nancy----"

"For goodness sake, Si----"

"Wait, Nancy, wait--let me finish--I've been secretly bailing and fuming with this grand inspiration for weeks, and I must talk or I'll burst! I haven't whispered to a soul--not a word--have had my countenance under lock and key, for fear it might drop something that would tell even these animals here how to discern the gold mine that's glaring under their noses. Now all that is necessary to hold this land and keep it in the family is to pay the trifling taxes on it yearly--five or ten dollars --the whole tract would not sell for over a third of a cent an acre now, but some day people will be glad to get it for twenty dollars, fifty dollars, a hundred dollars an acre! What should you say to" [here he dropped his voice to a whisper and looked anxiously around to see that there were no eavesdroppers,] "a thousand dollars an acre!"

"Well you may open your eyes and stare! But it's so. You and I may not see the day, but they'll see it. Mind I tell you; they'll see it. Nancy, you've heard of steamboats, and maybe you believed in them--of course you did. You've heard these cattle here scoff at them and call them lies and humbugs,--but they're not lies and humbugs, they're a reality and they're going to be a more wonderful thing some day than they are now. They're going to make a revolution in this world's affairs that will make men dizzy to contemplate. I've been watching--I've been watching while some people slept, and I know what's coming.

"Even you and I will see the day that steamboats will come up that little Turkey river to within twenty miles of this land of ours--and in high water they'll come right to it! And this is not all, Nancy--it isn't even half! There's a bigger wonder--the railroad! These worms here have never even heard of it--and when they do they'll not believe in it. But it's another fact. Coaches that fly over the ground twenty miles an hour--heavens and earth, think of that, Nancy! Twenty miles an hour. It makes a main's brain whirl. Some day, when you and I are in our graves, there'll be a railroad stretching hundreds of miles--all the way down from the cities of the Northern States to New Orleans--and its got

to run within thirty miles of this land--may be even touch a corner of it. Well; do you know, they've quit burning wood in some places in the Eastern States? And what do you suppose they burn? Coal!" [He bent over and whispered again:] "There's world--worlds of it on this land! You know that black stuff that crops out of the bank of the branch?--well, that's it. You've taken it for rocks; so has every body here; and they've built little dams and such things with it. One man was going to build a chimney out of it. Nancy I expect I turned as white as a sheet! Why, it might have caught fire and told everything. I showed him it was too crumbly. Then he was going to build it of copper ore--splendid yellow forty-per-cent. ore! There's fortunes upon fortunes of copper ore on our land! It scared me to death, the idea of this fool starting a smelting furnace in his house without knowing it, and getting his dull eyes opened. And then he was going to build it of iron ore! There's mountains of iron ore here, Nancy--whole mountains of it. I wouldn't take any chances. I just stuck by him--I haunted him--I never let him alone till he built it of mud and sticks like all the rest of the chimneys in this dismal country. Pine forests, wheat land, corn land, iron, copper, coal--wait till the railroads come, and the steamboats! We'll never see the day, Nancy--never in the world---never, never, never, child. We've got to drag along, drag along, and eat crusts in toil and poverty, all hopeless and forlorn--but they'll ride in coaches, Nancy! They'll live like the princes of the earth; they'll be courted and worshiped; their names will be known from ocean to ocean! Ah, well-a-day! Will they ever come back here, on the railroad and the steamboat, and say, 'This one little spot shall not be touched--this hovel shall be sacred--for here our father and our mother suffered for us, thought for us, laid the foundations of our future as solid as the hills!'"

"You are a great, good, noble soul, Si Hawkins, and I am an honored woman to be the wife of such a man"--and the tears stood in her eyes when she said it. "We will go to Missouri. You are out of your place, here, among these groping dumb creatures. We will find a higher place, where you can walk with your own kind, and be understood when you speak--not stared at as if you were talking some foreign tongue. I would go anywhere, anywhere in the wide world with you I would rather my body would starve and die than your mind should hunger and wither away in this lonely land."

"Spoken like yourself, my child! But we'll not starve, Nancy. Far from it. I have a letter from Beriah Sellers--just came this day. A letter that--I'll read you a line from it!"

He flew out of the room. A shadow blurred the sunlight in Nancy's face --there was uneasiness in it, and disappointment. A procession of disturbing thoughts began to troop through her mind. Saying nothing aloud, she sat with her hands in her lap; now and then she clasped them, then unclasped them, then tapped the ends of the fingers together; sighed, nodded, smiled--occasionally paused, shook her head. This pantomime was the elocutionary expression of an unspoken soliloquy which had something of this shape:

"I was afraid of it--was afraid of it. Trying to make our fortune in Virginia, Beriah Sellers nearly ruined us and we had to settle in Kentucky and start over again. Trying to make our fortune in Kentucky he crippled us again and we had to move here. Trying to make our fortune here, he brought us clear down to the ground, nearly. He's an honest soul, and means the very best in the world, but I'm afraid, I'm afraid

he's too flighty. He has splendid ideas, and he'll divide his chances with his friends with a free hand, the good generous soul, but something does seem to always interfere and spoil everything. I never did think he was right well balanced. But I don't blame my husband, for I do think that when that man gets his head full of a new notion, he can out-talk a machine. He'll make anybody believe in that notion that'll listen to him ten minutes--why I do believe he would make a deaf and dumb man believe in it and get beside himself, if you only set him where he could see his eyes tally and watch his hands explain. What a head he has got! When he got up that idea there in Virginia of buying up whole loads of negroes in Delaware and Virginia and Tennessee, very quiet, having papers drawn to have them delivered at a place in Alabama and take them and pay for them, away yonder at a certain time, and then in the meantime get a law made stopping everybody from selling negroes to the south after a certain day --it was somehow that way--mercy how the man would have made money! Negroes would have gone up to four prices. But after he'd spent money and worked hard, and traveled hard, and had heaps of negroes all contracted for, and everything going along just right, he couldn't get the laws passed and down the whole thing tumbled. And there in Kentucky, when he raked up that old numskull that had been inventing away at a perpetual motion machine for twenty-two years, and Beriah Sellers saw at a glance where just one more little cog-wheel would settle the business, why I could see it as plain as day when he came in wild at midnight and hammered us out of bed and told the whole thing in a whisper with the doors bolted and the candle in an empty barrel. Oceans of money in it --anybody could see that. But it did cost a deal to buy the old numskull out--and then when they put the new cog wheel in they'd overlooked something somewhere and it wasn't any use--the troublesome thing wouldn't go. That notion he got up here did look as handy as anything in the world; and how him and Si did sit up nights working at it with the curtains down and me watching to see if any neighbors were about. The man did honestly believe there was a fortune in that black gummy oil that stews out of the bank Si says is coal; and he refined it himself till it was like water, nearly, and it did burn, there's no two ways about that; and I reckon he'd have been all right in Cincinnati with his lamp that he got made, that time he got a house full of rich speculators to see him exhibit only in the middle of his speech it let go and almost blew the heads off the whole crowd. I haven't got over grieving for the money that cost yet. I am sorry enough Beriah Sellers is in Missouri, now, but I was glad when he went. I wonder what his letter says. But of course it's cheerful; he's never down-hearted--never had any trouble in his life--didn't know it if he had. It's always sunrise with that man, and fine and blazing, at that--never gets noon; though--leaves off and rises again. Nobody can help liking the creature, he means so well--but I do dread to come across him again; he's bound to set us all crazy, of course. Well, there goes old widow Hopkins--it always takes her a week to buy a spool of thread and trade a hank of yarn. Maybe Si can come with the letter, now."

And he did:

"Widow Hopkins kept me--I haven't any patience with such tedious people. Now listen, Nancy--just listen at this:

"Come right along to Missouri! Don't wait and worry about a good price but sell out for whatever you can get, and come along, or you might be too late. Throw away your traps, if necessary, and come empty-handed. You'll never regret it. It's the grandest country --the loveliest land--the purest atmosphere--I can't describe it; no

pen can do it justice. And it's filling up, every day--people coming from everywhere. I've got the biggest scheme on earth--and I'll take you in; I'll take in every friend I've got that's ever stood by me, for there's enough for all, and to spare. Mum's the word--don't whisper--keep yourself to yourself. You'll see! Come! --rush!--hurry!--don't wait for anything!

"It's the same old boy, Nancy, jest the same old boy--ain't he?"

"Yes, I think there's a little of the old sound about his voice yet. I suppose you--you'll still go, Si?"

"Go! Well, I should think so, Nancy. It's all a chance, of course, and, chances haven't been kind to us, I'll admit--but whatever comes, old wife, they're provided for. Thank God for that!"

"Amen," came low and earnestly.

And with an activity and a suddenness that bewildered Obedstown and almost took its breath away, the Hawkinses hurried through with their arrangements in four short months and flitted out into the great mysterious blank that lay beyond the Knobs of Tennessee.

CHAPTER II.

Toward the close of the third day's journey the wayfarers were just beginning to think of camping, when they came upon a log cabin in the woods. Hawkins drew rein and entered the yard. A boy about ten years old was sitting in the cabin door with his face bowed in his hands. Hawkins approached, expecting his footfall to attract attention, but it did not. He halted a moment, and then said:

"Come, come, little chap, you mustn't be going to sleep before sundown"

With a tired expression the small face came up out of the hands,--a face down which tears were flowing.

"Ah, I'm sorry I spoke so, my boy. Tell me--is anything the matter?"

The boy signified with a scarcely perceptible gesture that the trouble was in the house, and made room for Hawkins to pass. Then he put his face in his hands again and rocked himself about as one suffering a grief that is too deep to find help in moan or groan or outcry. Hawkins stepped within. It was a poverty stricken place. Six or eight middle-aged country people of both sexes were grouped about an object in the middle of the room; they were noiselessly busy and they talked in whispers when they spoke. Hawkins uncovered and approached. A coffin stood upon two backless chairs. These neighbors had just finished disposing the body of a woman in it--a woman with a careworn, gentle face that had more the look of sleep about it than of death. An old lady motioned, toward the door and said to Hawkins in a whisper:

"His mother, po' thing. Died of the fever, last night. Tha warn't no sich thing as saving of her. But it's better for her--better for her. Husband and the other two children died in the spring, and she hain't ever hilt up her head sence. She jest went around broken-hearted like,

and never took no intrust in anything but Clay--that's the boy thar. She jest worshiped Clay--and Clay he worshiped her. They didn't 'pear to live at all, only when they was together, looking at each other, loving one another. She's ben sick three weeks; and if you believe me that child has worked, and kep' the run of the med'cin, and the times of giving it, and sot up nights and nussed her, and tried to keep up her sperits, the same as a grown-up person. And last night when she kep' a sinking and sinking, and turned away her head and didn't know him no mo', it was fitten to make a body's heart break to see him climb onto the bed and lay his cheek agin hern and call her so pitiful and she not answer. But bymeby she roused up, like, and looked around wild, and then she see him, and she made a great cry and snatched him to her breast and hilt him close and kissed him over and over agin; but it took the last po' strength she had, and so her eyelids begin to close down, and her arms sort o' drooped away and then we see she was gone, po' creetur. And Clay, he--Oh, the po' motherless thing--I can't talk about it--I can't bear to talk about it."

Clay had disappeared from the door; but he came in, now, and the neighbors reverently fell apart and made way for him. He leaned upon the open coffin and let his tears course silently. Then he put out his small hand and smoothed the hair and stroked the dead face lovingly. After a bit he brought his other hand up from behind him and laid three or four fresh wild flowers upon the breast, bent over and kissed the unresponsive lips time and time again, and then turned away and went out of the house without looking at any of the company. The old lady said to Hawkins:

"She always loved that kind o' flowers. He fetched 'em for her every morning, and she always kissed him. They was from away north somers--she kep' school when she fust come. Goodness knows what's to become o' that po' boy. No father, no mother, no kin folks of no kind. Nobody to go to, nobody that k'yers for him--and all of us is so put to it for to get along and families so large."

Hawkins understood. All, eyes were turned inquiringly upon him. He said:

"Friends, I am not very well provided for, myself, but still I would not turn my back on a homeless orphan. If he will go with me I will give him a home, and loving regard--I will do for him as I would have another do for a child of my own in misfortune."

One after another the people stepped forward and wrung the stranger's hand with cordial good will, and their eyes looked all that their hands could not express or their lips speak.

"Said like a true man," said one.

"You was a stranger to me a minute ago, but you ain't now," said another.

"It's bread cast upon the waters--it'll return after many days," said the old lady whom we have heard speak before.

"You got to camp in my house as long as you hang out here," said one. "If tha hain't room for you and yourn my tribe'll turn out and camp in the hay loft."

A few minutes afterward, while the preparations for the funeral were being concluded, Mr. Hawkins arrived at his wagon leading his little waif

by the hand, and told his wife all that had happened, and asked her if he had done right in giving to her and to himself this new care? She said:

"If you've done wrong, Si Hawkins, it's a wrong that will shine brighter at the judgment day than the rights that many' a man has done before you. And there isn't any compliment you can pay me equal to doing a thing like this and finishing it up, just taking it for granted that I'll be willing to it. Willing? Come to me; you poor motherless boy, and let me take your grief and help you carry it."

When the child awoke in the morning, it was as if from a troubled dream. But slowly the confusion in his mind took form, and he remembered his great loss; the beloved form in the coffin; his talk with a generous stranger who offered him a home; the funeral, where the stranger's wife held him by the hand at the grave, and cried with him and comforted him; and he remembered how this, new mother tucked him in his bed in the neighboring farm house, and coaxed him to talk about his troubles, and then heard him say his prayers and kissed him good night, and left him with the soreness in his heart almost healed and his bruised spirit at rest.

And now the new mother came again, and helped him to dress, and combed his hair, and drew his mind away by degrees from the dismal yesterday, by telling him about the wonderful journey he was going to take and the strange things he was going to see. And after breakfast they two went alone to the grave, and his heart went out to his new friend and his untaught eloquence poured the praises of his buried idol into her ears without let or hindrance. Together they planted roses by the headboard and strewed wild flowers upon the grave; and then together they went away, hand in hand, and left the dead to the long sleep that heals all heart-aches and ends all sorrows.

CHAPTER III.

Whatever the lagging dragging journey may have been to the rest of the emigrants, it was a wonder and delight to the children, a world of enchantment; and they believed it to be peopled with the mysterious dwarfs and giants and goblins that figured in the tales the negro slaves were in the habit of telling them nightly by the shuddering light of the kitchen fire.

At the end of nearly a week of travel, the party went into camp near a shabby village which was caving, house by house, into the hungry Mississippi. The river astonished the children beyond measure. Its mile-breadth of water seemed an ocean to them, in the shadowy twilight, and the vague riband of trees on the further shore, the verge of a continent which surely none but they had ever seen before.

"Uncle Dan!"(colored,) aged 40; his wife, "aunt Jinny," aged 30, "Young Miss" Emily Hawkins, "Young Mars" Washington Hawkins and "Young Mars" Clay, the new member of the family, ranged themselves on a log, after supper, and contemplated the marvelous river and discussed it. The moon rose and sailed aloft through a maze of shredded cloud-wreaths; the sombre river just perceptibly brightened under the veiled light; a deep silence pervaded the air and was emphasized, at intervals, rather than broken, by the hooting of an owl, the baying of a dog, or the muffled

crash of a raving bank in the distance.

The little company assembled on the log were all children (at least in simplicity and broad and comprehensive ignorance,) and the remarks they made about the river were in keeping with the character; and so awed were they by the grandeur and the solemnity of the scene before them, and by their belief that the air was filled with invisible spirits and that the faint zephyrs were caused by their passing wings, that all their talk took to itself a tinge of the supernatural, and their voices were subdued to a low and reverent tone. Suddenly Uncle Dan'l exclaimed:

"Chil'en, dah's sum fin a comin'!"

All crowded close together and every heart beat faster.

Uncle Dan'l pointed down the river with his bony finger.

A deep coughing sound troubled the stillness, way toward a wooded cape that jetted into the stream a mile distant. All in an instant a fierce eye of fire shot out froth behind the cape and sent a long brilliant pathway quivering athwart the dusky water. The coughing grew louder and louder, the glaring eye grew larger and still larger, glared wilder and still wilder. A huge shape developed itself out of the gloom, and from its tall duplicate horns dense volumes of smoke, starred and spangled with sparks, poured out and went tumbling away into the farther darkness. Nearer and nearer the thing came, till its long sides began to glow with spots of light which mirrored themselves in the river and attended the monster like a torchlight procession.

"What is it! Oh, what is it, Uncle Dan'!"

With deep solemnity the answer came:

"It's de Almighty! Git down on yo' knees!"

It was not necessary to say it twice. They were all kneeling, in a moment. And then while the mysterious coughing rose stronger and stronger and the threatening glare reached farther and wider, the negro's voice lifted up its supplications:

"O Lord', we's ben mighty wicked, an' we knows dat we 'zerve to go to de bad place, but good Lord, deah Lord, we ain't ready yit, we ain't ready --let dese po' chilen hab one mo' chance, jes' one mo' chance. Take de ole niggah if you's, got to hab somebody.--Good Lord, good deah Lord, we don't know whah you's a gwyne to, we don't know who you's got yo' eye on, but we knows by de way you's a comin', we knows by de way you's a tiltin' along in yo' charyot o' fiah dat some po' sinner's a gwyne to ketch it. But good Lord, dose chilen don't b'long heah, dey's f'm Obedstown whah dey don't know nuffin, an' you knows, yo' own sef, dat dey ain't 'sponsible. An' deah Lord, good Lord, it ain't like yo' mercy, it ain't like yo' pity, it ain't like yo' long-sufferin' lovin' kindness for to take dis kind o' 'vantage o' sick little chil'en as dose is when dey's so many ornery grown folks chuck full o' cussedness dat wants roastin' down dah. Oh, Lord, spah de little chil'en, don't tar de little chil'en away f'm dey frens, jes' let 'em off jes' dis once, and take it out'n de ole niggah. HEAH I IS, LORD, HEAH I IS! De ole niggah's ready, Lord, de ole----"

The flaming and churning steamer was right abreast the party, and not

twenty steps away. The awful thunder of a mud-valve suddenly burst forth, drowning the prayer, and as suddenly Uncle Dan'l snatched a child under each arm and scoured into the woods with the rest of the pack at his heels. And then, ashamed of himself, he halted in the deep darkness and shouted, (but rather feebly:)

"Heah I is, Lord, heah I is!"

There was a moment of throbbing suspense, and then, to the surprise and the comfort of the party, it was plain that the august presence had gone by, for its dreadful noises were receding. Uncle Dan'l headed a cautious reconnaissance in the direction of the log. Sure enough "the Lord" was just turning a point a short distance up the river, and while they looked the lights winked out and the coughing diminished by degrees and presently ceased altogether.

"H'wsh! Well now dey's some folks says dey ain't no 'ficiency in prah. Dis Chile would like to know whah we'd a ben now if it warn't fo' dat prah? Dat's it. Dat's it!"

"Uncle Dan'l, do you reckon it was the prayer that saved us?" said Clay.

"Does I reckon? Don't I know it! Whah was yo' eyes? Warn't de Lord jes' a cumin' chow! chow! CHOW! an' a goin' on turrible--an' do de Lord carry on dat way 'dout dey's sumfin don't suit him? An' warn't he a lookin' right at dis gang heah, an' warn't he jes' a reachin' for 'em? An' d'you spec' he gwyne to let 'em off 'dout somebody ast him to do it? No indeedy!"

"Do you reckon he saw, us, Uncle Dan'l?"

"De law sakes, Chile, didn't I see him a lookin' at us?"

"Did you feel scared, Uncle Dan'l?"

"No sah! When a man is 'gaged in prah, he ain't fraid o' nuffin--dey can't nuffin tetch him."

"Well what did you run for?"

"Well, I--I--mars Clay, when a man is under de influence ob de sperit, he do-no, what he's 'bout--no sah; dat man do-no what he's 'bout. You mout take an' tah de head off'n dat man an' he wouldn't scasely fine it out. Date's de Hebrew chil'en dat went frough de fiah; dey was burnt considable--ob coase dey was; but dey didn't know nuffin 'bout it--heal right up agin; if dey'd ben gals dey'd missed dey long haah, (hair,) maybe, but dey wouldn't felt de burn."

"I don't know but what they were girls. I think they were."

"Now mars Clay, you knows bettern dat. Sometimes a body can't tell whedder you's a sayin' what you means or whedder you's a sayin' what you don't mean, 'case you says 'em bofe de same way."

"But how should I know whether they were boys or girls?"

"Goodness sakes, mars Clay, don't de Good Book say? 'Sides, don't it call 'em de HE-brew chil'en? If dey was gals wouldn't dey be de SHE-brew chil'en? Some people dat kin read don't 'pear to take no notice when dey

do read."

"Well, Uncle Dan'l, I think that----My! here comes another one up the river! There can't be two!"

"We gone dis time--we done gone dis time, sho! Dey ain't two, mars Clay--days de same one. De Lord kin 'pear eberywhah in a second. Goodness, how do fiah and de smoke do belch up! Dat mean business, honey. He comin' now like he fo'got sumfin. Come 'long, chil'en, time you's gwyne to roos'. Go 'long wid you--ole Uncle Daniel gwyne out in de woods to rastle in prah--de ole nigger gwyne to do what he kin to sabe you agin"

He did go to the woods and pray; but he went so far that he doubted, himself, if the Lord heard him when He went by.

CHAPTER IV.

--Seventhly, Before his Voyage, He should make his peace with God, satisfie his Creditors if he be in debt; Pray earnestly to God to prosper him in his Voyage, and to keep him from danger, and, if he be 'sui juris' he should make his last will, and wisely order all his affairs, since many that go far abroad, return not home. (This good and Christian Counsel is given by Martinus Zeilerus in his Apodemical Canons before his Itinerary of Spain and Portugal.)

Early in the morning Squire Hawkins took passage in a small steamboat, with his family and his two slaves, and presently the bell rang, the stage-plank; was hauled in, and the vessel proceeded up the river. The children and the slaves were not much more at ease after finding out that this monster was a creature of human contrivance than they were the night before when they thought it the Lord of heaven and earth. They started, in fright, every time the gauge-cocks sent out an angry hiss, and they quaked from head to foot when the mud-valves thundered. The shivering of the boat under the beating of the wheels was sheer misery to them.

But of course familiarity with these things soon took away their terrors, and then the voyage at once became a glorious adventure, a royal progress through the very heart and home of romance, a realization of their rosier wonder-dreams. They sat by the hour in the shade of the pilot house on the hurricane deck and looked out over the curving expanses of the river sparkling in the sunlight. Sometimes the boat fought the mid-stream current, with a verdant world on either hand, and remote from both; sometimes she closed in under a point, where the dead water and the helping eddies were, and shaved the bank so closely that the decks were swept by the jungle of over-hanging willows and littered with a spoil of leaves; departing from these "points" she regularly crossed the river every five miles, avoiding the "bight" of the great binds and thus escaping the strong current; sometimes she went out and skirted a high "bluff" sand-bar in the middle of the stream, and occasionally followed it up a little too far and touched upon the shoal water at its head--and then the intelligent craft refused to run herself aground, but "smelt" the bar, and straightway the foamy streak that streamed away from her bows vanished, a great foamless wave rolled forward and passed her under

way, and in this instant she leaned far over on her side, shied from the bar and fled square away from the danger like a frightened thing--and the pilot was lucky if he managed to "straighten her up" before she drove her nose into the opposite bank; sometimes she approached a solid wall of tall trees as if she meant to break through it, but all of a sudden a little crack would open just enough to admit her, and away she would go plowing through the "chute" with just barely room enough between the island on one side and the main land on the other; in this sluggish water she seemed to go like a racehorse; now and then small log cabins appeared in little clearings, with the never-failing frowsy women and girls in soiled and faded linsey-woolsey leaning in the doors or against woodpiles and rail fences, gazing sleepily at the passing show; sometimes she found shoal water, going out at the head of those "chutes" or crossing the river, and then a deck-hand stood on the bow and hove the lead, while the boat slowed down and moved cautiously; sometimes she stopped a moment at a landing and took on some freight or a passenger while a crowd of slouchy white men and negroes stood on the bank and looked sleepily on with their hands in their pantaloons pockets,--of course--for they never took them out except to stretch, and when they did this they squirmed about and reached their fists up into the air and lifted themselves on tip-toe in an ecstasy of enjoyment.

When the sun went down it turned all the broad river to a national banner laid in gleaming bars of gold and purple and crimson; and in time these glories faded out in the twilight and left the fairy archipelagoes reflecting their fringing foliage in the steely mirror of the stream.

At night the boat forged on through the deep solitudes of the river, hardly ever discovering a light to testify to a human presence--mile after mile and league after league the vast bends were guarded by unbroken walls of forest that had never been disturbed by the voice or the foot-fall of man or felt the edge of his sacrilegious axe.

An hour after supper the moon came up, and Clay and Washington ascended to the hurricane deck to revel again in their new realm of enchantment. They ran races up and down the deck; climbed about the bell; made friends with the passenger-dogs chained under the lifeboat; tried to make friends with a passenger-bear fastened to the verge-staff but were not encouraged; "skinned the cat" on the hog-chains; in a word, exhausted the amusement-possibilities of the deck. Then they looked wistfully up at the pilot house, and finally, little by little, Clay ventured up there, followed diffidently by Washington. The pilot turned presently to "get his stern-marks," saw the lads and invited them in. Now their happiness was complete. This cosy little house, built entirely of glass and commanding a marvelous prospect in every direction was a magician's throne to them and their enjoyment of the place was simply boundless.

They sat them down on a high bench and looked miles ahead and saw the wooded capes fold back and reveal the bends beyond; and they looked miles to the rear and saw the silvery highway diminish its breadth by degrees and close itself together in the distance. Presently the pilot said:

"By George, yonder comes the Amaranth!"

A spark appeared, close to the water, several miles down the river. The pilot took his glass and looked at it steadily for a moment, and said, chiefly to himself:

"It can't be the Blue Wing. She couldn't pick us up this way. It's the

Amaranth, sure!"

He bent over a speaking tube and said:

"Who's on watch down there?"

A hollow, unhuman voice rumbled up through the tube in answer:

"I am. Second engineer."

"Good! You want to stir your stumps, now, Harry--the Amaranth's just turned the point--and she's just a--humping herself, too!"

The pilot took hold of a rope that stretched out forward, jerked it twice, and two mellow strokes of the big bell responded. A voice out on the deck shouted:

"Stand by, down there, with that labboard lead!"

"No, I don't want the lead," said the pilot, "I want you. Roust out the old man--tell him the Amaranth's coming. And go and call Jim--tell him."

"Aye-aye, sir!"

The "old man" was the captain--he is always called so, on steamboats and ships; "Jim" was the other pilot. Within two minutes both of these men were flying up the pilothouse stairway, three steps at a jump. Jim was in his shirt sleeves,--with his coat and vest on his arm. He said:

"I was just turning in. Where's the glass"

He took it and looked:

"Don't appear to be any night-hawk on the jack-staff--it's the Amaranth, dead sure!"

The captain took a good long look, and only said:

"Damnation!"

George Davis, the pilot on watch, shouted to the night-watchman on deck:

"How's she loaded?"

"Two inches by the head, sir."

"'T ain't enough!"

The captain shouted, now:

"Call the mate. Tell him to call all hands and get a lot of that sugar forrard--put her ten inches by the head. Lively, now!"

"Aye-aye, sir."

A riot of shouting and trampling floated up from below, presently, and the uneasy steering of the boat soon showed that she was getting "down by the head."

The three men in the pilot house began to talk in short, sharp sentences, low and earnestly. As their excitement rose, their voices went down. As fast as one of them put down the spy-glass another took it up--but always with a studied air of calmness. Each time the verdict was:

"She's a gaining!"

The captain spoke through the tube:

"What steam are You carrying?"

"A hundred and forty-two, sir! But she's getting hotter and hotter all the time."

The boat was straining and groaning and quivering like a monster in pain. Both pilots were at work now, one on each side of the wheel, with their coats and vests off, their bosoms and collars wide open and the perspiration flowing down heir faces. They were holding the boat so close to the shore that the willows swept the guards almost from stem to stern.

"Stand by!" whispered George.

"All ready!" said Jim, under his breath.

"Let her come!"

The boat sprang away, from the bank like a deer, and darted in a long diagonal toward the other shore. She closed in again and thrashed her fierce way along the willows as before. The captain put down the glass:

"Lord how she walks up on us! I do hate to be beat!"

"Jim," said George, looking straight ahead, watching the slightest yawing of the boat and promptly meeting it with the wheel, "how'll it do to try Murderer's Chute?"

"Well, it's--it's taking chances. How was the cottonwood stump on the false point below Boardman's Island this morning?"

"Water just touching the roots."

"Well it's pretty close work. That gives six feet scant in the head of Murderer's Chute. We can just barely rub through if we hit it exactly right. But it's worth trying. She don't dare tackle it!"--meaning the Amaranth.

In another instant the Boreas plunged into what seemed a crooked creek, and the Amaranth's approaching lights were shut out in a moment. Not a whisper was uttered, now, but the three men stared ahead into the shadows and two of them spun the wheel back and forth with anxious watchfulness while the steamer tore along. The chute seemed to come to an end every fifty yards, but always opened out in time. Now the head of it was at hand. George tapped the big bell three times, two leadsmen sprang to their posts, and in a moment their weird cries rose on the night air and were caught up and repeated by two men on the upper deck:

"No-o bottom!"

"De-e-p four!"

"Half three!"

"Quarter three!"

"Mark under wa-a-ter three!"

"Half twain!"

"Quarter twain!-----"

Davis pulled a couple of ropes--there was a jingling of small bells far below, the boat's speed slackened, and the pent steam began to whistle and the gauge-cocks to scream:

"By the mark twain!"

"Quar--ter--her--er--less twain!"

"Eight and a half!"

"Eight feet!"

"Seven-ana-half!"

Another jingling of little bells and the wheels ceased turning altogether. The whistling of the steam was something frightful now--it almost drowned all other noises.

"Stand by to meet her!"

George had the wheel hard down and was standing on a spoke.

"All ready!"

The boat hesitated seemed to hold her breath, as did the captain and pilots--and then she began to fall away to starboard and every eye lighted:

"Now then!--meet her! meet her! Snatch her!"

The wheel flew to port so fast that the spokes blended into a spider-web--the swing of the boat subsided--she steadied herself----

"Seven feet!"

"Sev--six and a half!"

"Six feet! Six f----"

Bang! She hit the bottom! George shouted through the tube:

"Spread her wide open! Whale it at her!"

Pow-wow-chow! The escape-pipes belched snowy pillars of steam aloft, the boat ground and surged and trembled--and slid over into----

"M-a-r-k twain!"

"Quarter-her----"

"Tap! tap! tap!" (to signify "Lay in the leads")

And away she went, flying up the willow shore, with the whole silver sea of the Mississippi stretching abroad on every hand.

No Amaranth in sight!

"Ha-ha, boys, we took a couple of tricks that time!" said the captain.

And just at that moment a red glare appeared in the head of the chute and the Amaranth came springing after them!

"Well, I swear!"

"Jim, what is the meaning of that?"

"I'll tell you what's the meaning of it. That hail we had at Napoleon was Wash Hastings, wanting to come to Cairo--and we didn't stop. He's in that pilot house, now, showing those mud turtles how to hunt for easy water."

"That's it! I thought it wasn't any slouch that was running that middle bar in Hog-eye Bend. If it's Wash Hastings--well, what he don't know about the river ain't worth knowing--a regular gold-leaf, kid-glove, diamond breastpin pilot Wash Hastings is. We won't take any tricks off of him, old man!"

"I wish I'd a stopped for him, that's all."

The Amaranth was within three hundred yards of the Boreas, and still gaining. The "old man" spoke through the tube:

"What is she-carrying now?"

"A hundred and sixty-five, sir!"

"How's your wood?"

"Pine all out-cypress half gone-eating up cotton-wood like pie!"

"Break into that rosin on the main deck-pile it in, the boat can pay for it!"

Soon the boat was plunging and quivering and screaming more madly than ever. But the Amaranth's head was almost abreast the Boreas's stern:

"How's your steam, now, Harry?"

"Hundred and eighty-two, sir!"

"Break up the casks of bacon in the forrard hold! Pile it in! Levy on that turpentine in the fantail-drench every stick of wood with it!"

The boat was a moving earthquake by this time:

"How is she now?"

"A hundred and ninety-six and still a-swelling!--water, below the middle gauge-cocks!--carrying every pound she can stand!--nigger roosting on the safety-valve!"

"Good! How's your draft?"

"Bully! Every time a nigger heaves a stick of wood into the furnace he goes out the chimney, with it!"

The Amaranth drew steadily up till her jack-staff breasted the Boreas's wheel-house--climbed along inch by inch till her chimneys breasted it --crept along, further and further, till the boats were wheel to wheel --and then they, closed up with a heavy jolt and locked together tight and fast in the middle of the big river under the flooding moonlight! A roar and a hurrah went up from the crowded decks of both steamers--all hands rushed to the guards to look and shout and gesticulate--the weight careened the vessels over toward each other--officers flew hither and thither cursing and storming, trying to drive the people amidships--both captains were leaning over their railings shaking their fists, swearing and threatening--black volumes of smoke rolled up and canopied the scene,--delivering a rain of sparks upon the vessels--two pistol shots rang out, and both captains dodged unhurt and the packed masses of passengers surged back and fell apart while the shrieks of women and children soared above the intolerable din----

And then there was a booming roar, a thundering crash, and the riddled Amaranth dropped loose from her hold and drifted helplessly away!

Instantly the fire-doors of the Boreas were thrown open and the men began dashing buckets of water into the furnaces--for it would have been death and destruction to stop the engines with such a head of steam on.

As soon as possible the Boreas dropped down to the floating wreck and took off the dead, the wounded and the unhurt--at least all that could be got at, for the whole forward half of the boat was a shapeless ruin, with the great chimneys lying crossed on top of it, and underneath were a dozen victims imprisoned alive and wailing for help. While men with axes worked with might and main to free these poor fellows, the Boreas's boats went about, picking up stragglers from the river.

And now a new horror presented itself. The wreck took fire from the dismantled furnaces! Never did men work with a heartier will than did those stalwart braves with the axes. But it was of no use. The fire ate its way steadily, despising the bucket brigade that fought it. It scorched the clothes, it singed the hair of the axemen--it drove them back, foot by foot--inch by inch--they wavered, struck a final blow in the teeth of the enemy, and surrendered. And as they fell back they heard prisoned voices saying:

"Don't leave us! Don't desert us! Don't, don't do it!"

And one poor fellow said:

"I am Henry Worley, striker of the Amaranth! My mother lives in St. Louis. Tell her a lie for a poor devil's sake, please. Say I was killed in an instant and never knew what hurt me--though God knows I've neither scratch nor bruise this moment! It's hard to burn up in a coop like this with the whole wide world so near. Good-bye boys--we've all got to come

to it at last, anyway!"

The Boreas stood away out of danger, and the ruined steamer went drifting down the stream an island of wreathing and climbing flame that vomited clouds of smoke from time to time, and glared more fiercely and sent its luminous tongues higher and higher after each emission. A shriek at intervals told of a captive that had met his doom. The wreck lodged upon a sandbar, and when the Boreas turned the next point on her upward journey it was still burning with scarcely abated fury.

When the boys came down into the main saloon of the Boreas, they saw a pitiful sight and heard a world of pitiful sounds. Eleven poor creatures lay dead and forty more lay moaning, or pleading or screaming, while a score of Good Samaritans moved among them doing what they could to relieve their sufferings; bathing their chinless faces and bodies with linseed oil and lime water and covering the places with bulging masses of raw cotton that gave to every face and form a dreadful and unhuman aspect.

A little wee French midshipman of fourteen lay fearfully injured, but never uttered a sound till a physician of Memphis was about to dress his hurts. Then he said:

"Can I get well? You need not be afraid to tell me."

"No--I--I am afraid you can not."

"Then do not waste your time with me--help those that can get well."

"But----"

"Help those that can get well! It is, not for me to be a girl. I carry the blood of eleven generations of soldiers in my veins!"

The physician--himself a man who had seen service in the navy in his time--touched his hat to this little hero, and passed on.

The head engineer of the Amaranth, a grand specimen of physical manhood, struggled to his feet a ghastly spectacle and strode toward his brother, the second engineer, who was unhurt. He said:

"You were on watch. You were boss. You would not listen to me when I begged you to reduce your steam. Take that!--take it to my wife and tell her it comes from me by the hand of my murderer! Take it--and take my curse with it to blister your heart a hundred years--and may you live so long!"

And he tore a ring from his finger, stripping flesh and skin with it, threw it down and fell dead!

But these things must not be dwelt upon. The Boreas landed her dreadful cargo at the next large town and delivered it over to a multitude of eager hands and warm southern hearts--a cargo amounting by this time to 39 wounded persons and 22 dead bodies. And with these she delivered a list of 96 missing persons that had drowned or otherwise perished at the scene of the disaster.

A jury of inquest was impaneled, and after due deliberation and inquiry

they returned the inevitable American verdict which has been so familiar to our ears all the days of our lives--"NOBODY TO BLAME."

**[The incidents of the explosion are not invented. They happened just as they are told.--The Authors.]

CHAPTER V.

Il veut faire secher de la neige au four et la vendre pour du sel blanc.

When the Boreas backed away from the land to continue her voyage up the river, the Hawkinses were richer by twenty-four hours of experience in the contemplation of human suffering and in learning through honest hard work how to relieve it. And they were richer in another way also. In the early turmoil an hour after the explosion, a little black-eyed girl of five years, frightened and crying bitterly, was struggling through the throng in the Boreas' saloon calling her mother and father, but no one answered. Something in the face of Mr. Hawkins attracted her and she came and looked up at him; was satisfied, and took refuge with him. He petted her, listened to her troubles, and said he would find her friends for her. Then he put her in a state-room with his children and told them to be kind to her (the adults of his party were all busy with the wounded) and straightway began his search.

It was fruitless. But all day he and his wife made inquiries, and hoped against hope. All that they could learn was that the child and her parents came on board at New Orleans, where they had just arrived in a vessel from Cuba; that they looked like people from the Atlantic States; that the family name was Van Brunt and the child's name Laura. This was all. The parents had not been seen since the explosion. The child's manners were those of a little lady, and her clothes were daintier and finer than any Mrs. Hawkins had ever seen before.

As the hours dragged on the child lost heart, and cried so piteously for her mother that it seemed to the Hawkinses that the moanings and the wailings of the mutilated men and women in the saloon did not so strain at their heart-strings as the sufferings of this little desolate creature. They tried hard to comfort her; and in trying, learned to love her; they could not help it, seeing how she clung, to them and put her arms about their necks and found no solace but in their kind eyes and comforting words: There was a question in both their hearts--a question that rose up and asserted itself with more and more pertinacity as the hours wore on--but both hesitated to give it voice--both kept silence --and--waited. But a time came at last when the matter would bear delay no longer. The boat had landed, and the dead and the wounded were being conveyed to the shore. The tired child was asleep in the arms of Mrs. Hawkins. Mr. Hawkins came into their presence and stood without speaking. His eyes met his wife's; then both looked at the child--and as they looked it stirred in its sleep and nestled closer; an expression of contentment and peace settled upon its face that touched the mother-heart; and when the eyes of husband and wife met again, the question was asked and answered.

When the Boreas had journeyed some four hundred miles from the time the Hawkinses joined her, a long rank of steamboats was sighted, packed side

by side at a wharf like sardines, in a box, and above and beyond them rose the domes and steeples and general architectural confusion of a city--a city with an imposing umbrella of black smoke spread over it. This was St. Louis. The children of the Hawkins family were playing about the hurricane deck, and the father and mother were sitting in the lee of the pilot house essaying to keep order and not greatly grieved that they were not succeeding.

"They're worth all the trouble they are, Nancy."

"Yes, and more, Si."

"I believe you! You wouldn't sell one of them at a good round figure?"

"Not for all the money in the bank, Si."

"My own sentiments every time. It is true we are not rich--but still you are not sorry--you haven't any misgivings about the additions?"

"No. God will provide"

"Amen. And so you wouldn't even part with Clay? Or Laura!"

"Not for anything in the world. I love them just the same as I love my own: They pet me and spoil me even more than the others do, I think. I reckon we'll get along, Si."

"Oh yes, it will all come out right, old mother. I wouldn't be afraid to adopt a thousand children if I wanted to, for there's that Tennessee Land, you know--enough to make an army of them rich. A whole army, Nancy! You and I will never see the day, but these little chaps will. Indeed they will. One of these days it will be the rich Miss Emily Hawkins--and the wealthy Miss Laura Van Brunt Hawkins--and the Hon. George Washington Hawkins, millionaire--and Gov. Henry Clay Hawkins, millionaire! That is the way the world will word it! Don't let's ever fret about the children, Nancy--never in the world. They're all right. Nancy, there's oceans and oceans of money in that land--mark my words!"

The children had stopped playing, for the moment, and drawn near to listen. Hawkins said:

"Washington, my boy, what will you do when you get to be one of the richest men in the world?"

"I don't know, father. Sometimes I think I'll have a balloon and go up in the air; and sometimes I think I'll have ever so many books; and sometimes I think I'll have ever so many weathercocks and water-wheels; or have a machine like that one you and Colonel Sellers bought; and sometimes I think I'll have--well, somehow I don't know--somehow I ain't certain; maybe I'll get a steamboat first."

"The same old chap!--always just a little bit divided about things.--And what will you do when you get to be one of the richest men in the world, Clay?"

"I don't know, sir. My mother--my other mother that's gone away--she always told me to work along and not be much expecting to get rich, and then I wouldn't be disappointed if I didn't get rich. And so I reckon it's better for me to wait till I get rich, and then by that time maybe

"I'll know what I'll want--but I don't now, sir."

"Careful old head!--Governor Henry Clay Hawkins!--that's what you'll be, Clay, one of these days. Wise old head! weighty old head! Go on, now, and play--all of you. It's a prime lot, Nancy; as the Obedstown folk say about their hogs."

A smaller steamboat received the Hawkinses and their fortunes, and bore them a hundred and thirty miles still higher up the Mississippi, and landed them at a little tumble-down village on the Missouri shore in the twilight of a mellow October day.

The next morning they harnessed up their team and for two days they wended slowly into the interior through almost roadless and uninhabited forest solitudes. And when for the last time they pitched their tents, metaphorically speaking, it was at the goal of their hopes, their new home.

By the muddy roadside stood a new log cabin, one story high--the store; clustered in the neighborhood were ten or twelve more cabins, some new, some old.

In the sad light of the departing day the place looked homeless enough. Two or three coatless young men sat in front of the store on a dry-goods box, and whittled it with their knives, kicked it with their vast boots, and shot tobacco-juice at various marks. Several ragged negroes leaned comfortably against the posts of the awning and contemplated the arrival of the wayfarers with lazy curiosity. All these people presently managed to drag themselves to the vicinity of the Hawkins' wagon, and there they took up permanent positions, hands in pockets and resting on one leg; and thus anchored they proceeded to look and enjoy. Vagrant dogs came wagging around and making inquiries of Hawkins's dog, which were not satisfactory and they made war on him in concert. This would have interested the citizens but it was too many on one to amount to anything as a fight, and so they commanded the peace and the foreign dog coiled his tail and took sanctuary under the wagon. Slatternly negro girls and women slouched along with pails deftly balanced on their heads, and joined the group and stared. Little half dressed white boys, and little negro boys with nothing whatever on but tow-linen shirts with a fine southern exposure, came from various directions and stood with their hands locked together behind them and aided in the inspection. The rest of the population were laying down their employments and getting ready to come, when a man burst through the assemblage and seized the new-comers by the hands in a frenzy of welcome, and exclaimed--indeed almost shouted:

"Well who could have believed it! Now is it you sure enough--turn around! hold up your heads! I want to look at you good! Well, well, well, it does seem most too good to be true, I declare! Lord, I'm so glad to see you! Does a body's whole soul good to look at you! Shake hands again! Keep on shaking hands! Goodness gracious alive. What will my wife say?--Oh yes indeed, it's so!--married only last week--lovely, perfectly lovely creature, the noblest woman that ever--you'll like her, Nancy! Like her? Lord bless me you'll love her--you'll dote on her --you'll be twins! Well, well, well, let me look at you again! Same old --why bless my life it was only jest this very morning that my wife says, 'Colonel'--she will call me Colonel spite of everything I can do--she says 'Colonel, something tells me somebody's coming!' and sure enough here you are, the last people on earth a body could have expected.

Why she'll think she's a prophetess--and hanged if I don't think so too --and you know there ain't any, country but what a prophet's an honor to, as the proverb says. Lord bless me and here's the children, too! Washington, Emily, don't you know me? Come, give us a kiss. Won't I fix you, though!--ponies, cows, dogs, everything you can think of that'll delight a child's heart--and--Why how's this? Little strangers? Well you won't be any strangers here, I can tell you. Bless your souls we'll make you think you never was at home before--'deed and 'deed we will, I can tell you! Come, now, bundle right along with me. You can't glorify any hearth stone but mine in this camp, you know--can't eat anybody's bread but mine--can't do anything but just make yourselves perfectly at home and comfortable, and spread yourselves out and rest! You hear me! Here--Jim, Tom, Pete, Jake, fly around! Take that team to my place--put the wagon in my lot--put the horses under the shed, and get out hay and oats and fill them up! Ain't any hay and oats? Well get some--have it charged to me--come, spin around, now! Now, Hawkins, the procession's ready; mark time, by the left flank, forward-march!"

And the Colonel took the lead, with Laura astride his neck, and the newly-inspired and very grateful immigrants picked up their tired limbs with quite a spring in them and dropped into his wake.

Presently they were ranged about an old-time fire-place whose blazing logs sent out rather an unnecessary amount of heat, but that was no matter--supper was needed, and to have it, it had to be cooked. This apartment was the family bedroom, parlor, library and kitchen, all in one. The matronly little wife of the Colonel moved hither and thither and in and out with her pots and pans in her hands', happiness in her heart and a world of admiration of her husband in her eyes. And when at last she had spread the cloth and loaded it with hot corn bread, fried chickens, bacon, buttermilk, coffee, and all manner of country luxuries, Col. Sellers modified his harangue and for a moment throttled it down to the orthodox pitch for a blessing, and then instantly burst forth again as from a parenthesis and clattered on with might and main till every stomach in the party was laden with all it could carry. And when the new-comers ascended the ladder to their comfortable feather beds on the second floor--to wit the garret--Mrs. Hawkins was obliged to say:

"Hang the fellow, I do believe he has gone wilder than ever, but still a body can't help liking him if they would--and what is more, they don't ever want to try when they see his eyes and hear him talk."

Within a week or two the Hawkineses were comfortably domiciled in a new log house, and were beginning to feel at home. The children were put to school; at least it was what passed for a school in those days: a place where tender young humanity devoted itself for eight or ten hours a day to learning incomprehensible rubbish by heart out of books and reciting it by rote, like parrots; so that a finished education consisted simply of a permanent headache and the ability to read without stopping to spell the words or take breath. Hawkins bought out the village store for a song and proceeded to reap the profits, which amounted to but little more than another song.

The wonderful speculation hinted at by Col. Sellers in his letter turned out to be the raising of mules for the Southern market; and really it promised very well. The young stock cost but a trifle, the rearing but another trifle, and so Hawkins was easily persuaded to embark his slender means in the enterprise and turn over the keep and care of the animals to Sellers and Uncle Dan'l.

All went well: Business prospered little by little. Hawkins even built a new house, made it two full stories high and put a lightning rod on it. People came two or three miles to look at it. But they knew that the rod attracted the lightning, and so they gave the place a wide berth in a storm, for they were familiar with marksmanship and doubted if the lightning could hit that small stick at a distance of a mile and a half oftener than once in a hundred and fifty times. Hawkins fitted out his house with "store" furniture from St. Louis, and the fame of its magnificence went abroad in the land. Even the parlor carpet was from St. Louis--though the other rooms were clothed in the "rag" carpeting of the country. Hawkins put up the first "paling" fence that had ever adorned the village; and he did not stop there, but whitewashed it. His oil-cloth window-curtains had noble pictures on them of castles such as had never been seen anywhere in the world but on window-curtains. Hawkins enjoyed the admiration these prodigies compelled, but he always smiled to think how poor and, cheap they were, compared to what the Hawkins mansion would display in a future day after the Tennessee Land should have borne its minted fruit. Even Washington observed, once, that when the Tennessee Land was sold he would have a "store" carpet in his and Clay's room like the one in the parlor. This pleased Hawkins, but it troubled his wife. It did not seem wise, to her, to put one's entire earthly trust in the Tennessee Land and never think of doing any work.

Hawkins took a weekly Philadelphia newspaper and a semi-weekly St. Louis journal--almost the only papers that came to the village, though Godey's Lady's Book found a good market there and was regarded as the perfection of polite literature by some of the ablest critics in the place. Perhaps it is only fair to explain that we are writing of a by gone age--some twenty or thirty years ago. In the two newspapers referred to lay the secret of Hawkins's growing prosperity. They kept him informed of the condition of the crops south and east, and thus he knew which articles were likely to be in demand and which articles were likely to be unsalable, weeks and even months in advance of the simple folk about him. As the months went by he came to be regarded as a wonderfully lucky man. It did not occur to the citizens that brains were at the bottom of his luck.

His title of "Squire" came into vogue again, but only for a season; for, as his wealth and popularity augmented, that title, by imperceptible stages, grew up into "Judge;" indeed' it bade fair to swell into "General" bye and bye. All strangers of consequence who visited the village gravitated to the Hawkins Mansion and became guests of the "Judge."

Hawkins had learned to like the people of his section very much. They were uncouth and not cultivated, and not particularly industrious; but they were honest and straightforward, and their virtuous ways commanded respect. Their patriotism was strong, their pride in the flag was of the old fashioned pattern, their love of country amounted to idolatry. Whoever dragged the national honor in the dirt won their deathless hatred. They still cursed Benedict Arnold as if he were a personal friend who had broken faith--but a week gone by.

CHAPTER VI.

We skip ten years and this history finds certain changes to record.

Judge Hawkins and Col. Sellers have made and lost two or three moderate fortunes in the meantime and are now pinched by poverty. Sellers has two pairs of twins and four extras. In Hawkins's family are six children of his own and two adopted ones. From time to time, as fortune smiled, the elder children got the benefit of it, spending the lucky seasons at excellent schools in St. Louis and the unlucky ones at home in the chafing discomfort of straightened circumstances.

Neither the Hawkins children nor the world that knew them ever supposed that one of the girls was of alien blood and parentage: Such difference as existed between Laura and Emily is not uncommon in a family. The girls had grown up as sisters, and they were both too young at the time of the fearful accident on the Mississippi to know that it was that which had thrown their lives together.

And yet any one who had known the secret of Laura's birth and had seen her during these passing years, say at the happy age of twelve or thirteen, would have fancied that he knew the reason why she was more winsome than her school companion.

Philosophers dispute whether it is the promise of what she will be in the careless school-girl, that makes her attractive, the undeveloped maidenhood, or the mere natural, careless sweetness of childhood. If Laura at twelve was beginning to be a beauty, the thought of it had never entered her head. No, indeed. Her mind was filled with more important thoughts. To her simple school-girl dress she was beginning to add those mysterious little adornments of ribbon-knots and ear-rings, which were the subject of earnest consultations with her grown friends.

When she tripped down the street on a summer's day with her dainty hands propped into the ribbon-broidered pockets of her apron, and elbows consequently more or less akimbo with her wide Leghorn hat flapping down and hiding her face one moment and blowing straight up against her forehead the next and making its revelation of fresh young beauty; with all her pretty girlish airs and graces in full play, and that sweet ignorance of care and that atmosphere of innocence and purity all about her that belong to her gracious time of life, indeed she was a vision to warm the coldest heart and bless and cheer the saddest.

Willful, generous, forgiving, imperious, affectionate, improvident, bewitching, in short--was Laura at this period. Could she have remained there, this history would not need to be written. But Laura had grown to be almost a woman in these few years, to the end of which we have now come--years which had seen Judge Hawkins pass through so many trials.

When the judge's first bankruptcy came upon him, a homely human angel intruded upon him with an offer of \$1,500 for the Tennessee Land. Mrs. Hawkins said take it. It was a grievous temptation, but the judge withstood it. He said the land was for the children--he could not rob them of their future millions for so paltry a sum. When the second blight fell upon him, another angel appeared and offered \$3,000 for the land. He was in such deep distress that he allowed his wife to persuade him to let the papers be drawn; but when his children came into his presence in their poor apparel, he felt like a traitor and refused to sign.

But now he was down again, and deeper in the mire than ever. He paced

the floor all day, he scarcely slept at night. He blushed even to acknowledge it to himself, but treason was in his mind--he was meditating, at last, the sale of the land. Mrs. Hawkins stepped into the room. He had not spoken a word, but he felt as guilty as if she had caught him in some shameful act. She said:

"Si, I do not know what we are going to do. The children are not fit to be seen, their clothes are in such a state. But there's something more serious still.--There is scarcely a bite in the house to eat"

"Why, Nancy, go to Johnson----."

"Johnson indeed! You took that man's part when he hadn't a friend in the world, and you built him up and made him rich. And here's the result of it: He lives in our fine house, and we live in his miserable log cabin. He has hinted to our children that he would rather they wouldn't come about his yard to play with his children,--which I can bear, and bear easy enough, for they're not a sort we want to associate with much--but what I can't bear with any quietness at all, is his telling Franky our bill was running pretty high this morning when I sent him for some meal --and that was all he said, too--didn't give him the meal--turned off and went to talking with the Hargrave girls about some stuff they wanted to cheapen."

"Nancy, this is astounding!"

"And so it is, I warrant you. I've kept still, Si, as long as ever I could. Things have been getting worse and worse, and worse and worse, every single day; I don't go out of the house, I feel so down; but you had trouble enough, and I wouldn't say a word--and I wouldn't say a word now, only things have got so bad that I don't know what to do, nor where to turn." And she gave way and put her face in her hands and cried.

"Poor child, don't grieve so. I never thought that of Johnson. I am clear at my wit's end. I don't know what in the world to do. Now if somebody would come along and offer \$3,000--Uh, if somebody only would come along and offer \$3,000 for that Tennessee Land."

"You'd sell it, Si!" said Mrs. Hawkins excitedly.

"Try me!"

Mrs. Hawkins was out of the room in a moment. Within a minute she was back again with a business-looking stranger, whom she seated, and then she took her leave again. Hawkins said to himself, "How can a man ever lose faith? When the blackest hour comes, Providence always comes with it--ah, this is the very timeliest help that ever poor harried devil had; if this blessed man offers but a thousand I'll embrace him like a brother!"

The stranger said:

"I am aware that you own 75,000 acres, of land in East Tennessee, and without sacrificing your time, I will come to the point at once. I am agent of an iron manufacturing company, and they empower me to offer you ten thousand dollars for that land."

Hawkins's heart bounded within him. His whole frame was racked and wrenched with fettered hurrahs. His first impulse was to shout "Done!"

and God bless the iron company, too!"

But a something flitted through his mind, and his opened lips uttered nothing. The enthusiasm faded away from his eyes, and the look of a man who is thinking took its place. Presently, in a hesitating, undecided way, he said:

"Well, I--it don't seem quite enough. That--that is a very valuable property--very valuable. It's brim full of iron-ore, sir--brim full of it! And copper, coal,--everything--everything you can think of! Now, I'll tell you what I'll, do. I'll reserve everything except the iron, and I'll sell them the iron property for \$15,000 cash, I to go in with them and own an undivided interest of one-half the concern--or the stock, as you may say. I'm out of business, and I'd just as soon help run the thing as not. Now how does that strike you?"

"Well, I am only an agent of these people, who are friends of mine, and I am not even paid for my services. To tell you the truth, I have tried to persuade them not to go into the thing; and I have come square out with their offer, without throwing out any feelers--and I did it in the hope that you would refuse. A man pretty much always refuses another man's first offer, no matter what it is. But I have performed my duty, and will take pleasure in telling them what you say."

He was about to rise. Hawkins said,

"Wait a bit."

Hawkins thought again. And the substance of his thought was: "This is a deep man; this is a very deep man; I don't like his candor; your ostentatiously candid business man's a deep fox--always a deep fox; this man's that iron company himself--that's what he is; he wants that property, too; I am not so blind but I can see that; he don't want the company to go into this thing--O, that's very good; yes, that's very good indeed--stuff! he'll be back here tomorrow, sure, and take my offer; take it? I'll risk anything he is suffering to take it now; here--I must mind what I'm about. What has started this sudden excitement about iron? I wonder what is in the wind? just as sure as I'm alive this moment, there's something tremendous stirring in iron speculation" [here Hawkins got up and began to pace the floor with excited eyes and with gesturing hands]--"something enormous going on in iron, without the shadow of a doubt, and here I sit mousing in the dark and never knowing anything about it; great heaven, what an escape I've made! this underhanded mercenary creature might have taken me up--and ruined me! but I have escaped, and I warrant me I'll not put my foot into--"

He stopped and turned toward the stranger; saying:

"I have made you a proposition, you have not accepted it, and I desire that you will consider that I have made none. At the same time my conscience will not allow me to--. Please alter the figures I named to thirty thousand dollars, if you will, and let the proposition go to the company--I will stick to it if it breaks my heart!" The stranger looked amused, and there was a pretty well defined touch of surprise in his expression, too, but Hawkins never noticed it. Indeed he scarcely noticed anything or knew what he was about. The man left; Hawkins flung himself into a chair; thought a few moments, then glanced around, looked frightened, sprang to the door----

"Too late--too late! He's gone! Fool that I am! always a fool! Thirty thousand--ass that I am! Oh, why didn't I say fifty thousand!"

He plunged his hands into his hair and leaned his elbows on his knees, and fell to rocking himself back and forth in anguish. Mrs. Hawkins sprang in, beaming:

"Well, Si?"

"Oh, con-found the con-founded--con-found it, Nancy. I've gone and done it, now!"

"Done what Si for mercy's sake!"

"Done everything! Ruined everything!"

"Tell me, tell me, tell me! Don't keep a body in such suspense. Didn't he buy, after all? Didn't he make an offer?"

Offer? He offered \$10,000 for our land, and----"

"Thank the good providence from the very bottom of my heart of hearts! What sort of ruin do you call that, Si!"

"Nancy, do you suppose I listened to such a preposterous proposition? No! Thank fortune I'm not a simpleton! I saw through the pretty scheme in a second. It's a vast iron speculation!--millions upon millions in it! But fool as I am I told him he could have half the iron property for thirty thousand--and if I only had him back here he couldn't touch it for a cent less than a quarter of a million!"

Mrs. Hawkins looked up white and despairing:

"You threw away this chance, you let this man go, and we in this awful trouble? You don't mean it, you can't mean it!"

"Throw it away? Catch me at it! Why woman, do you suppose that man don't know what he is about? Bless you, he'll be back fast enough to-morrow."

"Never, never, never. He never will comeback. I don't know what is to become of us. I don't know what in the world is to become of us."

A shade of uneasiness came into Hawkins's face. He said:

"Why, Nancy, you--you can't believe what you are saying."

"Believe it, indeed? I know it, Si. And I know that we haven't a cent in the world, and we've sent ten thousand dollars a-begging."

"Nancy, you frighten me. Now could that man--is it possible that I --hanged if I don't believe I have missed a chance! Don't grieve, Nancy, don't grieve. I'll go right after him. I'll take--I'll take--what a fool I am!--I'll take anything he'll give!"

The next instant he left the house on a run. But the man was no longer in the town. Nobody knew where he belonged or whither he had gone. Hawkins came slowly back, watching wistfully but hopelessly for the stranger, and lowering his price steadily with his sinking heart. And

when his foot finally pressed his own threshold, the value he held the entire Tennessee property at was five hundred dollars--two hundred down and the rest in three equal annual payments, without interest.

There was a sad gathering at the Hawkins fireside the next night. All the children were present but Clay. Mr. Hawkins said:

"Washington, we seem to be hopelessly fallen, hopelessly involved. I am ready to give up. I do not know where to turn--I never have been down so low before, I never have seen things so dismal. There are many mouths to feed; Clay is at work; we must lose you, also, for a little while, my boy. But it will not be long--the Tennessee land----"

He stopped, and was conscious of a blush. There was silence for a moment, and then Washington--now a lank, dreamy-eyed stripling between twenty-two and twenty-three years of age--said:

"If Col. Sellers would come for me, I would go and stay with him a while, till the Tennessee land is sold. He has often wanted me to come, ever since he moved to Hawkeye."

"I'm afraid he can't well come for you, Washington. From what I can hear--not from him of course, but from others--he is not far from as bad off as we are--and his family is as large, too. He might find something for you to do, maybe, but you'd better try to get to him yourself, Washington--it's only thirty miles."

"But how can I, father? There's no stage or anything."

"And if there were, stages require money. A stage goes from Swansea, five miles from here. But it would be cheaper to walk."

"Father, they must know you there, and no doubt they would credit you in a moment, for a little stage ride like that. Couldn't you write and ask them?"

"Couldn't you, Washington--seeing it's you that wants the ride? And what do you think you'll do, Washington, when you get to Hawkeye? Finish your invention for making window-glass opaque?"

"No, sir, I have given that up. I almost knew I could do it, but it was so tedious and troublesome I quit it."

"I was afraid of it, my boy. Then I suppose you'll finish your plan of coloring hen's eggs by feeding a peculiar diet to the hen?"

"No, sir. I believe I have found out the stuff that will do it, but it kills the hen; so I have dropped that for the present, though I can take it up again some day when I learn how to manage the mixture better."

"Well, what have you got on hand--anything?"

"Yes, sir, three or four things. I think they are all good and can all be done, but they are tiresome, and besides they require money. But as soon as the land is sold----"

"Emily, were you about to say something?" said Hawkins.

Yes, sir. If you are willing, I will go to St. Louis. That will make

another mouth less to feed. Mrs. Buckner has always wanted me to come."

"But the money, child?"

"Why I think she would send it, if you would write her--and I know she would wait for her pay till----"

"Come, Laura, let's hear from you, my girl."

Emily and Laura were about the same age--between seventeen and eighteen. Emily was fair and pretty, girlish and diffident--blue eyes and light hair. Laura had a proud bearing, and a somewhat mature look; she had fine, clean-cut features, her complexion was pure white and contrasted vividly with her black hair and eyes; she was not what one calls pretty--she was beautiful. She said:

"I will go to St. Louis, too, sir. I will find a way to get there. I will make a way. And I will find a way to help myself along, and do what I can to help the rest, too."

She spoke it like a princess. Mrs. Hawkins smiled proudly and kissed her, saying in a tone of fond reproof:

"So one of my girls is going to turn out and work for her living! It's like your pluck and spirit, child, but we will hope that we haven't got quite down to that, yet."

The girl's eyes beamed affection under her mother's caress. Then she straightened up, folded her white hands in her lap and became a splendid ice-berg. Clay's dog put up his brown nose for a little attention, and got it. He retired under the table with an apologetic yelp, which did not affect the iceberg.

Judge Hawkins had written and asked Clay to return home and consult with him upon family affairs. He arrived the evening after this conversation, and the whole household gave him a rapturous welcome. He brought sadly needed help with him, consisting of the savings of a year and a half of work--nearly two hundred dollars in money.

It was a ray of sunshine which (to this easy household) was the earnest of a clearing sky.

Bright and early in the morning the family were astir, and all were busy preparing Washington for his journey--at least all but Washington himself, who sat apart, steeped in a reverie. When the time for his departure came, it was easy to see how fondly all loved him and how hard it was to let him go, notwithstanding they had often seen him go before, in his St. Louis schooling days. In the most matter-of-course way they had borne the burden of getting him ready for his trip, never seeming to think of his helping in the matter; in the same matter-of-course way Clay had hired a horse and cart; and now that the good-byes were ended he bundled Washington's baggage in and drove away with the exile.

At Swansea Clay paid his stage fare, stowed him away in the vehicle, and saw him off. Then he returned home and reported progress, like a committee of the whole.

Clay remained at home several days. He held many consultations with his mother upon the financial condition of the family, and talked once with

his father upon the same subject, but only once. He found a change in that quarter which was distressing; years of fluctuating fortune had done their work; each reverse had weakened the father's spirit and impaired his energies; his last misfortune seemed to have left hope and ambition dead within him; he had no projects, formed no plans--evidently he was a vanquished man. He looked worn and tired. He inquired into Clay's affairs and prospects, and when he found that Clay was doing pretty well and was likely to do still better, it was plain that he resigned himself with easy facility to look to the son for a support; and he said, "Keep yourself informed of poor Washington's condition and movements, and help him along all you can, Clay."

The younger children, also, seemed relieved of all fears and distresses, and very ready and willing to look to Clay for a livelihood. Within three days a general tranquility and satisfaction reigned in the household. Clay's hundred and eighty or ninety dollars had worked a wonder. The family were as contented, now, and as free from care as they could have been with a fortune. It was well that Mrs. Hawkins held the purse otherwise the treasure would have lasted but a very little while.

It took but a trifle to pay Hawkins's outstanding obligations, for he had always had a horror of debt.

When Clay bade his home good-bye and set out to return to the field of his labors, he was conscious that henceforth he was to have his father's family on his hands as pensioners; but he did not allow himself to chafe at the thought, for he reasoned that his father had dealt by him with a free hand and a loving one all his life, and now that hard fortune had broken his spirit it ought to be a pleasure, not a pain, to work for him. The younger children were born and educated dependents. They had never been taught to do anything for themselves, and it did not seem to occur to them to make an attempt now.

The girls would not have been permitted to work for a living under any circumstances whatever. It was a southern family, and of good blood; and for any person except Laura, either within or without the household to have suggested such an idea would have brought upon the suggester the suspicion of being a lunatic.

CHAPTER VII.

Via, Pecunia! when she's run and gone
And fled, and dead, then will I fetch her again
With aqua vita, out of an old hogshead!
While there are lees of wine, or dregs of beer,
I'll never want her! Coin her out of cobwebs,
Dust, but I'll have her! raise wool upon egg-shells,
Sir, and make grass grow out of marrow-bones,
To make her come!

B. Jonson.

Bearing Washington Hawkins and his fortunes, the stage-coach tore out of Swansea at a fearful gait, with horn tooting gaily and half the town admiring from doors and windows. But it did not tear any more after it got to the outskirts; it dragged along stupidly enough, then--till it came in sight of the next hamlet; and then the bugle tooted gaily again

and again the vehicle went tearing by the horses. This sort of conduct marked every entry to a station and every exit from it; and so in those days children grew up with the idea that stage-coaches always tore and always tooted; but they also grew up with the idea that pirates went into action in their Sunday clothes, carrying the black flag in one hand and pistolling people with the other, merely because they were so represented in the pictures--but these illusions vanished when later years brought their disenchanting wisdom. They learned then that the stagecoach is but a poor, plodding, vulgar thing in the solitudes of the highway; and that the pirate is only a seedy, unfantastic "rough," when he is out of the pictures.

Toward evening, the stage-coach came thundering into Hawkeye with a perfectly triumphant ostentation--which was natural and proper, for Hawkeye was a pretty large town for interior Missouri. Washington, very stiff and tired and hungry, climbed out, and wondered how he was to proceed now. But his difficulty was quickly solved. Col. Sellers came down the street on a run and arrived panting for breath. He said:

"Lord bless you--I'm glad to see you, Washington--perfectly delighted to see you, my boy! I got your message. Been on the look-out for you. Heard the stage horn, but had a party I couldn't shake off--man that's got an enormous thing on hand--wants me to put some capital into it--and I tell you, my boy, I could do worse, I could do a deal worse. No, now, let that luggage alone; I'll fix that. Here, Jerry, got anything to do? All right--shoulder this plunder and follow me. Come along, Washington. Lord I'm glad to see you! Wife and the children are just perishing to look at you. Bless you, they won't know you, you've grown so. Folks all well, I suppose? That's good--glad to hear that. We're always going to run down and see them, but I'm into so many operations, and they're not things a man feels like trusting to other people, and so somehow we keep putting it off. Fortunes in them! Good gracious, it's the country to pile up wealth in! Here we are--here's where the Sellers dynasty hangs out. Hump it on the door-step, Jerry--the blackest nigger in the State, Washington, but got a good heart--mighty likely boy, is Jerry. And now I suppose you've got to have ten cents, Jerry. That's all right--when a man works for me--when a man--in the other pocket, I reckon--when a man--why, where the mischief as that portmonnaie!--when a--well now that's odd--Oh, now I remember, must have left it at the bank; and b'George I've left my check-book, too--Polly says I ought to have a nurse--well, no matter. Let me have a dime, Washington, if you've got--ah, thanks. Now clear out, Jerry, your complexion has brought on the twilight half an hour ahead of time. Pretty fair joke--pretty fair. Here he is, Polly! Washington's come, children! come now, don't eat him up--finish him in the house. Welcome, my boy, to a mansion that is proud to shelter the son of the best man that walks on the ground. Si Hawkins has been a good friend to me, and I believe I can say that whenever I've had a chance to put him into a good thing I've done it, and done it pretty cheerfully, too. I put him into that sugar speculation--what a grand thing that was, if we hadn't held on too long!"

True enough; but holding on too long had utterly ruined both of them; and the saddest part of it was, that they never had had so much money to lose before, for Sellers's sale of their mule crop that year in New Orleans had been a great financial success. If he had kept out of sugar and gone back home content to stick to mules it would have been a happy wisdom. As it was, he managed to kill two birds with one stone--that is to say, he killed the sugar speculation by holding for high rates till he had to sell at the bottom figure, and that calamity killed the mule that

laid the golden egg--which is but a figurative expression and will be so understood. Sellers had returned home cheerful but empty-handed, and the mule business lapsed into other hands. The sale of the Hawkins property by the Sheriff had followed, and the Hawkins hearts been torn to see Uncle Dan'l and his wife pass from the auction-block into the hands of a negro trader and depart for the remote South to be seen no more by the family. It had seemed like seeing their own flesh and blood sold into banishment.

Washington was greatly pleased with the Sellers mansion. It was a two-story-and-a-half brick, and much more stylish than any of its neighbors. He was borne to the family sitting room in triumph by the swarm of little Sellerses, the parents following with their arms about each other's waists.

The whole family were poorly and cheaply dressed; and the clothing, although neat and clean, showed many evidences of having seen long service. The Colonel's "stovepipe" hat was napless and shiny with much polishing, but nevertheless it had an almost convincing expression about it of having been just purchased new. The rest of his clothing was napless and shiny, too, but it had the air of being entirely satisfied with itself and blandly sorry for other people's clothes. It was growing rather dark in the house, and the evening air was chilly, too. Sellers said:

"Lay off your overcoat, Washington, and draw up to the stove and make yourself at home--just consider yourself under your own shingles my boy --I'll have a fire going, in a jiffy. Light the lamp, Polly, dear, and let's have things cheerful just as glad to see you, Washington, as if you'd been lost a century and we'd found you again!"

By this time the Colonel was conveying a lighted match into a poor little stove. Then he propped the stove door to its place by leaning the poker against it, for the hinges had retired from business. This door framed a small square of isinglass, which now warmed up with a faint glow. Mrs. Sellers lit a cheap, showy lamp, which dissipated a good deal of the gloom, and then everybody gathered into the light and took the stove into close companionship.

The children climbed all over Sellers, fondled him, petted him, and were lavishly petted in return. Out from this tugging, laughing, chattering disguise of legs and arms and little faces, the Colonel's voice worked its way and his tireless tongue ran blithely on without interruption; and the purring little wife, diligent with her knitting, sat near at hand and looked happy and proud and grateful; and she listened as one who listens to oracles and, gospels and whose grateful soul is being refreshed with the bread of life. Bye and bye the children quieted down to listen; clustered about their father, and resting their elbows on his legs, they hung upon his words as if he were uttering the music of the spheres.

A dreary old hair-cloth sofa against the wall; a few damaged chairs; the small table the lamp stood on; the crippled stove--these things constituted the furniture of the room. There was no carpet on the floor; on the wall were occasional square-shaped interruptions of the general tint of the plaster which betrayed that there used to be pictures in the house--but there were none now. There were no mantel ornaments, unless one might bring himself to regard as an ornament a clock which never came within fifteen strokes of striking the right time, and whose hands always

hitched together at twenty-two minutes past anything and traveled in company the rest of the way home.

"Remarkable clock!" said Sellers, and got up and wound it. "I've been offered--well, I wouldn't expect you to believe what I've been offered for that clock. Old Gov. Hager never sees me but he says, 'Come, now, Colonel, name your price--I must have that clock!' But my goodness I'd as soon think of selling my wife. As I was saying to ---- silence in the court, now, she's begun to strike! You can't talk against her--you have to just be patient and hold up till she's said her say. Ah well, as I was saying, when--she's beginning again! Nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twen----ah, that's all.--Yes, as I was saying to old Judge ----go it, old girl, don't mind me.--Now how is that?----isn't that a good, spirited tone? She can wake the dead! Sleep? Why you might as well try to sleep in a thunder-factory. Now just listen at that. She'll strike a hundred and fifty, now, without stopping,--you'll see. There ain't another clock like that in Christendom."

Washington hoped that this might be true, for the din was distracting --though the family, one and all, seemed filled with joy; and the more the clock "buckled down to her work" as the Colonel expressed it, and the more insupportable the clatter became, the more enchanted they all appeared to be. When there was silence, Mrs Sellers lifted upon Washington a face that beamed with a childlike pride, and said:

"It belonged to his grandmother."

The look and the tone were a plain call for admiring surprise, and therefore Washington said (it was the only thing that offered itself at the moment:)

"Indeed!"

"Yes, it did, didn't it father!" exclaimed one of the twins. "She was my great-grandmother--and George's too; wasn't she, father! You never saw her, but Sis has seen her, when Sis was a baby--didn't you, Sis! Sis has seen her most a hundred times. She was awful deaf--she's dead, now. Aint she, father!"

All the children chimed in, now, with one general Babel of information about deceased--nobody offering to read the riot act or seeming to discountenance the insurrection or disapprove of it in any way--but the head twin drowned all the turmoil and held his own against the field:

"It's our clock, now--and it's got wheels inside of it, and a thing that flutters every time she strikes--don't it, father! Great-grandmother died before hardly any of us was born--she was an Old-School Baptist and had warts all over her--you ask father if she didn't. She had an uncle once that was bald-headed and used to have fits; he wasn't our uncle, I don't know what he was to us--some kin or another I reckon--father's seen him a thousand times--hain't you, father! We used to have a calf that et apples and just chawed up dishrags like nothing, and if you stay here you'll see lots of funerals--won't he, Sis! Did you ever see a house afire? I have! Once me and Jim Terry----"

But Sellers began to speak now, and the storm ceased. He began to tell about an enormous speculation he was thinking of embarking some capital in--a speculation which some London bankers had been over to consult with him about--and soon he was building glittering pyramids of coin, and

Washington was presently growing opulent under the magic of his eloquence. But at the same time Washington was not able to ignore the cold entirely. He was nearly as close to the stove as he could get, and yet he could not persuade himself, that he felt the slightest heat, notwithstanding the isinglass' door was still gently and serenely glowing. He tried to get a trifle closer to the stove, and the consequence was, he tripped the supporting poker and the stove-door tumbled to the floor. And then there was a revelation--there was nothing in the stove but a lighted tallow-candle! The poor youth blushed and felt as if he must die with shame. But the Colonel was only disconcerted for a moment--he straightway found his voice again:

"A little idea of my own, Washington--one of the greatest things in the world! You must write and tell your father about it--don't forget that, now. I have been reading up some European Scientific reports--friend of mine, Count Fugier, sent them to me--sends me all sorts of things from Paris--he thinks the world of me, Fugier does. Well, I saw that the Academy of France had been testing the properties of heat, and they came to the conclusion that it was a nonconductor or something like that, and of course its influence must necessarily be deadly in nervous organizations with excitable temperaments, especially where there is any tendency toward rheumatic affections. Bless you I saw in a moment what was the matter with us, and says I, out goes your fires!--no more slow torture and certain death for me, sir. What you want is the appearance of heat, not the heat itself--that's the idea. Well how to do it was the next thing. I just put my head, to work, pegged away, a couple of days, and here you are! Rheumatism? Why a man can't any more start a case of rheumatism in this house than he can shake an opinion out of a mummy! Stove with a candle in it and a transparent door--that's it--it has been the salvation of this family. Don't you fail to write your father about it, Washington. And tell him the idea is mine--I'm no more conceited than most people, I reckon, but you know it is human nature for a man to want credit for a thing like that."

Washington said with his blue lips that he would, but he said in his secret heart that he would promote no such iniquity. He tried to believe in the healthfulness of the invention, and succeeded tolerably well; but after all he could not feel that good health in a frozen, body was any real improvement on the rheumatism.

CHAPTER VIII.

--Whan pe horde is thynne, as of seruyse,
Nought repleneshed with grete diuersite
Of mete & drinke, good chere may then suffice
With honest talkyng----
The Book of Curtesye.

MAMMON. Come on, sir. Now, you set your foot on shore
In Novo Orbe; here's the rich Peru:
And there within, sir, are the golden mines,
Great Solomon's Ophir!----
B. Jonson

The supper at Col. Sellers's was not sumptuous, in the beginning, but it improved on acquaintance. That is to say, that what Washington regarded

at first sight as mere lowly potatoes, presently became awe-inspiring agricultural productions that had been reared in some ducal garden beyond the sea, under the sacred eye of the duke himself, who had sent them to Sellers; the bread was from corn which could be grown in only one favored locality in the earth and only a favored few could get it; the Rio coffee, which at first seemed execrable to the taste, took to itself an improved flavor when Washington was told to drink it slowly and not hurry what should be a lingering luxury in order to be fully appreciated--it was from the private stores of a Brazilian nobleman with an unrememberable name. The Colonel's tongue was a magician's wand that turned dried apples into figs and water into wine as easily as it could change a hovel into a palace and present poverty into imminent future riches.

Washington slept in a cold bed in a carpetless room and woke up in a palace in the morning; at least the palace lingered during the moment that he was rubbing his eyes and getting his bearings--and then it disappeared and he recognized that the Colonel's inspiring talk had been influencing his dreams. Fatigue had made him sleep late; when he entered the sitting room he noticed that the old hair-cloth sofa was absent; when he sat down to breakfast the Colonel tossed six or seven dollars in bills on the table, counted them over, said he was a little short and must call upon his banker; then returned the bills to his wallet with the indifferent air of a man who is used to money. The breakfast was not an improvement upon the supper, but the Colonel talked it up and transformed it into an oriental feast. Bye and bye, he said:

"I intend to look out for you, Washington, my boy. I hunted up a place for you yesterday, but I am not referring to that,--now--that is a mere livelihood--mere bread and butter; but when I say I mean to look out for you I mean something very different. I mean to put things in your way than will make a mere livelihood a trifling thing. I'll put you in a way to make more money than you'll ever know what to do with. You'll be right here where I can put my hand on you when anything turns up. I've got some prodigious operations on foot; but I'm keeping quiet; mum's the word; your old hand don't go around pow-wow-ing and letting everybody see his k'yards and find out his little game. But all in good time, Washington, all in good time. You'll see. Now there's an operation in corn that looks well. Some New York men are trying to get me to go into it--buy up all the growing crops and just boss the market when they mature--ah I tell you it's a great thing. And it only costs a trifle; two millions or two and a half will do it. I haven't exactly promised yet--there's no hurry--the more indifferent I seem, you know, the more anxious those fellows will get. And then there is the hog speculation --that's bigger still. We've got quiet men at work," [he was very impressive here,] "mousing around, to get propositions out of all the farmers in the whole west and northwest for the hog crop, and other agents quietly getting propositions and terms out of all the manufactories--and don't you see, if we can get all the hogs and all the slaughter horses into our hands on the dead quiet--whew! it would take three ships to carry the money.--I've looked into the thing--calculated all the chances for and all the chances against, and though I shake my head and hesitate and keep on thinking, apparently, I've got my mind made up that if the thing can be done on a capital of six millions, that's the horse to put up money on! Why Washington--but what's the use of talking about it--any man can see that there's whole Atlantic oceans of cash in it, gulfs and bays thrown in. But there's a bigger thing than that, yes bigger----"

"Why Colonel, you can't want anything bigger!" said Washington, his eyes blazing. "Oh, I wish I could go into either of those speculations--I only wish I had money--I wish I wasn't cramped and kept down and fettered with poverty, and such prodigious chances lying right here in sight! Oh, it is a fearful thing to be poor. But don't throw away those things --they are so splendid and I can see how sure they are. Don't throw them away for something still better and maybe fail in it! I wouldn't, Colonel. I would stick to these. I wish father were here and were his old self again--Oh, he never in his life had such chances as these are. Colonel; you can't improve on these--no man can improve on them!"

A sweet, compassionate smile played about the Colonel's features, and he leaned over the table with the air of a man who is "going to show you" and do it without the least trouble:

"Why Washington, my boy, these things are nothing. They look large of course--they look large to a novice, but to a man who has been all his life accustomed to large operations--shaw! They're well enough to while away an idle hour with, or furnish a bit of employment that will give a trifle of idle capital a chance to earn its bread while it is waiting for something to do, but--now just listen a moment--just let me give you an idea of what we old veterans of commerce call 'business.' Here's the Rothschild's proposition--this is between you and me, you understand----"

Washington nodded three or four times impatiently, and his glowing eyes said, "Yes, yes--hurry--I understand----"

----"for I wouldn't have it get out for a fortune. They want me to go in with them on the sly--agent was here two weeks ago about it--go in on the sly" [voice down to an impressive whisper, now,] "and buy up a hundred and thirteen wild cat banks in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri--notes of these banks are at all sorts of discount now--average discount of the hundred and thirteen is forty-four per cent--buy them all up, you see, and then all of a sudden let the cat out of the bag! Whiz! the stock of every one of those wildcats would spin up to a tremendous premium before you could turn a handspiral--profit on the speculation not a dollar less than forty millions!" [An eloquent pause, while the marvelous vision settled into W.'s focus.] "Where's your hogs now? Why my dear innocent boy, we would just sit down on the front door-steps and peddle banks like lucifer matches!"

Washington finally got his breath and said:

"Oh, it is perfectly wonderful! Why couldn't these things have happened in father's day? And I--it's of no use--they simply lie before my face and mock me. There is nothing for me but to stand helpless and see other people reap the astonishing harvest."

"Never mind, Washington, don't you worry. I'll fix you. There's plenty of chances. How much money have you got?"

In the presence of so many millions, Washington could not keep from blushing when he had to confess that he had but eighteen dollars in the world.

"Well, all right--don't despair. Other people have been obliged to begin with less. I have a small idea that may develop into something for us both, all in good time. Keep your money close and add to it. I'll make it breed. I've been experimenting (to pass away the time), on a little

preparation for curing sore eyes--a kind of decoction nine-tenths water and the other tenth drugs that don't cost more than a dollar a barrel; I'm still experimenting; there's one ingredient wanted yet to perfect the thing, and somehow I can't just manage to hit upon the thing that's necessary, and I don't dare talk with a chemist, of course. But I'm progressing, and before many weeks I wager the country will ring with the fame of Beriah Sellers' Infallible Imperial Oriental Optic Liniment and Salvation for Sore Eyes--the Medical Wonder of the Age! Small bottles fifty cents, large ones a dollar. Average cost, five and seven cents for the two sizes.

"The first year sell, say, ten thousand bottles in Missouri, seven thousand in Iowa, three thousand in Arkansas, four thousand in Kentucky, six thousand in Illinois, and say twenty-five thousand in the rest of the country. Total, fifty five thousand bottles; profit clear of all expenses, twenty thousand dollars at the very lowest calculation. All the capital needed is to manufacture the first two thousand bottles --say a hundred and fifty dollars--then the money would begin to flow in. The second year, sales would reach 200,000 bottles--clear profit, say, \$75,000--and in the meantime the great factory would be building in St. Louis, to cost, say, \$100,000. The third year we could, easily sell 1,000,000 bottles in the United States and----"

"O, splendid!" said Washington. "Let's commence right away--let's----"

"----1,000,000 bottles in the United States--profit at least \$350,000 --and then it would begin to be time to turn our attention toward the real idea of the business."

"The real idea of it! Ain't \$350,000 a year a pretty real----"

"Stuff! Why what an infant you are, Washington--what a guileless, short-sighted, easily-contented innocent you, are, my poor little country-bred know-nothing! Would I go to all that trouble and bother for the poor crumbs a body might pick up in this country? Now do I look like a man who----does my history suggest that I am a man who deals in trifles, contents himself with the narrow horizon that hems in the common herd, sees no further than the end of his nose? Now you know that that is not me--couldn't be me. You ought to know that if I throw my time and abilities into a patent medicine, it's a patent medicine whose field of operations is the solid earth! its clients the swarming nations that inhabit it! Why what is the republic of America for an eye-water country? Lord bless you, it is nothing but a barren highway that you've got to cross to get to the true eye-water market! Why, Washington, in the Oriental countries people swarm like the sands of the desert; every square mile of ground upholds its thousands upon thousands of struggling human creatures--and every separate and individual devil of them's got the ophthalmia! It's as natural to them as noses are--and sin. It's born with them, it stays with them, it's all that some of them have left when they die. Three years of introductory trade in the orient and what will be the result? Why, our headquarters would be in Constantinople and our hindquarters in Further India! Factories and warehouses in Cairo, Ispahan, Bagdad, Damascus, Jerusalem, Yedo, Peking, Bangkok, Delhi, Bombay--and Calcutta! Annual income--well, God only knows how many millions and millions apiece!"

Washington was so dazed, so bewildered--his heart and his eyes had wandered so far away among the strange lands beyond the seas, and such avalanches of coin and currency had fluttered and jingled confusedly down

before him, that he was now as one who has been whirling round and round for a time, and, stopping all at once, finds his surroundings still whirling and all objects a dancing chaos. However, little by little the Sellers family cooled down and crystalized into shape, and the poor room lost its glitter and resumed its poverty. Then the youth found his voice and begged Sellers to drop everything and hurry up the eye-water; and he got his eighteen dollars and tried to force it upon the Colonel--pleaded with him to take it--implored him to do it. But the Colonel would not; said he would not need the capital (in his native magnificent way he called that eighteen dollars Capital) till the eye-water was an accomplished fact. He made Washington easy in his mind, though, by promising that he would call for it just as soon as the invention was finished, and he added the glad tidings that nobody but just they two should be admitted to a share in the speculation.

When Washington left the breakfast table he could have worshiped that man. Washington was one of that kind of people whose hopes are in the very, clouds one day and in the gutter the next. He walked on air, now. The Colonel was ready to take him around and introduce him to the employment he had found for him, but Washington begged for a few moments in which to write home; with his kind of people, to ride to-day's new interest to death and put off yesterday's till another time, is nature itself. He ran up stairs and wrote glowingly, enthusiastically, to his mother about the hogs and the corn, the banks and the eye-water--and added a few inconsequential millions to each project. And he said that people little dreamed what a man Col. Sellers was, and that the world would open its eyes when it found out. And he closed his letter thus:

"So make yourself perfectly easy, mother-in a little while you shall have everything you want, and more. I am not likely to stint you in anything, I fancy. This money will not be for me, alone, but for all of us. I want all to share alike; and there is going to be far more for each than one person can spend. Break it to father cautiously--you understand the need of that--break it to him cautiously, for he has had such cruel hard fortune, and is so stricken by it that great good news might prostrate him more surely than even bad, for he is used to the bad but is grown sadly unaccustomed to the other. Tell Laura--tell all the children. And write to Clay about it if he is not with you yet. You may tell Clay that whatever I get he can freely share in-freely. He knows that that is true--there will be no need that I should swear to that to make him believe it. Good-bye--and mind what I say: Rest perfectly easy, one and all of you, for our troubles are nearly at an end."

Poor lad, he could not know that his mother would cry some loving, compassionate tears over his letter and put off the family with a synopsis of its contents which conveyed a deal of love to them but not much idea of his prospects or projects. And he never dreamed that such a joyful letter could sadden her and fill her night with sighs, and troubled thoughts, and bodings of the future, instead of filling it with peace and blessing it with restful sleep.

When the letter was done, Washington and the Colonel sallied forth, and as they walked along Washington learned what he was to be. He was to be a clerk in a real estate office. Instantly the fickle youth's dreams forsook the magic eye-water and flew back to the Tennessee Land. And the gorgeous possibilities of that great domain straightway began to occupy his imagination to such a degree that he could scarcely manage to keep even enough of his attention upon the Colonel's talk to retain the general run of what he was saying. He was glad it was a real estate

office--he was a made man now, sure.

The Colonel said that General Boswell was a rich man and had a good and growing business; and that Washington's work would be light and he would get forty dollars a month and be boarded and lodged in the General's family--which was as good as ten dollars more; and even better, for he could not live as well even at the "City Hotel" as he would there, and yet the hotel charged fifteen dollars a month where a man had a good room.

General Boswell was in his office; a comfortable looking place, with plenty of outline maps hanging about the walls and in the windows, and a spectacled man was marking out another one on a long table. The office was in the principal street. The General received Washington with a kindly but reserved politeness. Washington rather liked his looks. He was about fifty years old, dignified, well preserved and well dressed. After the Colonel took his leave, the General talked a while with Washington--his talk consisting chiefly of instructions about the clerical duties of the place. He seemed satisfied as to Washington's ability to take care of the books, he was evidently a pretty fair theoretical bookkeeper, and experience would soon harden theory into practice. By and by dinner-time came, and the two walked to the General's house; and now Washington noticed an instinct in himself that moved him to keep not in the General's rear, exactly, but yet not at his side--somehow the old gentleman's dignity and reserve did not inspire familiarity.

CHAPTER IX

Washington dreamed his way along the street, his fancy flitting from grain to hogs, from hogs to banks, from banks to eyewater, from eye-water to Tennessee Land, and lingering but a feverish moment upon each of these fascinations. He was conscious of but one outward thing, to wit, the General, and he was really not vividly conscious of him.

Arrived at the finest dwelling in the town, they entered it and were at home. Washington was introduced to Mrs. Boswell, and his imagination was on the point of flitting into the vapory realms of speculation again, when a lovely girl of sixteen or seventeen came in. This vision swept Washington's mind clear of its chaos of glittering rubbish in an instant. Beauty had fascinated him before; many times he had been in love even for weeks at a time with the same object but his heart had never suffered so sudden and so fierce an assault as this, within his recollection.

Louise Boswell occupied his mind and drifted among his multiplication tables all the afternoon. He was constantly catching himself in a reverie--reveries made up of recalling how she looked when she first burst upon him; how her voice thrilled him when she first spoke; how charmed the very air seemed by her presence. Blissful as the afternoon was, delivered up to such a revel as this, it seemed an eternity, so impatient was he to see the girl again. Other afternoons like it followed. Washington plunged into this love affair as he plunged into everything else--upon impulse and without reflection. As the days went by it seemed plain that he was growing in favor with Louise,--not sweepingly so, but yet perceptibly, he fancied. His attentions to her troubled her father and mother a little, and they warned Louise, without

stating particulars or making allusions to any special person, that a girl was sure to make a mistake who allowed herself to marry anybody but a man who could support her well.

Some instinct taught Washington that his present lack of money would be an obstruction, though possibly not a bar, to his hopes, and straightway his poverty became a torture to him which cast all his former sufferings under that held into the shade. He longed for riches now as he had ever longed for them before.

He had been once or twice to dine with Col. Sellers, and had been discouraged to note that the Colonel's bill of fare was falling off both in quantity and quality--a sign, he feared, that the lacking ingredient in the eye-water still remained undiscovered--though Sellers always explained that these changes in the family diet had been ordered by the doctor, or suggested by some new scientific work the Colonel had stumbled upon. But it always turned out that the lacking ingredient was still lacking--though it always appeared, at the same time, that the Colonel was right on its heels.

Every time the Colonel came into the real estate office Washington's heart bounded and his eyes lighted with hope, but it always turned out that the Colonel was merely on the scent of some vast, undefined landed speculation--although he was customarily able to say that he was nearer to the all-necessary ingredient than ever, and could almost name the hour when success would dawn. And then Washington's heart would sink again and a sigh would tell when it touched bottom.

About this time a letter came, saying that Judge Hawkins had been ailing for a fortnight, and was now considered to be seriously ill. It was thought best that Washington should come home. The news filled him with grief, for he loved and honored his father; the Boswells were touched by the youth's sorrow, and even the General unbent and said encouraging things to him.--There was balm in this; but when Louise bade him good-bye, and shook his hand and said, "Don't be cast down--it will all come out right--I know it will all come out right," it seemed a blessed thing to be in misfortune, and the tears that welled up to his eyes were the messengers of an adoring and a grateful heart; and when the girl saw them and answering tears came into her own eyes, Washington could hardly contain the excess of happiness that poured into the cavities of his breast that were so lately stored to the roof with grief.

All the way home he nursed his woe and exalted it. He pictured himself as she must be picturing him: a noble, struggling young spirit persecuted by misfortune, but bravely and patiently waiting in the shadow of a dread calamity and preparing to meet the blow as became one who was all too used to hard fortune and the pitiless buffetings of fate. These thoughts made him weep, and weep more broken-heartedly than ever; and he wished that she could see his sufferings now.

There was nothing significant in the fact that Louise, dreamy and distraught, stood at her bedroom bureau that night, scribbling "Washington" here and there over a sheet of paper. But there was something significant in the fact that she scratched the word out every time she wrote it; examined the erasure critically to see if anybody could guess at what the word had been; then buried it under a maze of obliterating lines; and finally, as if still unsatisfied, burned the paper.

When Washington reached home, he recognized at once how serious his father's case was. The darkened room, the labored breathing and occasional moanings of the patient, the tip-toeing of the attendants and their whispered consultations, were full of sad meaning. For three or four nights Mrs. Hawkins and Laura had been watching by the bedside; Clay had arrived, preceding Washington by one day, and he was now added to the corps of watchers. Mr. Hawkins would have none but these three, though neighborly assistance was offered by old friends. From this time forth three-hour watches were instituted, and day and night the watchers kept their vigils. By degrees Laura and her mother began to show wear, but neither of them would yield a minute of their tasks to Clay. He ventured once to let the midnight hour pass without calling Laura, but he ventured no more; there was that about her rebuke when he tried to explain, that taught him that to let her sleep when she might be ministering to her father's needs, was to rob her of moments that were priceless in her eyes; he perceived that she regarded it as a privilege to watch, not a burden. And, he had noticed, also, that when midnight struck, the patient turned his eyes toward the door, with an expectancy in them which presently grew into a longing but brightened into contentment as soon as the door opened and Laura appeared. And he did not need Laura's rebuke when he heard his father say:

"Clay is good, and you are tired, poor child; but I wanted you so."

"Clay is not good, father--he did not call me. I would not have treated him so. How could you do it, Clay?"

Clay begged forgiveness and promised not to break faith again; and as he betook him to his bed, he said to himself: "It's a steadfast little soul; whoever thinks he is doing the Duchess a kindness by intimating that she is not sufficient for any undertaking she puts her hand to, makes a mistake; and if I did not know it before, I know now that there are surer ways of pleasing her than by trying to lighten her labor when that labor consists in wearing herself out for the sake of a person she loves."

A week drifted by, and all the while the patient sank lower and lower. The night drew on that was to end all suspense. It was a wintry one. The darkness gathered, the snow was falling, the wind wailed plaintively about the house or shook it with fitful gusts. The doctor had paid his last visit and gone away with that dismal remark to the nearest friend of the family that he "believed there was nothing more that he could do"--a remark which is always overheard by some one it is not meant for and strikes a lingering half-conscious hope dead with a withering shock; the medicine phials had been removed from the bedside and put out of sight, and all things made orderly and meet for the solemn event that was impending; the patient, with closed eyes, lay scarcely breathing; the watchers sat by and wiped the gathering damps from his forehead while the silent tears flowed down their faces; the deep hush was only interrupted by sobs from the children, grouped about the bed.

After a time--it was toward midnight now--Mr. Hawkins roused out of a doze, looked about him and was evidently trying to speak. Instantly Laura lifted his head and in a failing voice he said, while something of the old light shone in his eyes:

"Wife--children--come nearer--nearer. The darkness grows. Let me see you all, once more."

The group closed together at the bedside, and their tears and sobs came now without restraint.

"I am leaving you in cruel poverty. I have been--so foolish--so short-sighted. But courage! A better day is--is coming. Never lose sight of the Tennessee Land! Be wary. There is wealth stored up for you there --wealth that is boundless! The children shall hold up their heads with the best in the land, yet. Where are the papers?--Have you got the papers safe? Show them--show them to me!"

Under his strong excitement his voice had gathered power and his last sentences were spoken with scarcely a perceptible halt or hindrance. With an effort he had raised himself almost without assistance to a sitting posture. But now the fire faded out of his eyes and he fell back exhausted. The papers were brought and held before him, and the answering smile that flitted across his face showed that he was satisfied. He closed his eyes, and the signs of approaching dissolution multiplied rapidly. He lay almost motionless for a little while, then suddenly partly raised his head and looked about him as one who peers into a dim uncertain light. He muttered:

"Gone? No--I see you--still. It is--it is-over. But you are--safe. Safe. The Ten-----"

The voice died out in a whisper; the sentence was never finished. The emaciated fingers began to pick at the coverlet, a fatal sign. After a time there were no sounds but the cries of the mourners within and the gusty turmoil of the wind without. Laura had bent down and kissed her father's lips as the spirit left the body; but she did not sob, or utter any ejaculation; her tears flowed silently. Then she closed the dead eyes, and crossed the hands upon the breast; after a season, she kissed the forehead reverently, drew the sheet up over the face, and then walked apart and sat down with the look of one who is done with life and has no further interest in its joys and sorrows, its hopes or its ambitions. Clay buried his face in the coverlet of the bed; when the other children and the mother realized that death was indeed come at last, they threw themselves into each others' arms and gave way to a frenzy of grief.

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