# THE MAN FROM JERICHO

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BY

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TO

PADRE FRANÇOIS

HUMANITARIAN AND FRIEND

FROM HIS LOVING SON

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# CHAPTER I

There had been a thunder-shower in the middle of the afternoon, but it had passed away about five o'clock, accompanied by sullen rumbles and intermittent flashes of uncertain lightning. Then the sun burst forth and poured its light over the drenched Kentucky landscape. It showed millions of diamonds and pearls strung upon the bending blades of blue-grass; broad expanses of molten silver where the ponds lay, and smaller mirrors of the same metal where puddles had formed from the recent downpour. It showed boundless hoards of gold where the nasturtiums were banked in a crimson mass, and the mottled bells of the rank trumpet-vines sent forth a silent summons to the answering sunshine. In the vivid green of a large oak tree a pair of orioles wove a wonderful pattern of living flame as they darted about among the boughs. Two honey-bees crawled out upon the tiny porch of their little home, and, being assured by the instinct which God gave them that the storm was over, arose on buzzing wings to seek some distant store of sweets.

His attention being drawn by the sunlight bursting suddenly through the window of the library where he sat reading—to be exact, it fell upon the open page before his eyes—Major Thomas Dudley closed the book, leaving one long fore-finger between the leaves

to mark the spot where he had been interrupted, and turned to look outdoors. The scene which was spread before him brought a peaceful but sad smile to his face. For two hundred feet or more the broad yard sloped very gently down to the highway, from which it was separated by an iron fence of ornamental design, but now much worn, and sadly bent and twisted in places. This yard was carpeted with a luxuriant expanse of bluegrass in which no alien growth was allowed to find root. There were a number of majestic trees, of the oak and maple variety, and a few shrubs, nicely trimmed. A gravel driveway came up one side from the road, led by the old portico in front, and from thence disappeared towards the rear in the direction of the stable. Through the open window came the odour of honeysuckle, heavy and sweet; the vine grew near the corner of the house. It was not a very sightly shrub, and it marred the wonderful correctness of the lawn no little, but the Major had his reasons for letting it alone. As a matter of fact, the Major's wife had planted it many years before, when their love-dream was at its height. Now she was gone, but it remained, and it helped to keep fresh and vigorous the memories which made Thomas Dudley's daily life a benediction to all who came within its radius.

As the perfume from the tiny white and yellow flowers crept subtly to his nostrils—fine, delicate nostrils they were, like those of a well-bred horse—a hungry, beseeching look stole over the old gentleman's face. He leaned forward and placed one hand

upon the window-sill, while his eyes half closed, and his countenance became transfigured. Then, had any been watching, they would have seen his lips move, as though they were shaping words.

At this point the sound of shuffling feet was heard coming from the hall running through the center of the house. Another moment a throat was cleared in the doorway, and an apologetic voice spoke.

"Beg pahd'n, suh; but de Prince am 'peah to be bettah, suh. I went to de stable ez soon ez de rain quit to tek a look at 'im, 'n' he hab come to he feed, suh, sho'!"

"Peter! Peter! What's this you're telling me? The Prince eating again!"

With remarkable activity the Major arose to his feet and faced about, eyeing with undisguised elation the figure in the doorway. It was that of a very old negro, bowlegged and bent. His face was brown, wrinkled and kindly in expression, with tiny corkscrews of gray hair, each totally isolated, dispersed over it. His head was flat and bald, but for a fringe of white wool shaped like the tonsure of a monk. He wore a rusty pair of trousers, so patched that it was impossible to tell what their original material had been; a brown hickory shirt tolerably new, and suspenders made of strips of bed-ticking. His huge feet were encased in a pair of old shoes, slit almost into shreds at the toes for the benefit of the "mis'ry" which he frequently had there. Such was Peter, faithful servant to the Dudleys before, during, and since the Civil War.

"*Eatin', suh; eatin'!*" he answered, with vehemence, replying to his master's question and accompanying the first and last words with a forward jerk of his head, by way of emphasis.

"This is good news you bring me, boy; we must have a look at him. He's the best bred horse in the Commonwealth," he added, to himself, as he turned aside to place his book upon a table, carefully noting the page as he did so. "It would be a pity in more ways than one for him to die by accident or foul play." Then aloud—"Have you seen your mistress recently?"

"Not since dinner, suh. I'ze heerd her say afo'time, do, dat she laks a nap in de rainy ebenin'."

From somewhere above a voice broke out singing as Peter spoke. The tune was a popular air of the day, lilting and free. The tones were those of a young woman, for they rang with irrepressible vitality, and there was hope and laughter and faith and happiness in them. The Major had started forward, but now he stopped and his head sank as under a benediction. Likewise did Peter's, for he always reflected his master. Thus they stood, types of the bond and the free, while that tender voice rang on above them as its owner moved about the room, for they could plainly hear her light footsteps going to and fro.

In his younger years the Major must have been a man to command any one's notice. Now, as he stood with his chin sunk in his stock under the spell of present enchantment and precious recollections of the past, one could behold the remnants of a magnificent

physical being. He was exceedingly tall, long of limb and square-shouldered. His hands were slender and white; his face naturally grave and thoughtful. He was clean shaven except for close cropped mustache and carefully cut imperial, both white. His complexion was ruddy, but whether this was natural or acquired it is not for us to say. Certain it is, however, that Peter mixed his mint juleps three times a day a few minutes before each meal. Certain it is, also, that never in his long life had Major Dudley taken more whiskey at one time than was good for him. He held that it was a Kentucky gentleman's prerogative to drink, in moderation, and he had the profoundest contempt for the weakling who would bestialize himself by getting drunk. "Whiskey, suh," he would say, "is like every other luxury; to be used, not abused."

The singing ceased, and there was the patter of feet on the stair.

"She's awake, Peter," said the Major; "get my hat." Then as he stepped into the hall—"News, daughter!" he cried, to the vision in pink and white muslin descending the curved stairway. "Peter reports that the Prince is eating. Will you go with me to see him?"

A little croon of delight escaped the vision, and the next instant she had settled like a butterfly upon the Major's broad breast. "I knew he would get well!" she exclaimed, rising on tiptoe and pulling with both her hands on the shoulders of her father in a vain attempt to reach his lips with hers. He, seeing her

purpose, caught her around the waist and lifted her bodily, though there was a matter of a hundred and twenty pounds to reckon with, and gave her the caress with a hearty smack.

"You'll have to learn to bring a stool along with you!" he panted; "I'm getting too old to lift such a buxom lass." But he smiled denial of his speech and patted her cheek fondly.

Peter presenting his stove-pipe hat with a low bow, the Major took it, placed it upon his sparse gray locks, and drawing his daughter's hand through his arm they passed out upon the long back porch, which had an eastern exposure, but was shaded all along its length by a species of vine which grew luxuriantly every summer. Peter preceded them, and Peter in motion was a sight to behold. It is useless to attempt to describe his method of locomotion. To one unfamiliar with the peculiar gait of a "befo' de wah" negro I can give no adequate picture of the old darkey as he shambled along over the large flat stones laid in a row which formed a walk to the gate of the lot wherein stood the stable. Behind him came the stately form of Major Dudley, and by his side Miss Julia, his only child, whose feet had just passed those elusive portals which give into the magical realms of young womanhood.

"What *has* been the matter with The Prince, daddy?" queried the young lady, lifting an annoyed and earnest countenance which Nature had blessed, or banned, however one may regard unusual beauty.

A deep furrow was immediately visible on Major

Dudley's forehead, indenting his brow just above his nose. It only came when he was angry, or intensely worried. His gray eyes gleamed with subdued resentment, and for the space of a few steps he did not answer.

"We do not know," he said, then, but he kept his eyes set straight ahead, instead of looking at his questioner.

"But you have suspicions, daddy, dear," she pleaded, coming closer to him, and pressing his arm gently. "Have you a right—have you the wish to keep these from me? Am I not Major Dudley's daughter, and is not your blood my blood? The Prince has been very sick. Corn and hay don't make a horse ill. What do you fear, daddy?"

The old man stopped and faced his daughter. She was quite serious now. Her firm chin, her positive but pliant mouth, her deep brown eyes which showed courage, and the waving wealth of her chestnut hair, all made a quick pride rush to the Major's heart, and brought a satisfied smile to his mouth. His stern eyes melted into tenderness and love.

"My child, you shall know all I know; all I suspect, rather, for nothing is positive. We—Peter and I—fear an attempt has been made to poison The Prince."

"*Daddy!*"

The word struggled through an indrawn breath of horror.

"The horse's symptoms indicated this. Peter found him in time for an antidote which he administered to be beneficial, else I fear we would have lost

him. We examined the feed which had been given him last night, and found some of it mixed with a whitish powder. In view of this we could come to only one conclusion."

"Who—"

The sentence which the girl's lips started to frame died with the first word. Her lips met firmly, and a slow dread gathered in her eyes.

From the highway not far off came the sound of a horse's hoofs, running at full speed. The Major was facing the road, and the girl turned to see a horseman dash furiously along the pike and disappear behind a fringe of trees which bordered the road farther on. Julia turned to her father, and saw written plainly upon his face a confirmation of her fears.

"He?" she breathed, awesomely.

"Or an emissary. He is our only enemy, and in all his stable of thoroughbreds he has not one that can approach The Prince!"

"Would he dare?"

"Anything, little girl.—Come."

At the door of The Prince's stall they stopped, and looked in eagerly. The horse recognized them, and whinnied feebly. Peter, with curry-comb and brush, was going over the splendid animal vigorously, though not a speck showed on his shining coat.

"Better, suh! Better, young missus!"

The old negro spoke encouragingly between the grunts caused by his exertion.

"He am beginnin' to tek notice. He et mos' he feed, 'n' he 'peared right glad to see me. I wush I

c'd lay dese brack han's on de low-down skunk whut tech 'im! I'd break his naik!"

The Prince was standing a little stiffly, and his slender, patrician head hung lower than it should, but his breathing was not labored, and his eyes were bright and beaming with intelligence.

"He'll come, Peter; he'll come!" said the Major, warmly. "He had a close call, but your prompt action saved him. You're a good boy, Peter, and I commend you!"

Peter grinned his appreciation, and rubbed the satin limbs with renewed vigour.

"Yassuh, he'll come all right, 'n' w'en de race hit come, he'll beat eb'ry one ob 'em! De hoss ain't folded whut kin tech 'im!"

"I believe you, boy. Only once in a lifetime is a hoss born like The Prince."

Julia slipped into the stall as her father was speaking and going up to the noble brute, put both arms around his neck and cuddled her cheek upon his shoulder.

"Poor old fellow!" she murmured. "Have they used you badly because you belonged to us? Never mind. They shan't do it again. Miss Julia loves you, and all of us love you, and we are going to take care of you."

The horse turned and muzzled the sleeve of her dress understandingly.

The girl withdrew her arms and stroked his nose gently. As she rejoined her father there were tears in her eyes.

"Put a new padlock on his door tonight, Peter," cautioned the Major, as he turned to go, "and see that there are no loose planks which a sneakin' assassin might prize off."

"I'll fix 'im so tight dat a gnat can't git in!" was the emphatic reply. "Dey shan't git nigh 'im ag'in!"

Julia was quiet as she and her father returned to the big house. Though her tongue was idle, her mind was busy. She was trying to elucidate this mystery of the attack on The Prince. Her father had said in as many words that he believed Devil Marston was at the bottom of it, but why should Devil Marston be so bitter against them? Half forgotten incidents came back to her—things which had been glozed over or dismissed with a laugh. Marston had been at their home several times, but all at once he stopped coming. She remembered it now. The last time he came was at night, and she had seen him only long enough to speak to him in the hall as she was starting upstairs. She recalled now some loud words being spoken by him; the regulated tones of her father in reply, and that night the Major had paced his room till nearly morning. When she asked for an explanation the following day, her father had put her off by saying it was purely a business matter which it was best she should not know about. She had let it go at that at the time, although she wondered that a business call should have been so stormy. Now she realized that something was being kept from her; that her father was shielding her through love and mercy from something she had a right to know. That had been in her

girlhood, though only two years ago. But since then her mother had died, and during the following two years, which had brought her to twenty, she felt that she had grown to be a woman. She had met successfully the responsibility of caring for the house, and she felt that she could equally meet any other responsibility touching her family.

As they passed into the long hall again, the Major laid aside his hat and turned to the open library door to resume his reading. Julia gently detained him.

"Daddy, what's the trouble between Mr. Marston and us?"

The old man's face grew very grave.

"Who spoke of trouble, lassie?"

"Would a friend attempt so vile a thing as was attempted last night? He has grounds for his conduct, or thinks he has. I want to know it all. I'm sure you never harmed any of his, or him. Then why does the man hate us? He must be very wicked, for no honorable enemy would employ such underhand methods of attack. Now tell me all about it, won't you?"

Major Dudley tilted her chin with his bent forefinger, and gazed long and earnestly into the fearless eyes upheld to meet his own.

"There are some things little girls shouldn't know," he said, finally.

"Little girls, indeed!" she exclaimed, almost petulantly. "Won't you ever realize that I'm a woman, though a young one, and can't you trust your only daughter with a family secret, daddy dear?"

It was quite evident that her feelings were on the verge of being wounded, for her lips were a little unsteady, and her eyes were reproachful.

The reply came in a soft, reminiscent voice.

"'Twas yesterday you were in pinafores, chasing butterflies by day and fire-flies by night, out yonder on the lawn. Are you really *twenty?*"

"Yes, sir; and I demand it as my right to share your burdens. They will be lighter so, for us both."

The Major sighed, and lifted his hand to his forehead.

"You are right, and I promise that you shall know. But not now—not now."

"In a day or two, then?"

"Yes, in a day or two. Run along now and gather some flowers."

He bent to receive her kiss, and stood watching her as she moved with a free, swift step out onto the portico, into the yard, and over to a side fence where a mass of nasturtiums were rioting in a wealth of variegated colors.

"That is where her life should be," he murmured to himself; "spent among blooming flowers, listening to the birds, caressed by sun and wind. Now she demands of me the story of Devil Marston's hate, and I have to tell her. Why do innocent children have to grow up and taste of bitterness? Why must she know of man's inhumanity, injustice and greed? O my little Julia, I would keep you from every thorn if I could! This old breast would gladly take all that were meant for you, and not mind the sting! But

that is not God's way, and His way is best. Poor child! I wish it could be otherwise."

He passed slowly into the library, and sat down with his book.

After the frugal evening meal, which Aunt Frances, Peter's spouse, served with due punctiliousness, the Major sought his room, pleading fatigue. Really he sat alone, thinking, for a long time before going to bed. It was past ten o'clock when he finally arose, and going to a south window, looked out in the direction of the stable. The night was starlit only, so he did not see a stealthly figure climb the rail fence enclosing the barn lot, and move swiftly across the intervening space to The Prince's door.

## CHAPTER II

As a town, Macon did not differ materially from its sister towns of like size throughout the State. It is true it was located on the border of the bluegrass, and this alone gave it a distinction which the penny-royal and mountain districts did not possess. The corporate limits of the place held about three thousand souls—black and white—and nobody ever got in a hurry. A quiet air of indolent aristocracy pervaded the town. Shops were opened late, and if any one wished to buy, they were served courteously and languidly, but there was no "drumming for trade." For all of its lazy atmosphere, it might have been located farther south. But its people were good people, on the whole, although they permitted saloons, and went wild over horse racing. And, best of all, they reverenced their women. A lady on the streets of Macon had respectful right of way. It may have been that they were duly proud of these three things, for they knew full well that nowhere in the world were nobler or more beautiful women, faster horses, or better whiskey.

The nabobs of central Kentucky were a distinct and exclusive class in the years preceding the great Civil strife which freed the colored race. They had friends about them constantly, near and from a distance. They gave large banquets and more often

drank immoderately; they dressed in expensive and fashionable clothes, and had body servants galore. Each gentleman had a personal valet, to shave him every morning, attend to his wardrobe and be always within call. Another servant groomed his favorite horse, brought it around and held the stirrup while his master mounted, and was always on the spot when his master returned to have the bridle reins thrown to his waiting hands.

Then came the war scourge, and the old order passed. Homes were broken up; houses were pillaged and burned, bought and sold. Of the several stately homes surrounding Macon, but one or two remained in the family after the war.

The Dudleys were an old family, proud as could be, and holding manual labor a disgrace. This faulty doctrine was due to heredity and training, and detracted in no way from the sterling manhood and womanhood which ran with the name. They had been wealthy people generations gone, living freely and without stint. Then came the days when one of them became a black sheep and killed a man while in liquor. It took most of the vast estate to save him from the gallows. When the war ended Major Thomas Dudley found that he had little left save a wife and child, the homestead, a half dozen horses of purest racing strain, and an eighty acre farm which would grow with equal abundance hemp, tobacco, corn or wheat. He would not work; he could not work. Had a Dudley's hand ever touched the handle of a plow? Never! Welcome genteel starvation rather than ignoble toil!

In the meantime the family had to live in befitting manner. One by one the servants, enticed by their new-found freedom, drifted away. At length only Peter and Aunt Frances were left, and the Major knew that his body servant would never go, for between these two was that subtle, adamantine bond which rarely existed, but which, once formed, was indissoluble.

Julia grew to girlhood, and the question of her education came up. There had never been a Dudley, male or female, who had not received a complete college course. The Major avowed that Julia should go to boarding school, and he signed away the remaining eighty acres with a hand which did not tremble in order that the traditions of his family should remain inviolate. Julia, ignorant of the sacrifice which had been made for her, went away three successive years, coming back the last time to find her mother dying. After Mrs. Dudley had been laid to rest in the little cemetery east of town, the daughter stepped into her place in the management of the household. Up to this time she had supposed her father had plenty, but the fact that they were almost poverty stricken became quickly revealed to her now. She met the situation with a brave and smiling face, and employed every art she knew to cut down expenses. About this time a number of shares of stock in the thriving Bank of Macon were placed on the market. Then Major Dudley severed the last tie which bound him to the old life. He was getting too old to give his horses proper attention. He sold them,

every one, retaining only a colt not quite a year old, and bought the bank stock. He had figured out that the dividends which this would bring would barely keep them in food and clothing, and pay the taxes on the home. The colt which he had held back from the sale he had given to Julia at its birth, and this was The Prince, the last member of the stables which in years gone by had been the wonder of all Kentucky.

Peter, born to the care of fine horses, shadowed The Prince day and night. Though well up in the seventies, he had broken the young horse to the saddle, and that without a fall. Then, shrewd old rascal that he was, one balmy night he had ridden the colt out to the race track, one mile from the town limits, and tested his speed. He had no watch wherewith to time the exploit, but he needed none, for had he not seen races ever since he was two feet tall! The result had been marvelous. The Prince almost ran from under him, and he must needs cling on with heels and hands when the horse was in motion. When he slipped from his back in an ecstasy of joy, Peter knew that he stood beside the greatest race-horse that had ever touched Kentucky soil! The old darkey was wild with delight, and could hardly wait till morning to tell the Major of his discovery. Major Dudley's face beamed when the news was given him.

"Keep it still, Peter," he counselled, "and watch him. There'll be racing here in July next year."

Winter passed and the Spring came again, and Peter hied himself and The Prince to the race track as soon as the earth became solid. He went always at night,

and always alone, but a rumour began to spread through Macon and the county in general that Major Dudley's colt was a marvel, and could make a mile in two minutes flat. Certainly the story lost nothing by its constant re-telling, and while few believed it true, yet everyone confided it to his neighbor as a matter of gossip.

Then came the night of the cowardly attempt upon The Prince's life.

* * * * * *

The evening express from the north was due at Macon a quarter till eleven. The night of the day upon which Major Dudley had promised to his daughter a revelation of certain things which had been kept hidden from her, this train was running fifteen minutes late. The engineer was trying to make the time up, and in consequence the coaches were swaying and jerking over the rather imperfect roadbed. Crouched in the corner of a seat next the window sat a young man. It would have been impossible to form any idea of his physical appearance from the uncouth position which he had assumed. It was quite evident from this that he was traveling entirely alone. He had slipped down in his seat until his head was below the top of its back. His long legs were flexed so that his knees rested against the back of the seat in front of him. His shoulders, unusually broad and square, drooped somewhat, as from weariness; his chin was sunk upon his shirt front, and his cap was pulled well down over his eyes, so that only a portion of his face could be seen. The line of shadow slanted across his face

sharply just at the cheek bone, revealing below it a smoothly shaven surface, and a chin as square and resolute as the shoulders. In common with the majority of his fellow-passengers, he was dozing. The conductor came unsteadily up the aisle, fumbled at his cap band for the piece of paper sticking in it, then, observing that the man was asleep, he shook him gently by the shoulder. The sleeper aroused readily, and in response to "Your's next station," nodded his head, and turned, as one will do the blackest night, to look out the window. This not with the purpose of seeing anything, but from some inexplicable force within.

But the young man did see something—a dull glow was discernible in the sky, apparently a great distance away. To a sleep-befuddled brain it looked very much like the rose tints of morning, and John Glenning mechanically pulled out his watch, to smile at his stupidity the next moment, for it was not yet eleven. He glanced about the car and brought himself to an erect sitting posture with a quick exercise of the great fund of reserve strength which he undoubtedly possessed. His shoulders went back squarely against the seat, and his feet sought the floor. Then, as he pushed the cap off his eyes, his face became visible. It was a strong face, with jaw- and cheek-bones showing prominently. The forehead was good, almost square, and over one eye was a crescent-shaped scar, not livid, but standing out plainly against the white skin. His hair was black and straight, and his face wore a half melancholy expression, which seemed habitual.

After a casual and disinterested survey of the com-

partment, he turned to the window again, placed his elbow upon the sill, and looked out into the night. The glow in the distance was still there. He judged it to be a fire, although no flames were yet visible. Just a dull red vapor seemed suspended, like an immense ruby, against the black draped breast of the sky, and on all sides of it the stars shone like rare gems. As this poetic thought struck Glenning, he smiled, as though pleased at the conception, and just then a long blast of the whistle told him that they were approaching his station. A moment later the door was flung open, admitting a rush of pure, sweet night air into the stuffy coach, and the flagman passed through, touching alternate seats with either hand to steady himself, and shouting "Macon! Macon!"

Women began to rouse soundly sleeping children, men to stretch their arms and remark to their neighbors, and John also began to get himself together. He was near the door, and as the train came to a halt with jangling bell and escaping steam, he grasped his suit case and safely made his exit before the aisle became crowded.

The place was entirely new to him, for his home had been in the north end of the State. The engine had stopped at the edge of a bisecting street, and just in front of it an arc light was suspended, which threw his surroundings into view uncertainly. Back of him was the bulk of a water tank; to the front, and at one side, the station. People were hurrying to board the train, and packages and trunks were being hastily dumped from the open door of the express car onto a

truck drawn alongside. A number of forms moved vaguely about—that pitiful, shiftless class which no small town can eliminate, who had merely come to "see the train come in." All this Glenning saw in the twinkling of an eye, and then he started briskly up the crushed rock space which served for a platform. Opposite the tender of the engine were two or three men, one of them a negro, standing abreast, toeing an invisible line and bawling lustily the names of different hotels. Glenning stopped for a moment in front of a row of hands eagerly outstretched, and just then the words "Union House!" came to his ears through the din of jumbled voices. He remembered suddenly that a friend had told him this was the best hotel in the place, so he resigned his suit case to the care of the one who had yelled "Union House!" and fell in with the straggling line of people streaming up town.

Above the babel of the hotel criers, and the slow, muffled puffs of the inert engine, a new sound now throbbed through the air—the clanging, tumultuous notes of a sharp-toned bell, rung with fury. The people nearest John pricked up their ears, and he heard the sinister query, "Where's the fire?" "Where's the fire?" repeated on all sides. No one knew, and those who had been from home, and had returned on the train, hastened their steps, some breaking into a run, for none knew whose household goods were in danger. The panic spirit seized Glenning, too, for henceforth his life was to be in this place, and with these people, and he found himself running with the others. Covering a short square,

they turned into the main street of Macon, where confusion reigned. Men were dashing about in the middle of the street, shouting to each other, and an ancient fire engine had just been dragged into view, with the hook-and-ladder wagon trailing in its wake. Glenning ran towards the engine, which had halted in the center of the highway, and at which some striplings were tugging in a vain effort to move it.

"Where's the horses? Where's the fire company?" demanded the newcomer, hurriedly, stopping in perplexity.

"Men is the hosses that pull this old water-bug!" volunteered one of the youths, ceasing his efforts to move the antiquated vehicle; " 'n' the fire comp'ny's anybody that's got spunk 'nough to fight fire!"

As these words were spoken a number of men reached the scene, some of them bareheaded and wearing only shoes, trousers and shirts, and pounced upon the engine like wolves upon a carcass.

"Come on!" "Lend a hand!" "Git holt!" "Push!" "Pull!"

These and divers other excited exclamations rang out, and in the cupola directly overhead the brazen tongued bell sent out its warning, appeal and encouragement in vibrant and deafening tones.

Glenning needed no spurring on. His hands were the first to fall into place, and with rumble and rush the Macon Fire Company started on its errand of succour. The hook-and-ladder wagon, being lighter, was dragged along by half grown boys, who took a keen delight in emulating, both in speed and endur-

ance, their elders in the lead. To the accompaniment of yelping dogs, men in vehicles and men on horseback, the procession rushed madly up Main street, rudely disturbing the calm serenity of the summer night. As he ran, doing his full stint of work, and more, the athletic stranger cast his eyes about in a vain effort to locate the conflagration. He turned to the man running nearest him.

"Do you suppose it's out? I can see no sign of it now."

"No; it ain't out! Cemetery hill's in the way. There's been nothin' to put it out. An old white man, a girl and two old niggers couldn't do much with a house on fire!"

Glenning noticed from the straggling houses and vacant lots that they were nearing the edge of town.

"Where is it, anyway?" he asked. "In the country?"

The man puffed and blew before making reply.

"Mile from the court house, ever'body says. I b'lieve it's a mile and a quarter. Seems like three or four tonight!"

He dashed the perspiration from his eyes, and settled to his work afresh. John looked at him again, and in the dim starlight, to which his eyes had become accustomed, he saw that the man was young and soft. His hands showed white, his face was purple from exertion, and his breathing was stertorous.

"Pretty tough on a fellow who stays indoors, isn't it?" queried Glenning, pleasantly.

"You—bet! Stranger, ain't you?"

"Just came on the train tonight."

"You must be—mightily interested—in these people!"

"I'm going to make this place my home."

"Uh-huh. I know you—now. You're the—new doctor!"

"Yes. My name's John Glenning."

"Pleased to—meet you—doctor! I'm Tom Dillard. Work—in bank!"

"I'm glad to know you. You're my first acquaintance here. It's harder work pushing a fire engine than it is pushing a pen, isn't it?"

Mr. Dillard grinned acquiescence.

"Con—*siderable!*" he gasped.

"Whose house is it that's burning?" continued Glenning.

"Must be—Major Dudley's; no other house out—here close."

At this juncture they rounded a sharp curve in the road, and came in full view of the fire, now close at hand.

"Stable!" exploded Mr. Dillard, and everybody redoubled their exertions at the same moment, rendering further conversation out of the question.

The surrounding landscape was brilliantly lighted by the leaping flames, and Glenning saw that they were sweeping by a large, well kept lawn, back of which rose a most pretentious old home. On they dashed to a gate, which some thoughtful person had previously opened, and which let into a meadow adjoining the stable lot. The people who had started

in buggies and on horseback had all arrived, and a number of them now came forward to relieve the men who had brought the engine out. Most of these willingly resigned their places, but Glenning stuck to his, and Dillard, who was preparing to step aside, gathered fresh courage, and remained also. The old engine was rushed furiously across the meadow and into the lot, in the midst of a shrill bedlam of excited cries, most of them conveying directions and suggestions entirely futile. In one corner of the lot, near the doomed stable, an old negro was waving his arms frantically and jumping up and down, yelling at every jump in a high falsetto.

"Hyar's de well! Hyar's de well! Hyar's de well! Bring de ingine hyar; Hyar's de water! Hyar's de well!"

Whether his penetrating tones reached the relief party, or whether some person nearer to hand gave the information, does not matter. But the engine was quickly rolled in position and the hose unwound. Peter seized the end of the hose which was being borne towards him, and plunged it into the well's black mouth.

"*More! More!*" he screamed, tugging at the sinuous rubber tube like a madman. "De water's down dah! Come on wid it!"

Willing hands unwound the coil, and Peter paid it out. Down went the hose, and presently the old negro jumped to his feet.

"*Pump!*" he shrieked; "put de water dah!"

Then, for fear he would not be understood, he ran

like a monkey towards the burning building. Stopping just outside the radius of the fiercest heat, he pointed towards an open door.

"Dah! In dah! Pour hit in dah! De Prince won' come out! I try git 'im out, but he won' come! Pump de water on 'im!"

In the midst of his exhortations a score of hands grasped the handles and began to pump. But no water came! In vain the long handles went up and down. Something had gone wrong with the mechanism of the machine. A blacksmith was present, and he began an examination. In the meanwhile the fire grew prodigiously, and suddenly a horse's unearthly scream of terror and pain rent the air. Few had ever heard this sound before, and it struck a note of horror upon every soul assembled there. The cry of a horse in mortal distress is utterly indescribable, but it is a demon tone which makes cowards of strong men. The mixed crowd drew back in fear, thinking the imprisoned animal might make a sudden break and trample them in his rush. Even the smith, who had been vainly searching for the hitch in the pumping gear of the engine, crawled from under the useless thing and retreated with the others. So it happened, almost without his knowing it, that John Glenning was left standing alone by the deserted engine. The intense glare showed up his figure well. He was tall and lean, but his shoulders had a look of great strength, and his face, upon which the light was dancing, was calm and purposeful. The old negro had sunk to the ground, and with his face hidden in

his crossed arms, was rocking to and fro, moaning ceaselessly. Following the horse's awful scream, and the subsequent rush backward, fell a dead silence, disturbed only by the cracking and snapping of seasoned wood as the fire ate up its fibres, and the low undertone of Peter's dolorous wails. Then plainly to Glenning's ears came a woman's muffled sobs, and he heard a voice tense with distress exclaim—

"My poor Prince! O my poor Prince!"

John wheeled half way around abruptly, and looked in the direction from whence the voice had come. He beheld two people standing partly aside, and well back. A tall, erect old man whose disordered apparel indicated the haste with which he had dressed, and a girl clinging despairingly to his arm, clad only in a white night robe with a shawl thrown about her shoulders and held tightly over her breast with one clenched hand. The old man's face was mask-like, but there was a deep furrow in the middle of his forehead, and his eyes blazed with repressed anger. The young woman was pitiful to the respectful but penetrating eyes of Glenning. Her hair, braided for the night, hung over her shoulder, down to her waist. Her face was drawn with anguish which she could not hide, and in her big eyes was a living sorrow. As he looked at her she caught his gaze, and upon that instant she left the old man's side, ran a few steps forward, and with both arms stretched towards him, with her hands clasped, her voice rang out in an agony of entreaty.

"Save The Prince! O, save him if you are a man!

If he is burned to death it will kill me! He is there—there!"

She pointed towards the open doorway before which a red veil was shimmering and waving, then turned to the old man, threw her arms around his neck and hid her face on his breast, while her whole form shook with uncontrollable sobs.

Dazed for a moment by this direct appeal, and by the very evident beauty of his petitioner, Glenning stood without moving. Then from the huddled crowd, apathetic and silent, burst the figure of a man, running towards the stable. He came swiftly, and Glenning saw only a low, heavily-built person. But as he sped by the new doctor saw his face, and shuddered. It was dark, brutish, treacherous, devilish. Then the man was gone towards the open door. The girl had turned in time to behold this man's actions, and on her countenance was repulsion and disgust. The onrushing form had nearly reached his goal when a sudden shifting of the breeze concentrated the flames and dashed them into his face with a spiteful hiss. He stopped as though smitten, staggered and fell back, choked and coughing. With his hands to his face he reeled over into a patch of weeds, calling hoarsely for water. Glenning looked at the girl again, and in her eyes was a dumb appeal. The man's mouth squared in quick decision, and in a second his lassitude became transformed into vigorous action. He took off his coat with a few dextrous movements, and holding it as a shield before his face, quickly drew near the door now guarded by a wall of shifting fire.

He felt the hot air rushing into his lungs as he advanced, but he never flinched. Drawing a deep breath, he leaped hard, and passed over the jealously guarded portals. Faintly to his ears came the resounding cheer which accompanied this feat. But he had sterner work before him than to receive merely the praise of those who watched him from a safe distance. He was alone in a fiery furnace; caged with a maddened animal. He realized that his work must be done at once, or he would perish miserably.

Outside, the crowd inched nearer. Renewed silence had succeeded Glenning's successful entrance into the stall of The Prince, and under this strange stillness they came closer, in a body, breathing awesomely and straining their eyes to see. But the waving curtain of flame baffled their peering gaze. Only once they saw a dark, writhing bulk beyond the gleaming barrier, then this was hidden. Major Dudley and Julia had not changed their positions. But upon his face now shone the light of hope, while the girl's was stony with despair and dread. The brief moments were as leaden-footed hours, and time changed into eternity for the anxious hearted watchers. No sound now but the crackling of wood and the subtle swish of flames, and far off in the shadows at the rear of the lot a subdued coughing, where Devil Marston crouched and nursed his scorched lungs, and cursed the unknown man who had gone where he could not go. The stable was large, and the conflagration was now at its height, and it presented a gorgeous, if harrowing, spectacle. Red and yellow and dun streamers shot skyward,

shaking out their serpentine lengths, wrapping and twining about each other, dying if a breath of wind touched them, only to be succeeded by others, fiercer and longer and more vivid. Crawling, hissing, crimson serpents of heat disported over the trembling roof of the building, and myriad of sparks would rise on columns of rose-tinted smoke when a bit of timber dropped. And deep in the very heart of all this hell, burned, blinded, suffocated and weak, a brave soul wrestled with imminent and torturing death, because a woman had looked twice into his eyes and asked for help, if he were a man!

There came a change. Less than a minute had elapsed since Glenning had committed himself to almost certain death. Then the watchers saw a movement at the flame-hung door. An indistinguishable something seemed trying to force its way out. At this moment, as though fortune truly favored the brave, the veering wind caught the red curtain and drew it aside as gently as though done by a lady's hand. Out from the inferno within sprang a man, his clothing covered with little red tongues, his face blackened and his hair singed and disordered. After him, with the man's coat bound over his head, the sleeves tied under his throat, completely blindfolding him, came The Prince. Glenning swung on to his halter, and as the falling sparks nipped the horse afresh he reared hugely and lunged forward with demoniacal fury. The man's spent strength could not cope with this final outburst. The horse bore him

down, rushed over him, and the crowd scattered right and left to seek safety.

Peter, with a shrill cry of joy, ran to the prostrate figure and drew it farther away from the fire. As he laid the rescuer of The Prince down Julia was there to receive his head in her lap. Her face was white as the gown she wore, but her voice was clear as she spoke.

"Peter, go for a doctor! Daddy, bring some water, please."

She gently placed her hand upon the smoke-grimed forehead, and while the crowd lingered to await the outcome, Devil Marston stole away with curses deep and vile, and set his dark face towards home.

## CHAPTER III

When Glenning opened his eyes the next morning he lay quiet a long time, staring at the figure seated by his bedside. At first he was at a total loss to understand where he was, but a sharp pain in his lungs when he breathed, and sundry irritating, prickly places about his face and head, brought back to him the events of the past night. But he was a philosophical fellow, and while he felt a deep gratitude welling up in his heart for young Tom Dillard, he could not help smiling at the appearance his newly-found friend presented that morning. It was quite plain to Glenning's still befuddled intellect that Dillard had elected to stay with him and take care of him during the night. The bank clerk's figure was almost corpulent in daylight, and this was emphasized by the attitude he had assumed. He had evidently determined not to go to sleep, but the relaxation and absolute quiet succeeding the excitement at the burning of the stable had proven too much for him. Now he sat with his heels on a rung of the chair, his knees drawn up, while his head had sunk forward till it almost touched them. In this position he bore a striking resemblance to a butterball, and when Glenning first saw him he was slumbering with much effort, because his breathing was hampered by his cramped posture.

There was something in it all over-poweringly funny to John, and presently he chuckled aloud. Whereupon his watcher gave a little snort and opened his eyes, round, blue, and innocent as a child's.

"Bless me, if I haven't been asleep!" exclaimed Dillard, a bit sheepishly. Then—"How are you feeling, doctor?"

"Chipper as a lark—considering!" was the hearty answer. "But I hope I'll never come closer to hell than I did last night," he added.

Dillard shivered at the recollection, and a look of commiseration crept to his face.

"It's clear past me how you did it," he replied, candidly. "Log chains and a traction engine couldn't have pulled me in that place. But you've fixed yourself all right with the people, I guess. I'll bet your name has gone all over this old town long before now."

"I didn't do it for what the people would think, though I do want their good will. But did you see the look on that girl's face when she spoke? I couldn't have done anything else. Where are we?—hotel?"

"Yes, this is your room at the Union House. We thought you were out of the game for good at first. You don't remember anything after the horse ran over you? Well, the Dudley's old nigger, Peter, dragged you away from the heat, and Miss Julia made a pillow of her lap for your head. They were for taking you up to the house and caring for you, for you did them a greater service than you'll ever

know when you pulled that obstreperous colt out of the fire. But I knew that wouldn't do, because they're not situated to entertain well folks, let alone sick ones, so I got a buggy, piled you in, and drove here as fast as I could. As luck would have it, old Doctor Kale was passing just as we got here—had been making a country call—and I hailed him. We got you up here and brought you around, though I don't suppose you remember anything about it, for you were kind o' flighty. Old Kale washed you off and patched you up, and gave you something to make you sleep soundly. I volunteered to sit up with you and watch, but I played the devil a-doin' it! Kale said he'd call around again this mornin' to see you. He's a gruff old cuss, but good hearted. He often swears at his men patients if they don't obey him to the letter. I tell you this now, so you won't be surprised at anything he may say to you."

Glenning put out a blackened hand from the back of which the hair had been singed away. Dillard saw his intention, and took it readily.

"I hope you'll let me be your friend," said the new doctor, appreciation beaming in his eyes. "I can't tell you just all I feel for the way you've stuck by me, a total stranger, who had not the slightest claim upon your time, or care. But I shan't forget it. A life-long chum couldn't have done more, and I want to assure you that my gratitude is the kind that lasts. I don't know what's in store for me here, but I've come to stay. And I'm going to make good if toil, and hard work, and conscientious pains count for any-

thing. I was climbing fast back—where I came from, but it became best for me to leave. Not because I had to. There's nothing back there I'm ashamed of. You're the first person here who's been kind to me, and I did nothing to deserve it. I shall remember it always."

He pressed the soft, flabby hand which he held, and withdrew his arm.

Dillard's face reddened at this speech. He made a few awkward movements with his hands, and then spoke, in an abashed way.

"I've done nothin', doctor, to make a fuss about, but I'll be mighty glad to be your friend. I imagine a fellow with the stuff in him that you are made of would be worth having for a friend."

He drew out his watch and looked at it, rising quickly as he noted the time.

"It's getting late. By the time I get breakfast and reach the bank it'll be close onto nine. I'm glad you're lookin' so well. Don't try to get up today. I'll call in at noon for a minute. Good-bye."

He leaned over the bed and pressed Glenning's hand again, then took his hat and withdrew, closing the door gently behind him.

When his fat friend had departed, Glenning mechanically sent his eyes around the room. It contained, besides the bed upon which he lay, the customary washstand, dresser, table and two chairs. His clothes lay upon one of these chairs, and he looked in a rather disinterested way at the scorched and burned garments, now rendered totally useless. Then

his mind flew back to those awful moments in the stall with The Prince, and he shut his eyes and groaned audibly. The door to his room opened, and he heard the clinking of dishes. He looked, and saw a waiter bearing a tray to the table in the center of his room. The young fellow deposited his burden, then glanced towards the bed with respectful eyes, as some might gaze upon a hero overthrown.

"Here's your breakfast, sir. I'll bring it closer if you want me to. Mr. Dillard told us you were awake and feeling pretty well, so Mr. Travers thought you might be hungry."

"Thank you," returned Glenning. "I'll be getting up presently. You needn't wait."

The boy moved reluctantly to the door. He had his hand on the knob, then turned.

"I didn't go to the burnin' o' ol' man Dudley's barn," he vouchsafed, in a rather high, scared voice, "but if I'd knowed what you's goin' to do I wouldn't 'a' missed seein' you pull that hoss out. The town's wild about it."

Without waiting for a reply of any sort, the speaker ducked through the door and slammed it after him. It had taken a deal of courage for him to deliver his speech, but he was determined to say it.

Glenning eyed the disarray of dishes dubiously. Some of them appeared cold, while the faint odour which crept to his nostrils from the others was not at all savory. But the rich aroma of coffee blended with the other smells, and he was on the verge of making an effort to rise when there came a faint rap upon his

door. It was so faint that John was not sure he had heard it. He was quite certain there had been no sound of footsteps. As he lay with his head in an expectant attitude the rap came again—two little pecking knocks, given timorously. The man on the bed relaxed, drew the cover which he had thrown partly aside up to his chin, and invited whoever it was to enter, in a fairly strong voice.

Then a most extraordinary thing happened at the door. The knob was deliberately turned, then released. Again it was turned, and the door carefully opened about two inches. It remained this way for the space of a breath or two, then the aperture was widened by perhaps another two inches. Glenning was puzzled. If some one was pranking, the sport was certainly very innocent. By almost imperceptible degrees the door kept coming open, and then a bald, brown, sleek skull, surrounded by a fringe of white wool, came within the range of vision of the watcher on the bed. Peter looked slowly all around the room, and the last object his eyes alighted upon was the man. Then he completed his entrance in a comparatively rapid manner, bobbing his head unceasingly, and being careful to see that the door was latched behind him. Then he bowed profoundly.

"Mawnin', suh! I hope you's bettuh, suh! De Prince am not hu't much, 'n' de folks feel putty peart, suh! De Lawd bress yo', suh—doctuh—'n' keep yo' twel de day o' Jedgment fo' savin' dat' deah colt whut would 'a' buhned to a cracklin' but fo' you. Yes, suh! Dis ol' nigguh gwi' ax de Lawd's blessin' on you night

'n' mawnin', 'n' I'm 'bleeged to yo', suh, fo' whut you done las' night!"

Glenning had no difficulty in recognizing in his effusive caller the old negro who had played a star part in the barn lot. But there was something which claimed his attention above the volubility of Peter, and that was a square envelope, tinted a delicate blue, which the darky carried in one of his wrinkled hands.

"Thank you, old gentleman," he said, "for your interest and your kindness. I hope the Dudleys did not suffer from exposure last night."

"De young missus tek a li'l col', suh, but de Major, suh, am all right—I'm 'bleeged to yo'." He made another profound obeisance. "I wuz sent dis mawnin', suh—doctuh—by de folks to 'quiah ob yo' health, suh, 'n' gib dis lettuh into yo' han'. It was writ by de Major, 'n' gib to me by de young missus, who says, says she—'Peter, gib dis to de man whut save our Prince, 'n' to nobody else.' Here it am, suh. I cyaried it on top o' my haid under my hat right to yo' do', kase I's feared I'd lose it."

He shambled across the room and gave the missive to the hand stretched out to receive it.

"I mus' be goin' now, suh—doctuh—but I's 'spressly to ax how yo' wuz?"

"Present my sympathy and respects to your folks, and assure them I am not hurt—only a few bruises and burns which do not annoy me in the least. Say, in fact, that you left me feeling well."

"Thank yo', suh—doctuh—'n' you're a man whut *is* a man!"

With this parting encomium, which to his mind represented the acme of praise, Peter shuffled to the door, bowed again, and went out.

"Heigh-ho!" mused Glenning. "It seems, indeed, that 'there is a tide in the affairs of men.' From what I can hear I have started in well. Let's see what that fine looking old gentleman has to say."

Tearing the tough fibre of the paper with some difficulty, he drew out the folded sheet, and opened it. The handwriting was angular, legible, and painfully correct. The ink was brownish, as though it had been watered often. He read rapidly.

"DEAR DOCTOR GLENNING:

"This morning we learned the name of the heroic stranger who did us such unparalleled service last night upon the occasion of the burning of our stable. We wish to convey to you at the earliest moment a sense of our profound gratitude for your noble act. My daughter and I feel that we can never repay the debt under which you have placed us by your marvelous bravery. I shall call this afternoon to thank you in person, and I pray you will at all times consider our house your own. The colt is practically uninjured. It is our prayer that you have not suffered seriously.

"Your obliged and obedient servant,

"THOMAS DUDLEY."

"Fine!" breathed Glenning. "A little stilted, perhaps, but true and sincere. He means every word.

Writes like a Clay or a Webster. There's blood back of it—Kentucky bluegrass blood. And she—she did not know she was a queen of tragedy last night when she made her appeal. Who could that have been who tried to get in ahead of me? Ugh! He was a devil! When she saw him coming she looked daggers of scorn and contempt. There's something back of it all, I'll wager. Could that terrible thing dare to love her, I wonder? If he does, it's one-sided. But she's beautiful! I'd go into another burning stable tonight if she looked at me as she did then, and asked me."

As he folded the letter and slipped it back into the envelope he suddenly realized that his coffee must be getting cold. He smiled at the incongruity of the thought, but he was very hungry, so he essayed to rise. The effort necessary to get onto his elbow brought numerous darting pains to a dozen places at once, and made his temples throb. But his firm jaws were not for nothing, and presently his feet were on the floor and he was standing upright, dizzy, and holding to the head of the bed. His chest burned as though coals of fire were laid upon it. He waited a few moments, battling with physical weakness, then steered an uncertain course for the washstand. How sweet was the touch of cool water on his hot, parched face! He dashed it over his head and neck and face by the handsful and felt his brain clear as if by magic. And there is magic in a basin of cold water, as anyone can testify. Directly he set about dressing. His trunk and suit case sat in a corner, and when he had

donned underwear, shirt and trousers his strength left him, and he feebly sought a chair by the table and gulped down the coffee. Then, by sheer force of will, he began to eat. The food was half cold, and not good. It would not have been good had it come just from the oven, but it gave strength, nevertheless. The man felt the elation of returning vigour as he ate. His meal was not half finished when a hurried, thumping step was heard in the corridor without, his door was unceremoniously and roughly opened, and Doctor Kale entered. He was a man getting along in life; full bearded, grizzled. His beard and hair curled slightly, and beneath his rather heavy brows keen, kind eyes danced incessantly. He was not very particular as to his apparel. His clothing was baggy, and none too clean. He wore boots, with his trousers legs pulled down over them. His vest was secured by the bottom button alone. There was a row of buttons, but only one was used. This left exposed to fullest view a shirt front which had doubtless been clean when the garment to which it belonged had been first put on, but which was now flecked and streaked with yellow stains which showed plainly that its wearer used tobacco. A derby hat of a past age was on his head, and he carried a medicine case much battered from long use. His right leg was shorter than his left—rheumatism had done it—and this accounted for his peculiar gait. He stopped in blank surprise for a moment when he saw his erstwhile patient sitting up and eating, then the vials of his wrath exploded.

"What in the devil do you mean by getting up, young man?" he thundered. "Get back in bed! You'll die! You won't live till night!"

He placed his case on the floor, took a handkerchief from his pocket and removed his hat, and fiercely took a turn or two up and down the room, mopping his head and face as he went. It was well for Glenning that a friend had prepared him for this visit.

"Pardon me for not rising to meet you, Doctor Kale," he said, feeling his risibles stirring, and endeavoring to maintain a steady countenance. "But I feel much better, thanks to your attention."

"Any fool could have washed the dirt off and stuck court plaster on you," growled the caller, still belligerent. "How do you know my name, and who told you you might get up?"

"The young man who spent the night with me told me you would call this morning, and I got tired lying in bed with nothing the matter with me—"

"Nothing the matter with you! Why, you're burned, and cut, and thumped, and bruised. It's a wonder the Lord let you off alive for being such an idiot. It seems to me you'd have had better sense than to go in a burning stable just to pull out one good-for-nothing horse which don't earn its hay!"

"Circumstances were such that I had no other choice," answered Glenning, a bit distantly.

"Circumstances!" sniffed Doctor Kale. "Yes, I heard about the circumstances, and when you've lived as long as I have, you won't butt your head into a little hell every time a pretty girl winks!"

The blood rushed to John's face, and even Dillard's warning did not serve to check his tongue.

"She didn't wink!" he retorted, rather hotly. "But she asked for help, and I gave it to her, as any man would!"

The caller cast a sidelong glance at the figure by the table, then stumped over to the bed and sat down upon it.

"Tom Dillard told me that you were the new doctor the *Herald* said was coming here to locate, and that your name was Glenning."

"Yes, John Glenning is my name, and my profession is the same as yours."

"Well, it's a damn bad one!" ejaculated Doctor Kale. "That is, the profession ain't so bad, but it's a worrisome and unappreciative life. It's a hard way to earn a living, young man, and if you hadn't started in it I'd advise you to try something else, even if it was beating rock on the county road. People expect you to be always ready, day or night, to jump up and run to them, even if you are sick yourself. Then you are the last man they want to pay when it comes time to settle, and they always think you're trying to rob them. I've worn my life away trying to serve them, and they call me a skinflint and a miser because I own one or two nigger shacks and try to save what little I make! You've come to a mighty poor place to make your fortune, and it's a mighty hard life you're beginning."

"I've practiced some already, and did not find the work hard, or uncongenial. And I also found people

very obliging. But I love the work, doctor, and I suspect that counts for a great deal!"

"Love it!" snorted Doctor Kale; "I never did love it! It's slavery—a dog's life! Here, last night, I was coming in from the country tired to death and headed for bed, when that fool Dillard held me up and hauled me up here to work on you! Don't you see? Work, work, work!"

"But that's what we're put here for. Employment is our salvation. Suppose everybody stopped work. What would happen to the world? . . . But you did a good job with me, and you must permit me to compliment your skill."

Unknowingly Glenning had found the vulnerable spot in the old fellow's armour. His eyes took on a kinder gleam, but the look he bent on the young man was not unmixed with suspicion.

"Think I helped you, eh? Maybe I did. I've fooled around diseased and mistreated bodies the most of a lifetime, and I ought to know something, if I don't. Where're you from? The *Herald* said, but I can't remember."

"Jericho. It's rather in the northeastern part of the State. Not large; something like this place in population."

"D'you take this for a hamlet, young man?" fired up Doctor Kale. "Fifth class city, sir, and we're growin' by the minute."

"No offense, I'm sure," smiled Glenning. "You must remember I haven't seen your tow—city, by daylight."

"You've seen the prettiest thing in it by firelight, though."

A swift change had come over the combative features of Doctor Kale, and his wrinkled face bore a reminiscent look. There was a distant expression in his eyes; he seemed to be gazing into the past.

Glenning pushed the tray and its contents away and leaned his head on his hand.

"The prettiest woman in the county, and I might say in Kentucky," mused the man on the bed.

He got up and walked limping to his patient, and as he began an examination of hidden bandages and general physical condition his flow of talk continued in a wonderfully changed and melodious voice.

"I've known the family always. These hands were the first hands which touched that little girl when she came into the world, and I've watched her in sickness and in health up till now. Julia's as sweet as God could make her, and that's about as sweet as a woman can get. The old Major's game, and stiff, and proud as the devil, and poor as Lazarus, but he's a gentleman; a gentleman, sir, who'd pawn his last coat to pay a debt and go through the winter in his shirt sleeves. I could never get closer than arm's length to the Major, but Julia—" His voice stopped, and Glenning, stealing a glance at his face, saw that his lips were tight and he was slowly shaking his head. "She's a wonderful girl," he resumed, presently, while his hands glided deftly about here and there. "She came to me once when nobody else would have done in her place, when my greatest sorrow was on me, and

I won't forget it—*I won't forget it*—I'll tell it to God Almighty when we stand before Him together!"

Glenning had no words in which to answer this unusual discourse. He remained silent, and presently the doctor stepped aside.

"I swear you seem fit as a fiddle!" he avowed, in his old peremptory tones. "You must be a tough nut. How do you feel? Any internal pains?"

His patient drew a long breath, and a grimace which he could not check in time shot over his face.

"Don't lie to me, you young rascal! Where does it hurt?"

"Inside; here."

The speaker placed his hand on his right lung.

"It ought to hurt there, for you've a bruise as big as a soup plate. Nothing dangerous, but you must be careful. Stay in this room for two days, anyway, and lie down most of the time. Do you promise?"

"I suppose I'll have to," replied Glenning, somewhat ruefully.

Doctor Kale thumped over to his hat and medicine case. Jamming the hat on his head till it almost rested on his ears, he grabbed his case, then swung around and gazed keenly at the new doctor.

"Are you married?" he demanded, abruptly, and in a manner which in anyone else would have been highly impertinent.

"No," was the answer, given quite gravely.

A meaningless snort greeted this inoffensive monosyllable. Then Doctor Kale began to parade the room, thumping and storming.

"Why in hell ain't you? A doctor ought to be married—adds to his respectability. And here you come sneakin' into Macon not married!"

He stopped about three feet in front of the figure in the chair.

"I may be a rascal, as some people say, but I'm no fool. You're not married, and you went into a fiery furnace to save Julia Dudley's horse. Now I've got this to say. The man who gets her has me to reckon with as well as the old Major. Damned if he don't have to *prove* himself, and be as clean as a whitewashed wall! Good morning, sir!"

He stamped to the door, went out, slammed it furiously behind him, and was gone.

## CHAPTER IV

The predominant feeling in Glenning's breast when Doctor Kale left him was one of resentment. The old fellow had presumed far beyond his rights, had gone into the future in an entirely unwarrantable way, and had given advice for which there was no thanks in the young man's heart. His resentment was heightened by the fact that Julia Dudley's face had been haunting him all morning. Certainly he did not love her. He had never exchanged a word with her; he had only seen her once, a vision of white beauty with brown, braided hair, standing like a Niobe in that night of stress and peril. He had never been of a susceptible temperament. He had work to do in the world, and love must wait. That had been his motto of renunciation, for he had a deep, strong, tender heart, charged with that priceless heritage God gives to each of his children. But when the girl with the braided hair had stepped forward in the presence of half the town and had singled him out for her cavalier in the adventure of that hour, he had felt a strange and unaccountable thrill pass through him. Her presence had been with him in the burning, blinding heat of his subsequent struggle, and the knowledge that she was waiting without for him to appear again a victor had nerved his arm and his smoke-numbed brain to success. He did not try to hide these facts from himself, but

it was galling to think that a meddlesome old busybody had also found them out, and had flung them in his face, coupled with a warning.

He shook himself together and took another view. He must not be supersensitive. The old man had been good to him. He had ministered to him and nursed him when he, himself, was worn and tired. And Dillard had said he was peculiar. But Glenning had seen the deeper, truer side to Doctor Kale for a few moments, and he knew that whatever nature he presented exteriorly, down in his heart he was a man. That personal experience of which he spoke evasively probably referred to the death of his wife. Anyhow it was something very vital; something of serious import, and John saw now that it had been shrewdly given him to assist him in formulating a proper attitude towards Miss Dudley. Old Doctor Kale loved her. Of course it was a paternal, protecting love, but it was deep as the nethermost sea, and as true as heaven. And old Doctor Kale knew that as sure as grass grew, and water ran down hill, a man and a maid will love.

Slowly through these engrossing reflections a sound crept to Glenning's brain. He had been conscious of it for several moments in an indifferent way, but all at once it assumed the tones of a conversation. He inclined his head in the direction from whence the sound came, and caught a name which made him start. He got up, alert, calm, quiet, and moved swiftly towards the cheap oak dresser. He now observed for the first time that this sat in front of a door connecting with another room, and it was from

that room the voices came. There was no transom, but by moving the dresser slightly he would have access to the keyhole. This would have to be accomplished without noise. He listened. The voices had sunk to a murmur. There was no choice, and instantly his long, sinewy fingers gripped the top of the dresser on either side. Oh, how it hurt when he put forth his strength! But he lifted it, swerved it a few inches, and set it down without a sound. The exertion had racked his body with acutest pain, but he smiled grimly as he thought of what his recent caller would have said and done could he have seen him, then squatted before the keyhole and softly put his ear to the tiny aperture. In an instant his face grew grave.

"Tonight, Travers; it must be tonight," a husky, coarse voice was whispering; "it's got to be done!"

"And you want *me* to do it?" came the answering whisper, in a nervous, excited manner.

"Yes. There's nothing in the State that can beat my Thunderer, Daystar and Imperial Don except that long-legged devil-colt. You want to retire from business. You can do it after this summer's racing with the tips I'll give you *if you'll kill Dudley's colt tonight!*"

"I can't! I can't!" was the moaning reply. "I'm not too good; I'm afraid!"

"Afraid of what?" a sneering voice returned. "Of the dark, two old niggers, an old man and a girl? You're not game a bit!"

"Let me think . . . let me think! How much can I make?"

"Ten thousand, easy. See here, it can be done in a minute. We've tried poison and fire, but there's no escape from a pistol bullet, unless that lank fool who last night went where I tried to go chooses to stand in the way—and I shouldn't care if he did."

"Where will the horse be?—the stable's burned flat."

"I'll find that out today and let you know soon after dark. But you'd better not do it till along towards three in the morning. Everybody will be asleep then."

"But if they should catch me, Marston? I'm supposed to be respectable!"

"Damn you for a rank coward!" was the explosive rejoinder, spoken aloud. "I know a fellow who'll do it for a ten-dollar bill!"

The heavy tramping of feet followed this harsh speech, as though the man who had spoken was leaving the room.

Hold on, Marston!" the nervous voice protested, eagerly. "Come back a minute! And don't talk so loud. That new doctor's on this floor somewhere. I was asleep when they brought him in half dead last night, and the night clerk, Jones, put him on this floor somewhere. Be patient. A man can't risk his life and reputation without thinking about it. Sit down just a minute and let me think."

Some unintelligible grumbling was the only reply Glenning could hear, but he judged from the silence which followed that both men were still there. He took advantage of this lull in the conversation to put

his eye to the keyhole. A compactly built, brutish looking man was in his line of vision, sprawled in a chair directly facing him. Glenning would have recognized anywhere the one who had vainly tried to enter The Prince's stall. He was an evil appearing man. His shoulders were very broad, and his neck was so thick and short that his round head seemed to spring from his body. He was flashily dressed, with knee length riding boots of russet leather. His face was sensual and cruel; his straight black hair grew low upon his forehead. His eyes were small and set close to his nose, and his upper teeth habitually showed, like a wolf's. A heavy scowl sat upon his features from his present ill humour. The watcher at the keyhole felt a great wave of repulsion surge over him as he beheld this being in the shape of man, and unconsciously his heart hardened. Nothing was visible of the second occupant of the room except the toe of one shoe, which kept up an incessant tattoo on the worn carpet. Two minutes passed, and Glenning noted that the figure fronting him was growing restless. The frown on his low forehead deepened into threatening furrows and he began to strike his boots with the whip he carried. Suddenly he sat upright.

"Out with it, man!" he hissed. "Don't dally here till the morning's gone! Are you going to do it or not?"

The tattoo ceased, and the foot was withdrawn from view. Then its owner came within the radius of the little circle formed by the keyhole. He walked straight to the burly figure in the chair, and bent

down to whisper his decision. The man on watch could only see his back. He was a low, thin person, wearing a brown checked suit. Glenning swiftly put his ear to the little opening, and listened with the greatest intensity. It was of the utmost importance that he should hear the outcome of the plot. But only elusive murmurs reached him, and not a word could he hear. Observation was his second chance; the only one left. Again he brought his eye to bear. Both men were standing now, close together. They had come to a satisfactory understanding, for the heavy man's face had lightened, and he had one hand laid in a confiding way upon the shoulder of his confederate. Then they passed from the room, whispering as they went.

Glenning got onto his feet, found a chair, and sat down. Of one thing only was he sure—there was work before him. The rest was dark, but plain ahead lay his duty. The Dudleys must know of all that had passed in the next room. The one called Marston had spoken of poison and of fire. Then the burning of the stable had been the work of an incendiary. He was exerting every malign effort to get rid of Dudley's horse. The third trial was to occur that night. John got up and looked at his watch. It was after eleven. Major Dudley had said in his note that he would call in the afternoon. But he might not come till late, and something might happen whereby he could not come at all. The matter was most urgent and vital, admitting of no delay whatever. He knew no one who could act as a messenger on an errand of this character.

Dillard had said he would drop in at noon, but he had duties of his own. He must go himself. There was no other course open. When he had come to this decision Glenning took a quick inventory of his physical condition. The wound over his right lung was his most serious hurt. The burns which he had sustained were only on the surface, and while they were quite painful, they would not prevent his proposed journey. Strange to say, his face had scarcely been touched by the fire. There was an ugly welt about two inches long upon his left cheek, and a scratch or two upon his forehead and neck; that was all. His hair was badly singed, as he discovered when he endeavored to brush it. He made his toilet as carefully as possible, finding shaving a task for a stoic, but going through with it nevertheless. By twelve he was appareled in a neat gray suit and clean linen, and feeling very much himself. He went down to the dining-room early, and was grateful to be assigned to a table in an obscure corner. It was his especial desire right now to be unnoticed, and besides he had an innate abhorrence of publicity; of being looked at and commented upon, even though favorably.

The boy who had brought his breakfast approached in a deferential way for his order, which Glenning gave with the request that it be served quickly. But before it came he began to realize the penalty of greatness. The guests of the hotel commenced to assemble, and every one that entered, male or female, big or little, cast their eyes about until they found the hero in his corner. And the painful

part of it was they did not withdraw their eyes after they had found him, but gazed and gazed with truly rural interest, in which rudeness really had no place. One little girl in brown curls even ventured to point, and ask, "Mama, is that him?" before the maternal hand could grasp her arm, and the paternal voice admonish her in a loud whisper to behave. Still his dinner did not come, and he began to grow embarrassed. Finally, in desperation, he drew some old letters from his pocket and began to re-read them, finding such employment better suited to his taste than staring sillily back at the many pairs of eyes which were now beholding him. Directly a small envelope slipped from the packet in his hand and fell face upward on the table. The address was in an unformed feminine hand. He did not re-read this letter, but as he picked it up and placed it back in his breast pocket along with the others a look of dejected weariness settled heavily on his face. He forgot all those who were watching him; forgot the urgent present, as a pair of wonderful wine-brown eyes swam before him. Dishes jingled at his elbow; his dinner was being served. He must eat quickly and go. He must behave well, and let the people look as long as they wished, for they were to be his people now, and his home was to be among them. In time he was to be the family doctor for many of them.

But the grip of a past such as held him now was not the palsied touch of age. It was the strong-handed hold of vigorous youth, which tightens the more as we make resistance. Glenning shook back the straight

black locks which had fallen upon his forehead, and the melancholy of his eyes became a shadow of living pain. A lassitude was upon him, weighting his spirit, leaden-like. He ate perfunctorily, choosing no dish above another, taking always the one closest to hand. He was not aware of the obsequious attentions of the waiter who stood proudly behind his chair, with mouth set in a perpetual grin. He did not hear the purring questions this worthy asked. Sometimes it was this way with him. He had fought a battle from which gods would have shrunk, and had come out clean. But the price! Sometimes he wondered, in bitterness, if it had been worth while, and then later, when quiet came, and he felt an awed sweetness stealing upon his soul, he was glad.

By force of will alone he brought his mind back to the hour before him. Then, hurriedly making an end of his dinner, he went to his room for a light cane, found and descended the parlor stairs to avoid the office and the loungers there, and started up street.

The appearance of any stranger in a town the size of Macon is always remarked. Little wonder then that John Glenning found himself, as it were, on dress parade. When he had run the gantlet of one block, which happened to be the one upon which most of the business houses were located, he turned to the right, to allay any suspicions as to his ultimate destination. He would make a detour, and come back to main street further on. The first corner which he approached was occupied by a small, weather-beaten, one-story frame house, setting slightly back in a yard

poorly kept, wherein a few straggling rose bushes strove for existence. Entering the front door of this house as he passed was a slightly bent, limping figure. He recognized in a moment Doctor Kale, but whether this was his residence, or whether he was making a call, he could not determine. He was quite thankful, however, that the old doctor had not seen him, for an unpleasant situation would have developed at once. He had given his word to remain in his room for two days, and he did not feel inclined to share his secret with a comparative stranger, even though his friendly interest in the Dudleys could not be questioned.

Glenning crossed the street diagonally and resumed his eastward course, walking more rapidly. The increased circulation which his exercise occasioned caused him considerable suffering, but he set his jaws, and went on. Presently he passed the jail, a stone structure, with narrow slits for windows. Pitying any unfortunate who might be languishing in the gloomy pile this bright June day, he fell to noticing the pleasant looking houses which he passed, most of them of frame, most of them old, and possessing no decided style of architecture, but indicating thrift and cleanliness on the part of their occupants. Then he had swerved onto the main street once more, which led on in an unbroken line almost to Cemetery Hill, beyond which was the Dudley home. He passed very few people now, for it was hot at this time of the day, and not many were stirring. Then, too, it was the dinner hour. He found this walk would have been

delightful under ordinary circumstances, for the pavement was lined with maple trees, which cast a continuous shade below. He passed some beautiful homes on this part of his walk; residences which showed plainly the lavish elegance of ante-bellum prosperity. He grew the least bit nervous as he crossed the railroad just this side of Cemetery Hill. It was here the pavement ended, and for the remainder of his journey he must take the pike. He was not afraid of his welcome; he knew that would be cordial and genuine, but until he should be able to make his errand known it would appear somewhat as if he had come to be thanked. His sensitive nature revolted at this. He really would have preferred to let the incident drop without discussion, but he knew that was impossible. He was now in view of the fence, the long, iron fence bent and twisted in places which bounded a large and exceedingly well kept lawn, from which arose in stately splendour, irregularly, majestic oaks, maples and elms. The lawn sloped gently upward, and on its crest was the home, looking very square, solid and dignified, with its upper and lower porticos and its rows of windows, four above and four below. There was no sign of life. Glenning went down the fence, watching for a gate. The night before he had had no time for minor things, and it was almost as though he had never seen the place before. The gate proved to be at the other corner of the yard, was double, and had a lion's head cast in the center of the iron arch which spanned it. One of the gates yielded to his touch and he went in, feeling decidedly like a tres-

passer. He found himself at the beginning of a graveled drive, winding picturesquely through borders of evergreens up to the front of the mansion. Unconsciously, perhaps, he put his hand to his tie to see that it was in place, then bravely set his face towards his goal.

As he drew closer he discovered that the house was pretentious, and that the disposition and care of everything outdoors was peculiarly correct. He did not tarry as his feet brought him near the end of the drive, but walked with a firm tread upon the portico, removed his hat, and knocked briskly upon a panel of one of the heavy doors, both of which were open wide. Accompanying his knock, rather than following it, came the sound of the swishing of dainty drapery overhead; a sound which instantly became more audible, and mingled with it was the musical hum of a lilting tune. Glenning glanced up, his heart behaving somewhat oddly, for his position was a trifle nervous, and beheld, around the further bend of the old stairway, where it gave upon the broad landing, a flutter of garments. He knew at once who it was, and he knew she had not heard his summons at the door, for she was humming industriously, and evidently had just started to descend the stair. Across the landing she floated, to the top of the downward flight, and at that point she lifted her eyes and beheld the tall young stranger standing in the middle of the open doorway. The humming stopped abruptly, and so did Julia. She did not recognize him at that distance, for the brighter light was at his back, and his

clothing was entirely different from what it had been the night before. Knowing it to be a stranger, and presuming he had called to see her father, she came very demurely and very slowly down the stair, one hand sliding gently along the mahogany rail. Glenning waited in respectful silence until she should come nearer. She had dropped her eyes, but as her feet reached the floor she lifted them in an interrogative glance, and then she saw—the singed and burned hair, the disfiguring welt upon his cheek, one or two pieces of court plaster which he had tried to remove and failed. The change which transformed this quite correct and polite young lady was electric in its rapidity. Her hands clasped and flew up under her chin, and there came a look upon her sweet face such as the man had never seen in his life before. There was gratitude, compassion, and a lingering, unconscious tenderness, and eloquent, if wordless emotion beamed in her brown eyes. For a moment each was speechless. Then Julia came forward with outheld hand.

"O, you are he!" she exclaimed, and the blood rushed up to her face, overflowing its delicate beauty with rich tints. "You saved our Prince!"

The touch of the small, cool hand in his affected Glenning strangely. It brought recollection—which was bitter—and it made this girl's presence very real—which was sweet.

She spoke again almost at once, in a somewhat calmer voice, though it was plain to see her feelings had not abated.

"My father and I are in your lasting debt. Come into the library. He will want to see you. He was going into town for that purpose later in the afternoon. Peter told us he delivered father's letter safely."

As she was speaking she led the way into the room on the right. Glenning followed, and both sat down.

"I—might have waited for him to come," said John, "but—I thought something might detain him, and an incident has arisen which makes it necessary that I see him at once. Otherwise I would not have forced myself upon you so soon after—last night."

"I am glad you have come, Mr.—Doctor—"

"Glenning, Miss Dudley."

"Doctor Glenning, for I want to speak my thanks with father's. I do not know whether I should apologize or not for appealing to you last night, for I had never seen you until that moment. But I was wild with grief at the thought of my Prince burning to death before my eyes, and when the rest gave back cowardly, and left you alone, it was borne in upon me that you would do it—that you could do it, and were not afraid. Now, when I am calm and sane, I see that I was presuming enormously—almost inhumanly, upon your manhood, for I had no right in the world to speak to you as I did, and I believe I am ashamed of it today, and think I should ask your pardon."

Her words followed each other swiftly, as though the speech was one which she wished to say quickly, before her determination to speak it wavered. The

flush which had come to her face at the door had never receded, and still enveloped her features charmingly, as she sat with bent head in the cool semi-gloom of the old library.

Glenning looked on her a moment keenly before he replied. The picture she made might have stirred any man's heart. He knew she was sincere; that sufficed for the time.

"Don't speak of apologies," he answered, in a voice which had grown deeper and more vibrant. "You do not owe me any. I have read of days when men counted it a favor to serve a lady, be she friend or stranger. Let us not think those days are entirely gone—that they are as dead as the people who lived in them. Candidly, and without simulation, I was glad to do what I did for you—gladder still that you felt you might call upon me. That means more than all else, perhaps. And it was not all a duty, believe me; it was a pleasure."

A smile trembled upon her lips as she raised her head and looked squarely at him.

"And these," she said, "upon your cheek, and neck, and forehead. Your hands, blackened and burned"—her voice quivered—"your lungs perhaps scorched—what of these?"

He laughed gently.

"Let us say my body has been purged of some of its sins by fire, and let us call the marks badges of honor. They will not deface, and I shall never be sorry for them."

There was a peculiar earnestness to his tones she

could not fathom. None of the young men in Macon would have made a speech like that. None of them could have understood such sentiments. She understood them but vaguely herself, yet they appeared very noble. As he spoke, she knew that she was noticing for the first time the square lines of his angular face, and the half melancholy, half humorous expression of his eyes.

"You take serious things quite lightly," she contended, "but it is difficult to answer you. You are striving not to permit your heroism to be recognized, but *we* know better, father and I, and you must not speak deprecatingly of it before us. It will hurt us. Shall I go for father?" She arose quietly and stood before him. "Peter is arranging new quarters for the Prince, and father is superintending the work."

"Yes, if it is convenient for him to come now. I don't think I need delay him long. You, too, had better be present, for you will be interested in my message."

"Very well. Wait just a moment."

She disappeared in the hall with light footsteps, and Glenning, with his eyes set intently upon the worn Brussels carpet in front of him, awaited her return.

## CHAPTER V.

The presence of a peculiarly sweet perfume, brought to his nostrils by a light zephyr floating through the open window near, caused him to look up. He could see through the casement an old and shabby honeysuckle, and it was from this the odour came, so elusive as to make him doubt its reality. He wondered why so unsightly a shrub as this had grown to be was allowed a place in the purlieus of the immaculate lawn, then his eyes came indoors. The room in which he sat was large. An old fireplace was on one side, but this was hidden by a screen. Above it was a tall mantel, with some chaste bric-a-brac, and above this the picture of a man of unusually fine appearance. A young man, whose every feature bespoke courage and determination. The remainder of the wall space was pretty much given up to book cases of various sizes and designs, and all crammed with books. A center-post mahogany table stood in the middle of the room, and this also was heavily sprinkled with books and papers, and a few magazines. Being a man, Glenning did not know that the threads in the carpet under his feet showed, nor that the haircloth with which the chairs were upholstered was worn into holes in many places. But he pricked his ears at once when he heard quick footsteps on the long side porch,

and the sound of more deliberate and heavier steps coming with them. He was on his feet when Major Dudley and Julia came into the library arm in arm. A smile of genuine welcome was on the aristocratic features of the master of the place, and he came forward with more celerity than he was wont to show, clasping Glenning's hand in a grip which almost made the young fellow wince.

"You're none too soon, suh; none too soon!" he exclaimed, beaming warmest appreciation into the eyes of his caller. "Sit down, suh, sit down, while I apologize for not coming to inquire after you this morning, instead of waiting for this afternoon. You must have a constitution of adamant," he added, as the three took chairs.

"It is pretty tough," admitted Glenning. "I'm almost myself today. Still I would not have ventured to impose myself upon you this morning had it not chanced I heard something which you will be glad to know—or, at least, which you should know, for it is not pleasant news."

"One moment, suh." Then to his daughter, in a tone of greatest respect—"Julia, bid Peter mix two juleps and serve them here at once. * * * Now, doctor, what were you going to say?"

"I shall wait for Miss Dudley's return, with your permission. That which I have to say concerns you both equally. This is a lovely old home, if you will pardon the comment."

Major Dudley took a book from the table by which he sat. Certainly not with the intention of reading,

but it was a life-long habit, and if he happened to be in arm's length of a book he never failed to pick it up.

"It's a family possession, suh. The wah's done away with most of them hereabout, but we were fortunate in not being pillaged and burned, like many of our neighbors. Then a number were sold for debt, and passed into vandal hands. But before we proceed fu'ther, suh, you must let me confess my obligation—"

Glenning held up a restraining hand.

"Miss Dudley has done that," he said, "and you would please me most by not referring again to last night's adventure. I was lucky enough to get the horse out, and lucky enough to get out myself. I know all the thanks which you would utter, and I accept them. Now let's close the incident and come down to the needs of the moment, for, believe me, they are pressing."

The Major gazed in sheer amazement at the man, and before he could find his voice Julia returned, glided like a sunbeam to her chair and sat down, folding her hands in her lap.

"Peter will be here in a moment," she said, softly.

Glenning resumed talking immediately, and laid bare to the smallest detail the plot which he had heard an hour or two before. The girl's face paled in evident distress as the recital proceeded, while Major Dudley sat like an image of stone, his gray eyes fixed unwaveringly on the speaker.

"That is all," concluded John, "and I have come straight to you, for forewarned is forearmed. I

judge the attack will be made between two and three in the morning."

When he ceased there was dead silence for perhaps a minute. Finally one word broke from the Major's lips—"Marston!" His eyes fell to the floor for an instant, then he lifted his head as a stag might when brought to bay.

"He is the enemy of our house, suh, and he has harassed me vilely! If I were a younger man, I'd dare him to do his worst." Then a troubled and perplexed expression came over his face, and he turned to his daughter. "Little girl, this is men's work. Had you not better leave us?"

Julia got up, went to him, and placed one hand upon his forehead and the other around his neck.

"The time has come when I must share your burdens, daddy," she said. Her face was burning, but her voice was very tender and brave. "Let's talk it over together—Doctor Glenning, you and I. Is not that best?"

She turned her gaze on the young man by the window as she put the question.

"Decidedly!" he answered promptly, and with vigour. "I am convinced that an exceedingly base man is attempting you cowardly violence, and if you will permit me I shall gladly take part in your council. The first thought which presents itself is—why not denounce him and place him under arrest?"

The old man shook his head, and smiled sadly.

"Had you not just arrived in our town you would realize that to be impossible. He is very powerful,

very rich, and has men at his mercy who are high in civic and municipal affairs. Your testimony—or mine—would be laughed at. We cannot touch him."

Glenning's face darkened, and his lips pressed together to a thin, straight line.

"Then it's Greek meet Greek," he said, in a low, hard voice, and Julia, watching him, felt something akin to awe well up in her breast. Somehow he seemed so masterful, so calm, so purposeful, and she had been a witness of his ability to do things.

"Travers is to be his agent this time?"

It was the Major's voice, worry-laden.

"Yes, that's the name."

"He runs the hotel on a lease. Marston owns it. He's tired of working, and wants to buy his way to independence over the body of the Prince. Let him come! I am old to shed man's blood, but I will protect my property!"

"Daddy, you can't sit up all night," remonstrated Julia, trying to smooth the wrinkles from his forehead, "and you would be no match for an able bodied person bent on mischief. Isn't the smoke-house strong enough to keep out whoever comes?"

A throat was cleared in the hall doorway in an apologetic manner. The Major was too preoccupied to hear it.

"Here's Peter," said Julia, soothingly, without looking up.

"Ah! I'd forgotten. Let me ask you to have a julep with me, Doctor Glenning. * * * Peter, pass the tray to the gentleman."

The retainer of the Dudley household shambled forward, bearing a tray upon which sat two glasses, each containing a well-mixed mint julep. It may as well be stated here that the quality of a mint julep depends largely upon the manner in which it is prepared, and Peter had been doing this sort of thing three times a day for more years than he had fingers and toes. This formal courtesy having been duly observed, Peter withdrew at once, and the question of the moment again commanded attention.

"There's nothing, my daughter," said Major Dudley, reverting to Julia's question, "there's nothing can positively thwart a villain except steel or lead. This man has hounded me until I'm desperate!"

"I agree with Miss Dudley," said Glenning, speaking carefully, "that it would not do for you to attempt to cope with this midnight assassin. A personal encounter is not at all improbable, and in that event you would inevitably suffer bodily harm, and perhaps death, for the man who would undertake such a piece of work as this would not hesitate to take human life."

While he was speaking Julia left her father's side and went back to the chair she had formerly occupied.

"Is there any one about the place upon whom you could rely?" John queried.

"We are alone with the exception of Peter and Aunt Frances. They would sacrifice themselves for us, but their aid would be out of the question upon an occasion like this."

A sudden gloom seemed to envelope the Major as he spoke.

"There's no one," he added, in a lifeless tone.

"But in town?" persisted the calm, even voice. "Is there no one—no young person who is not afraid that you could call to your assistance?"

The old man's head moved slowly in sign of negation.

"We live almost absolutely to ourselves, and alone," explained Julia. "It has been the family trait for generations. I have sometimes thought it a grave fault thus to seclude ourselves from the world, and live apart from our neighbors. It is a species of selfishness, but we have always found it very sweet. But living thus we must, you see, be sufficient unto ourselves at all times and under all circumstances. We have no moral nor civil right to make any demands, or ask any favours. We have chosen our lot, and we must abide by it, whatever comes. Until now—until this hour we have never regretted this, but—"

"But at the proper time Fate takes a hand in every game."

Glenning smiled as he finished the sentence in his own way.

"What do you mean?" asked the girl, a quick suspicion of what was in his mind causing her brown eyes to dilate and her lips to part the least bit in anticipation.

His words had an effect on the Major also. He straightened up, while hope sprang to his eyes. Glenning braced his feet on the floor and grasped the arms of his chair firmly before he answered. When

he spoke his words came clear and sharp from between his teeth.

"I mean what I say." He held Julia Dudley's eyes with his own, without wavering an instant, as he went rapidly on. "Fate has taken a hand, and I am her instrument. This is no time for false attitudes, hypocrisy, or make-believes. There come times in all lives when superficiality has to be shorn away, when we must look upon things as they really are and cast aside all pretence and the nice fabric which cloaks our everyday actions and affairs. It is in such times we find our real selves, and the pity of it is they are usually compelled by some distressing situation, some condition which of itself strips off all sham and leaves our true natures bare. A little more than twelve hours ago I did not know that either of you were in the land of the living. Chance, if we chose to call it that, brought me in your way, and I did you a service. Simple justice to a fellow being against whose worldly goods I overheard a vile conspiracy brought me to your home today. With what result? You are totally unprepared and unable to meet this crisis alone and unaided. There is no one upon whom to call in this emergency. I am young, strong, and unafraid. I shall watch The Prince tonight!"

Julia put her palms over her face for the briefest moment, and when she took them down her eyes were shining adorably.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "We cannot accept that!"

A faint shadow of annoyance flashed over Glen-

ning's countenance. He feared that she had not understood fully, but in the swift moment which followed he knew that he was wrong, and that she did understand. She was aware that his motive was noble and impersonal, for the knowledge was written on her face. The caller turned to Major Dudley.

"Will you accept my offer, sir? It is made simply as man to man; as two strangers might meet in the desert, one unarmed and threatened by a wild beast, the other armed, and ready and willing to do what he can. That is the situation, and it is very simple. I see no need to delay, or hesitate. It is an extremely plain proposition. What do you say, sir?"

The Major was grave, upright and dignified as he answered in his measured tones:

"This is the fust time in my life that I have asked or received aid from any man. But I find myself in a sore strait, from which, as far as I can see, there is only one escape. The Prince is almost as deah to me as a child, Doctor Glenning. He is the last of a strain of race hosses which have made Kentucky famous all over the United States, and I confess to you that his swiftness has never been equalled by any of his forebears. To save myself, personally, I would tell you no. To save Julia and the colt, I say yes. It looks base, it looks brazen, it looks coarse and common, but I trust, suh, you realize fully the peculiar position in which you find me, and from which it seems that no one but you can extricate me. * * * My daughter, we accept Doctor Glenning's magnanimous offer provisionally."

Julia merely bowed her head and remained silent. Her face had grown whiter and her eyes almost solemn.

"What restrictions do you wish to place upon me?" asked Glenning.

"Simply this. That you do not go on duty till midnight. There is absolutely no danger before that time, and Peter and I will share the watch. Again, you must promise to remain in shelter when you begin your vigil. The Prince's new quarters will be the smoke-house. Peter is there now doing what's necessary. It's a stanch structure, solid as a block-house of pioneer days, and will withstand an assault. You must also agree not to fire upon anyone unless it should become necessary. I have no desire that any of these people should die. If compelled to shoot, shoot low, and let your aim be to cripple. These are my provisions, and I shall not swerve from them an inch."

The man by the window hesitated a moment only.

"All right," he said. "I agree, since I must, but I had rather go into this business unhampered." He smiled boyishly, and turned to Julia. "We've overridden you, Miss Dudley. I hope you, also, will now agree to this little plan?"

"Ye-e-s, if father thinks it right I mustn't be contrary. But you are unfit for such a thing just now, and it seems brutally cruel and unfeeling after what you did last night."

Glenning waved his hand deprecatingly.

"We've forgotten that, you know, and agreed to

let it alone. See that you don't trespass again. To-night will be a lark, nothing else. Do you think I could be possibly frightened by that funny looking little hotel keeper?"

"Travers is an arrant coward, as well as a knave," broke in the Major, "but if Marston has any reason to doubt his project will miscarry, he may come, too. Then it's time to keep your eyes open, for he'll stop at nothing. I'm glad you have consented to my provisions, doctor, and now I've something else to say. I invite you to spend the afternoon with us, and take tea. Then you can return to town at twilight and retire early, in order to get some rest."

Involuntarily Glenning's eyes went around to where the young mistress of the old home sat.

"Let me repeat father's invitation," she said. "We shall be glad to have you stay. It will be pleasant for us, and will give you an opportunity to lay your plan of action for tonight. It will also save you an extra trip, if you have no other business on hand for the afternoon."

Glenning bowed.

"Nothing whatever. Tomorrow, perhaps, or the next day, I will establish an office down town, and incidentally desert the Union House. I have no desire whatever to remain the guest of our friend, Mr. Travers. He might put arsenic in my soup, or strychnine in my bread. But for the rest of this day I'm free, and I am delighted with your invitation, which I accept with pleasure."

Julia arose and went to the Major's side again.

"This is the hour for father's siesta," she said. "He has been accustomed to taking a nap this time of day ever since I can remember, and I know he especially needs it now." She bent down and whispered in the old gentleman's ear, but Glenning caught the words. "Lie down and rest now, daddy dear. I'll take care of our guest until you wake. And don't worry. Everything will come out all right."

Major Dudley arose a little unsteadily. His present trouble, crowding the heels of last night's occurrence, had told on him. His face was careworn, and there was the suggestion of a stoop in his shoulders. John had likewise risen.

"If you will pardon me, suh," spoke the Major, "I'll lie down a while now. A lazy custom of mine for which there really is no excuse. But habit is strong, and grows stronger the more we humour it. I will be up and out in the course of an hour. My daughter will entertain you, suh."

He bowed in formal, old-fashioned courtesy, and made his way to a long, deep davenport across the room which Glenning had hitherto failed to notice.

The caller now followed Julia into the hall.

"It seems impossible for us to treat you as a stranger in any way," she said, in a low, musical voice, "or to make company of you. Shall we sit on the portico, or would you rather go out on the lawn? We can take chairs out, if you prefer."

"Am I to speak with perfect freedom? I believe that is the best and truest basis for friendship, and I hope we may grow to be friends."

The partly alarmed glance which she darted at him showed only the habitual expression, half-smiling, half-grave, wholly genuine.

"The truth, always, and straight from the shoulder," she answered. "Deliver me from men or women who are constantly beating about the bush and perpetually feeling their way."

"Bravo!" he exclaimed, softly, and laughed—a chest laugh which thrilled her. "If everyone followed that maxim we would always know where our neighbours stood. Then this is the thing I wish now—to go have a look at The Prince's new stable. It had best be done by daylight, and—"

"Why, certainly."

She took a sunbonnet from the hat-rack near by, and turned to the long side porch back of the hall.

"Come with me. It is not very far away."

They passed the length of the porch side by side, silently. Some steps brought them to the ground, and as Glenning cast his eyes about he saw a portly figure in blue calico and bandana swathed head disappearing up another short flight of steps at the other end of the house.

"That's Aunt Frances," explained Julia, smiling at the precipitate manner in which the old negress had sought the shelter of her kitchen. "She is very shy for one of her age, and she is especially 'jubus' of young men. I don't know why, for I'm sure they are not near so critical as the young women. But she is faithful, and wonderfully watchful of me. I love

her devotedly. Yonder is her consort, Peter, hard at work."

The smoke-house was not over fifty yards from the mansion, and was reached along a walk of huge flat stones. The way to all the out-buildings was paved in this manner. Peter was evidently hung on the horns of a dilemma as the two young people came up. He removed his tattered hat deferentially, greeted them with two profound salaams, and plunged into a recital of his woes, using the saw he held in one hand by way of emphasis and illustration.

"De stable hit bu'n, 'n' de Prince got to hab a home. Massa 'low de smoke-house wuz de only t'ing lef' fittin', 'n' hyar I been all day tryin' to wuk out de riddle. Dar's de do', 'n' dar's de Prince, hitched to dat freestone peach tree, 'n' de question whut's 'plexin' my mind is, how I gwi' git 'im thu dat do'!"

He ceased with his head on one side, and rheumy eyes which glared defiantly at the young man fronting him.

"What have you been doing with your saw?" asked Glenning, amused, but holding his face decorously straight.

"Cut a winder on de yon' side o' de house. Hit tuk me twel dinner-time. Now comes dis pesky do', whut de Prince won' fit. Ef he had 'nough gumption to stoop, he could go in, but he's dat proud he won' bend a bit. 'N' he got to git in hyar 'fo' dahk, sho'."

"Let me take a look. Maybe I can offer you a suggestion."

John passed through the low door. He found himself in a tall, dark room, odourous of cured meats and burned hickory fagots. It was scantily lighted by a square window of diminutive size, for in making the opening Peter had been careful not to get it large enough to admit the body of a man. But Glenning thought it was just the right size to admit two arms, one holding a bull's eye lantern and the other a revolver. By the aid of the light which streamed through the open door he could discern dimly the rows of blackened rafters overhead, from which broken bits of hempen strings hung desolately. There was not an ounce of meat in the smoke-house, and the man could not help wondering the least bit at this. Could they really be poor! He remembered what Dillard had said to him—"They are in no position to entertain a well guest, let alone a sick one." His heart sank strangely at the thought, and pity filled his breast. He turned swiftly, and went out the door.

"Peter's trouble is not as grave as it might be," he said, smiling at Julia as she stood patiently listening to the darky's discourse. "There are two remedies; to cut up, or dig down. The floor, I notice, is perhaps six inches lower than the ground, or we could saw out the log above the lintel. Either is entirely practicable, and not difficult. Which would you prefer, Miss Dudley?"

Julia did not know, as the perplexed look on her face showed, but Peter did. He broke in before she had time to formulate a reply.

"We'll dig dat do'step up. I've heerd de Massa

say afo'time dat de rain'd run under dat do', 'n' dat he gwi' hab it 'tended to 'kase it spile de meat. 'Bleeged to yo', suh. I'll git de pick 'n' shev'l 'n' fix dat d'reckly."

He departed with his peculiar gait.

"Come and look at The Prince, and see if he knows you," said Julia. "Peter hasn't let him get out of sight today."

Together they approached the young animal which stood tethered under the shade of a small peach tree to one side.

"It's wonderful how little he was hurt," resumed Julia, and she could not restrain the emotion in her voice. "See, this is the worst."

She pointed to a spot just above the lean flank, where a long, deep burn marred the satin-like skin.

"A piece of falling timber did that," said Glenning. "I saw it."

He walked slowly around The Prince, and he, who had known horses from his childhood, marveled much at the absolute faultlessness of this young colt. He was modeled for speed, and speed alone, from the tips of his veined ears to his small, polished hoofs. There was not a line at fault, and, unbidden, a great wave of enthusiasm swept the man.

"You will race him this summer?" he queried.

"Yes, if he lives till then," she answered, with some sadness.

"Don't fear but he will live. I pledge you my word he shall be on the track when the day comes."

Julia looked at him with moist eyes.

"You are wondrous kind." Then, with a sudden brightening—"The Prince *is* fast. Oh, you don't know! He really runs like the wind; so rapidly that it almost frightens you. But this is a secret, you know. Still it has gotten abroad, somehow, and that's why the stable burned, for there are those not far away who also own fast horses, and it would almost kill them to have our Prince victorious."

A scowl darkened the face of the tall, spare man in front of her.

"I can scarcely believe such dastardly cowards are alive. But don't fear them. They shall not harm your horse, and after this night I think their designs upon his life will cease."

"O I fear the night!" she cried. "But remember your promise to father. I wish it was all over, and morning was here again!"

His deep, soft chest laugh reassured her.

"This will be child's play, Miss Dudley. Do not permit your rest to be disturbed on my account. I love the darkness. Not because I am altogether evil, but because of the solitude and peace which it brings. We can find ourselves better in the still hours; we can face ourselves and take counsel, and repent of what has been unworthy, and gather strength, perchance, for the next day."

She raised her eyes with the tiniest frown of wonder, but he had bent down and was rubbing the foreleg of The Prince.

Peter arrived at this point with his implements and set vigorously to work, and in the space of a half-

hour the colt was safely domiciled anew, and was munching oats from a soap-box, both of which had been provided by his faithful groom.

The remainder of the day passed with remarkable swiftness for John Glenning. He found in Julia a character of unusual charm. She was unsated with the world, unspoiled by men, unworried by the demands of society. Her life had been a trifle monotonous, perhaps, but she possessed the polish which gentle birth and proper environment bestows, and her ready, bright mind had been led along the channels of the pure and good only. Her innate womanliness was ever uppermost, never approaching prudery, but marking unmistakably her speech, gestures and manners. Soon after their return to the house they had been joined by Major Dudley, and ere he realized how time had flown the vigorous ringing of a bell on the side porch made Glenning aware that it was tea time. It was rather a frugal repast to which he sat down a few moments later, but the napery was snowy white, and the service of elegant silver, solid and old. Aunt Frances, in white cap and apron, moved ponderously about the board in prompt and deft manipulation of dishes, and to the poor office- and hotel-worn man it was as though he had accidentally strayed into Paradise. Candles in antique old brass holders lighted the table, and there was witchery in the misty halo they cast upon the fresh, lovely face and waving hair of Julia Dudley. She was happy and bright at tea, striving alike to entertain their guest and to lift the gloom which

had again enveloped the Major. This side of her father's nature she had seldom seen, and it made her afraid. Should he grow morose or brooding at his time of life the result would be disastrous, she knew, and before the meal was finished she made a mental resolve to bring about that very night the talk which the Major had promised her the afternoon before. Then she would be the better able to aid him.

The sun was down when they again came out upon the portico, and twilight was silently clearing the way for darkness.

"You have been most kind to me," said Glenning, standing barcheaded upon the low step between the portico pillars. "Your hospitality has been the best thing I have known for a long time. Let me beg you, Major, not to let this little affair tonight keep you from sleeping. There is not the slightest use of anyone being at the smoke-house until after midnight, and I shall be here not later than twelve. If, however, you would feel easier to know that a friendly eye was on The Prince, let Peter go. Remember I consented to your terms readily, and now I implore you to listen to me. Will you retire at your usual hour?"

"I will see that father keeps to the house," Julia said, with an unexpected firmness which surprised both her hearers. As she spoke she thrust her arm through the Major's and pressed it gently.

"There is not the slightest necessity for either of you to sit up," resumed Glenning. "I shall come and quietly go around to the smoke-house and remain

there till morning. And please do not be alarmed unnecessarily. I shall keep my word to you, Major, depend upon that, and above all, go to sleep with the positive assurance that The Prince shall pass through this night unharmed."

He clasped each one's hand firmly, and turned away.

As the tall, upright form disappeared down the avenue, Julia put one hand upon her father's cheek.

"Daddy," she said, "this night I must hear why Devil Marston hates us."

## CHAPTER VI.

The day had been very warm, and the old settee on the portico offered a comfortable seat, so it was here Major Dudley and Julia decided to stay. The master of the house made one more effort at postponement, but the young mistress would have none of it. It must be that night, and at once. Affairs had shaped themselves in such a manner that a complete revelation of all that had been kept hidden from her was imperative. So Peter fetched the long-stemmed meerschaum pipe which his master never smoked except of evenings, and received his instructions regarding the colt. These, by the way, were superfluous, for the negro had already made his arrangements to be a bed-mate of The Prince that night. Then, with the faint odour of the cherished honeysuckle at the corner of the house in their nostrils, and the faraway plaint of a mourning whip-poor-will floating spookily up from the lowlands on their right, they settled themselves, one to the task of telling a story he had rather have kept, and the other listening eagerly, yet with a certain dread. Julia felt that a new existence was opening up for her, and it looked formidable enough in the uncertain atmosphere which now enveloped it. Hitherto her way had been smooth, and her tasks and renunciations had been those of love. But as she thought of that dark-faced, brutish

looking man who lived only a half mile further down the road, and knew that in some way both he and she were concerned in the tale she was to hear, for the first time in her happy life a vague terror took hold of her and her body sank closer to the form beside her. Major Dudley had his pipe alight by this time, but he was slow to begin speaking. For perhaps five minutes he said not a word, and Julia discreetly did not urge him. She knew it would come, and they had half the night ahead of them. Presently her father's hand strayed over into her lap and found hers.

"Julia," he said, and his voice was so tender and caressing that the girl caught a sob in her throat, that he might not hear, and be distressed. "Julia, I have hoped all my life that it would never become necessary for you to hear this story. It but illustrates man's inhumanity to man, and shows the harm an evil mind can bring about. Now I will tell you all about it, for it is your right.

"You never knew old Brule Marston. He was the father of our neighbour, and at heart was as vile a being as I have ever known. He loved your mother" —there was a catch in his voice here—"or at least pretended that he did, and wanted to marry her. His family's position was good, but only from the great fortune they had always owned. In reality the Marstons have been a bad lot as far back as I have any recollection of them. They have lived in Kentucky a long time, but they have always bought their position in a community, and I have never known one of the name to be a true gentleman, as we of the

Bluegrass construe the word. Brule Marston was hot-headed, rash, impetuous and domineering as a young man. We were near the same age, he being a few years my senior, and we knew each other but slightly, for our families never visited, as you well know. Your mother came from Virginia to visit in the neighbourhood. It was to the Beckwith home she came—you know Miss Adeline, the old maid who lives with the Rays. She was one of the belles of the period, and I met Margaret at their home. Brule Marston met her about the same time, and then the mischief started. Each of us loved her from the first, and in his own way. Brule tried to force her into a promise of marriage, and for a time I thought I had lost her. He was handsome in a dark, devilish way, and I think it was his dashing manner which captivated Margaret for a time. They were heavy days for me, my daughter, but I played fair, and never said or did an underhand thing to attempt to further my cause. She gave no preference to either suitor so far as being in her company was concerned, and we had an equal chance. In the end I won, and that was God's choicest and sweetest gift to me. My rival took his defeat as might have been expected. He went raving wild when Margaret told him, and had not help been within call I believe he would have struck her in his frenzy. Then followed a prolonged drunken spree, when he scoured the country roads at night like a fiend escaped from hell, shouting his curses at the sky, and shooting his revolver recklessly. I had never feared him, and made no especial effort to avoid

him in my nightly calls upon my fianceé. But I was glad we never met, for mischief most certainly would have ensued.

"Margaret and I were married quietly, and now comes some more news. You know you have often spoken of your uncle Arthur's picture over the mantel in the library, saying how sorry you were never to have known him? He was several years my junior, and had been at college in the East. He came home and met Margaret after she and I had confessed our love. He at once conceived a violent affection for her, and when he discovered he was too late to hope to win her, it went hard with him, indeed. He stayed till after the wedding, and then went West, following the lure of gold. For a few years we heard from him at intervals, then his letters ceased, and today we do not know whether he lives or not. We loved each other dearly, and it has always been a cross to me that I was the innocent cause of his exile. I have made efforts to find him, but they have all been futile.

"Brule Marston disappeared a few days after our wedding. It was told that he took a boat at Louisville and went south, as far as New Orleans. He was gone a short time only, and when he returned he brought with him a woman. She was a quadroon, or a Creole, and she was exceedingly handsome in a flashy, barbaric way. Marston had loaded her with costly silks and jewels of all kinds, and introduced her as his wife. No one believed this to be true, and doors were closed upon them everywhere. In the course of a year a child was born to them, a son, who

from his cradle was christened Devil Marston, for such was the wicked heart of Brule, his father, who worshiped nothing but his own passions, and made an open mock of religion. Then came the war, and I went with the South. Fearing to leave my young wife unprotected, I took her to her old home in Virginia, and there she stayed safely until the bitter strife was over, and there you were born. When we returned home a fearful tale of horror awaited us. In a maniac fit of rage Brule Marston had killed the Creole woman whom he had brought up from New Orleans. No attempts had been made to bring him to justice for the crime. Partly because everything was so unhinged on account of the war and its effects, partly because no officer was brave enough to try arrest him. From that time on he lived alone in the old home down yonder, leaving the rearing of his son to an old negro woman who was reputed to be coarse and profane. Harrowing stories came to us of the fiendish cruelties Brule Marston practiced upon his servants, and he thought nothing of knocking one down and stamping him with his feet.

"How swiftly the years have chased each other since I came back home with you and your mother! And how I have wished them back again—those short, sweet years which followed your coming, when Margaret, you and I lived in perfect unity, and peace, and love. But change is the order of the universe, and we must take it when it comes, bravely, if so be God gives us grace, and fit ourselves to meet the new needs.

"Brule Marston died upon a night of awful storm. It seemed as if the cohorts of Satan had assembled to escort his foul soul to the realms of the lost. I will tell you now what I learned later, and I pray you to be brave, my child, and do not fear. The only training which Brule Marston instilled into his son was hatred of us. He never sought to teach him any good thing, or any worthy precept. His eternal and ceaseless injunction was hate, hate, hate. He never forgot the fact that I had robbed him of the pure being he had set his black heart on possessing, and revenge was the only feeling he harbored. Had he lived long enough I believe that in the end he would have wrought us some great harm, for I am assured that was his sole aim and desire. But death found him in the midst of his machinations, and stilled his hand. Devil Marston was an apt pupil, and he readily imbibed his father's teachings. By birth he was well fitted for any scurrilous task or duty, and he has always found joy in causing pain. On that night of storm when old Brule died he called his son to his bedside, and laid upon him his dying wish. It was that Devil Marston should make it his life's work to harass and oppress us, and at last to ruin us utterly, using his entire fortune for that purpose should it become necessary. It is needless for me to tell you the son was not slow to make the promise. It was a task entirely congenial to his nature. You have never been aware of it, my child, but he has had designs upon your happiness, knowing well that through you he could inflict the deepest pain upon me. You of course

remember when he was at our home frequently, when we accorded him the courtesy due any one under our roof, while never extending him a welcome, or making him feel that his presence was desired. He always endeavored to be pleasant, but it transpired later that this was acting only; a mask for his true feelings. He often sought to be alone with you, but I could not trust the blood, worse mixed than ever in this man, and I always managed the situation so that I should be present also. This annoyed him, and he could not always hide his resentment—it would flame through the veil of decency he tried to wear with us. I did all in my power to discourage him from coming here, without asking him in so many words to stay away, but he had set his soul upon accomplishing a certain thing, and he would lose his soul rather than lose his project. Then came the night, not long ago, after which his visits ceased."

The low, regular, even tones stopped, and father and daughter sat close to each other in silence, each feeling the other's sympathy through their clasped hands. As they sat thus in the sweet summer night a clatter of hoofs jangled through the star-lit dark. They came from off to the right—from the direction in which the man lived of whom they were talking. The sound gathered rapidly in volume, and a moment or two later they heard a horse running furiously by on the highroad in front of them, going towards town. As the noise died away in the distance Julia pressed the Major's hand, but said nothing.

"It is he," spoke the father, in a voice of pro-

nounced melancholy. "So his sire rode before him, killing on an average two horses every year. It seems the devil not only dwells in them, but is continually chasing them."

"What happened that night, daddy, when Mr. Marston came the last time? I saw him only in passing, and he looked nervous and angry."

"He was angry, little one. We ended it all in the library, but not until he had voluntarily torn away his mask. I would spare you this if I could—if you did not demand it."

Though it was dark Julia knew that he had turned to look at her.

"But I demand it—everything. You will not find me weak, for I am stronger than you know, daddy dear."

"He would not sit down, although I insisted that he take a chair, so our interview occurred with us both standing. He was quite restless, and frequently walked the entire length of the room, switching at his legs with his whip, which he always carries. I do not think I had ever seen him so disturbed—"

"I know all that, daddy; please come to the vital part at once."

The Major drew a deep breath, as though in preparation for some great exertion.

"He told me at the outset that he loved you, and that he wanted me to use my influence to gain your consent to marry him—damn him for a lying, mongrel cur!"

The girl felt his deep rage trembling through the

hand she held, but the sickening shudder which swept her from head to foot passed unnoticed by him. His mind was back on the memorable scene, when he had to grip a chair-back to keep his hands off the throat of the scoundrel who faced him—who had dared to come with his black sins thick upon him, and ask for a Dudley, for his, Thomas Dudley's daughter in marriage! When he resumed his story his voice was husky and uneven.

"For a time I did not answer him. I feared to speak, for I would have cursed him from my home—would have driven him out like a rabid dog. I stood behind a chair and looked at him, and through his bravado I saw him grow afraid. He knew his words called for a bullet, and for a moment I believe he thought it was coming. He did not relish my silence. I am sure he had been drinking some, and his mood was more fiery and impetuous than usual. He wanted it all over quickly, and that prompted him to speak again.

" 'Will you help me? What do you say?'

"Oh, how I wanted to splinter the chair before me against his face! But I answered him thus:

" 'I say that my daughter will never, *never* marry you. She scarcely knows you, she is but a child, but she is not, nor ever will be for you, Devil Marston!'

"Thus I answered him, and I have never seen a human face become so ferocious as his did at that moment. All restraint vanished on the instant, and he became his own self, a raving beast. I do not recall his words. They were hot, reckless, vindictive and

threatening. His fury became so great that he forgot all caution, and boasted of his money, and power, and what he was going to do to us. He vowed that he would bring us to a crust of bread before another year had gone, that he would literally starve us to his will. He spoke of the bank, of his power there as president, and declared that he would arrange to pass dividend after dividend if I did not reconsider. When I bought my stock he was only a director, but by unscrupulous wire-pulling and money manipulation he has become the head of the bank, and owns nearly fifty per cent. of the capital stock. That means, my daughter, that he really controls the bank's affairs, and has power to declare or pass a dividend. He could not do the latter without crooked work, for the bank is prosperous to a high degree, but he glories in underhand methods, and would not hesitate to swear to a false statement. If he does do this, I cannot foresee the future very clearly, for you know that is our sole source of income. I made no attempt to pacify him. I did not want his good will, for his ill will were better. I patiently listened to his volcanic speeches, and at last he wore himself out.

"'Now will you agree?' he concluded; 'or will you have me for an enemy instead?'

"'I shall never agree to such a base proposition,' I answered, 'and I had rather have you for an enemy than a friend.' Then I opened the door and pointed him out. 'Don't ever show your evil face in this house again!' I said, and he went, mouthing incoherent threats as he did so. That is the story, child,

and you cannot wonder that I have kept it from you, whom I would shield from every sharp wind."

Again there was silence on the portico. A bird rustled in the vines, and a tree-frog, awaking down on the lawn, shrilled his dolorous cry. Perhaps a half hour passed without a word being spoken. Then Julia's calm voice said:

"I believe you did right, and whatever happens you will know that I approved your actions, and if we must suffer because of this man we will suffer together, and help each other all we can. I had no idea of—his feelings for me, but I cannot think them true and noble."

"They are assumed, and base as his nature can make them. He can no more love than a brute beast of the field."

"What could have been his motive last night? Was it pretence only when he made as if he would rescue The Prince?"

"Nothing else. It was a sham show of courage before you—and the people. He may have had some vague hope of getting the colt out, and thus winning favour with you, but whatever his momentary purpose, I am positive his ultimate and main one is our downfall."

They continued to discuss the future until the library clock struck ten.

"You had better go to bed now, daddy," said Julia, coaxingly. "You know it does not serve you well to sit up late, and nothing can be gained by it tonight. Peter is at the smoke-house now, and Doctor Glenning

will be there long before the hour of danger. O daddy, what a brave, fine fellow this new doctor is! I can scarcely understand how he has come to us, and taken possession of us, as it were. He carries things with a firm hand, and they all seem right and natural. Kiss me goodnight and go upstairs; I shall be along presently."

The Major arose with a sigh, gave her the caress, and went indoors. Directly she heard his deliberate step on the stair. It was then she went in also, and carefully put out the lights. But instead of seeking her room she found a light, dark-coloured shawl and crept noiselessly back to the settee, leaving the front door slightly ajar. She could not go to sleep yet, and the sense of impending danger had so wrought upon her that she knew it would be entirely useless for her to attempt to compose herself for rest. A subdued excitement was running swiftly through her veins, so she wrapped the sombre folds of the ample shawl closely about her form, completely hiding the white dress which she wore, and let her mind review the incidents which had taken place the last twenty-four hours. The retrospection had its pleasant features, despite the loss and anxiety she had suffered. It was not a disquieting thought to know that a clean, athletic young gentleman with remarkable eyes and a new way of looking at things had for the time usurped control of the Dudley affairs, all in a way which bore no trace of forwardness. It was not a fearsome thing at all to sit there and know that within an hour or two a knight would be on the ground to champion her

cause against any and all comers. But it was a new sensation for Julia. She had never had a sweetheart, and the only protection she knew was that offered by her father, which was really only a tender providing for her temporal wants. But this night romance walked abroad. A man, almost a stranger, was really to risk his life for her!

Swiftly the minutes raced by, and Julia was startled when the clock struck twelve. She was sure she had not slept, but this was the hour, and her knight had not come. As the vibrations from within pulsed into silence she became aware that something was moving on the drive. She strained her eyes through the nebulous star-shine, holding her breath in the tenseness of the moment. The figure of a man rapidly assumed proportions before her gaze. He was walking quickly, but noiselessly. He passed the portico step without stopping, and though he wore a cap and his coat was closely buttoned, Julia knew it was the one who had promised to be there at that time. She shrank back and clutched the shawl closely under her chin, but he looked in front of him only, and passed on around the corner of the house in the direction of the impromptu stable.

Julia arose and went in, carefully locking the front door. Then she tipped up to her room, pausing at her father's door to listen. From the regularity of his breathing, and the part of the room from whence the sound proceeded, she knew he was asleep. She was glad of this, for she had feared he would try to

sit up. Passing into her own room she undressed and prepared herself for the night, then knelt by the open window, and with her elbows on the sill and her chin in her palms, gazed up at the starry space above her, and prayed. This was her nightly custom, to pray from her open casement. It seemed to her that a freer, more perfect and more intimate communication was established thus. It was only a fancy, of course, but it was one she always indulged in when the weather would allow. This night a new name was added to her petitions. She knelt there a long, long time after her prayers were done, listening, dreading to hear. But only the soft night sounds she had known always came to her. Then all at once a sweet drowsiness crept over her, and soon she was in bed, asleep.

Glenning's approach to the smoke-house came very near resulting in a tragedy. Preoccupied, he walked boldly to the door, and tried to open it. Instantly a belligerent and threatening voice informed him if he "teched dat do' ag'in he'd git a hole in 'im yo' c'd th'ow a dog thu!" John stepped quickly aside and opened a parley with the defender of the door. It was several minutes before Peter could be persuaded that it was the new doctor come to relieve him, although this part of the program had been dinned into him over and over again by Julia, and when at last the door was grudgingly opened a few inches, the rusty barrel of an army musket was the first thing to appear. But the exchange was then soon effected, and the relief guard had to unceremoniously cut off

a long string of instructions from the departing Peter, by gently closing the door in that worthy's face, and making it tight on the inside.

Alone with the colt, Glenning drew a small lantern from his pocket, and made his brief preparations. With native denseness of mind, Peter had tethered The Prince broadside on to the window yawning blackly in the opposite wall. The man untied the halter, and led the animal to a point where it would be most inaccessible for anyone attempting it harm by employing the window, and that was really the only point where an attack could be successfully made, for the door was thick-beamed, and could not be forced. This done to his satisfaction, the man sat down directly under the window—in this position the hole was about two feet over his head—and drew forth a thirty-eight calibre revolver. The brief but thorough inspection he gave it showed it to be in perfect trim, so he carefully placed it on a shingle which happened to lie near by. Then he closed the slide of his lantern, found a comfortable attitude with his back against the logs, and did some thinking himself. His mind was keenly awake and alert, and he had no fear of falling asleep. Now and again he would look at his watch, then lean back and stare into the impenetrable blackness before him, and wonder things. The colt was very quiet, his only movement being an occasional stamp of the foot. Finally Glenning's watch showed half-past two. At this time of the year it would begin to grow light soon after three. He arose agilely, and drew off his coat. Then he loosened his

shirt at the throat, rolled his sleeves above his elbows, and again sat down, this time facing the window, with his knees drawn up. If the attack was really to be made that night it must come quickly. He had scarcely settled himself in this new attitude when he felt another presence. On the heels of this intuitive perception came light footfalls—a stealthy creeping on the balls of the feet. The prowler was circling the smoke-house, seeking some place of entrance. The feet stopped at the door, and Glenning heard the strain of the bolts as a shoulder was forcibly pressed upon the oaken planks. The man inside smiled grimly, and waited. A moment's silence, and the footfalls came on, to the corner, around it, and the watcher caught the low exclamation of gratified surprise when the marauder saw the window. Glenning got to his knees and slowly rubbed the palms of his hands together, while his jaws grew hard. A shaft of yellow light darted through the window and danced among the blackened rafters near the roof, showing the broken bits of hempen strings which in past years had borne luscious burdens. The man crouching inside set his eyes intently on the opening, while on his body and limbs the muscles rose and ridged themselves for the coming battle. The sword of yellow light flickered lower and lower, revealing the beech logs to which the bark still clung, and the chinking between them. Lower, and around, till it shone in the honest, unsuspecting eyes of The Prince, and glistened on his withers, and found the spot on his shiny coat behind which his heart was beating. A

hand holding a bull's-eye lantern came through the window; another hand holding a huge revolver, cocked, crept like a snake to its side. Then up from the darkness beneath the window sprang two other hands, long, slender, white and strong as steel. Around the wrists of the assassin these two hands closed in a grip so fierce that it brought a cry of pain and fright from the one outside, and lantern and revolver fell to the soft earth inside the smoke-house. Then ensued a silent struggle, in which the captive strove with fiendish power born of terror and rage to free himself. Glenning, on his knees, sent all his strength to his vise-like hands. Not a word was spoken, not another sound was uttered. In the gloom the two men strove as two animals might, and their heavy breathing alone broke the stillness. Not for nothing had John Glenning kept himself in rigorous physical training from the first year he went to college. All his hoarded strength leaped up at his call, and gave him the victory. Gradually the frantic struggles of the marauder stopped, and finally he ceased resisting. Then Glenning, with his hands still set in a superhuman grasp, spoke from between his clenched teeth.

"Who are you?"

There was no answer.

"Who are you?" he repeated.

Still no answer came.

Then the captor began to draw down on the arms he held, forcing the bones against the log at the bottom

of the window. Down, down, and a groan of pain escaped his prisoner.

"Who are you?" he asked, for the third time.

"Don't break my arms!" said a voice.

Glenning recognized it.

"Are you Travers?"

"Yes—yes—I'm Travers! Let me go—for God's sake! You're killing me!"

"Who sent you to kill this horse?"

A little more force was brought to bear with the question.

"Marston—Devil Marston! Ease up a little and I'll talk—I swear I'll talk!"

John did as the man requested, though not lessening his grip on the wrists.

"Now let me tell you something. You don't know who I am, but I want you to know. You came out here expecting easy sailing, because you thought there was no one here to protect this horse. I'm the new doctor who came last night, and I'm at your hotel. I won't be there tomorrow night. I'm not making you any promises of secrecy about this matter, but I'd advise you to cut Marston. Now I want you to go to Marston tomorrow with this message from John Glenning. Tell him I say he's got to leave the Dudleys and the Dudley's horse alone. Tell him the next one who comes here on mischief will be shot, if it is himself. Do you understand, and will you promise to tell him?"

"Yes, I'll tell him every word. But for God's sake

don't you tell anybody of this. It'd ruin me. It's the first time I've ever gone wrong, and if you'll let me off I'll swear not to do anything bad again. And I'll tell Marston. He got me into this."

"I'll not make you any promises, but I'll see how you behave, for I've come here to stay. Go, now, before daylight catches you, and thank the Lord you're alive!"

In the first gray dawn of the next morning Peter knocked dubiously on the smoke-house door. It was opened promptly, and when he saw The Prince alive and unharmed his joy knew no bounds. Glenning dismissed his exuberant manifestations somewhat abruptly, for he was in haste to be gone. Instructing the darky to say to the Dudleys that nothing of any consequence had happened, he went around the house and down the avenue towards the road.

And how was he to know that behind a partly lifted curtain in an upper room two sleep-sweet eyes, moist with beauty newly born, watched his retreating figure with something approaching tenderness in their depths?

## CHAPTER VII.

When Devil Marston awoke that morning he was conscious of a vague feeling of satisfaction. As his brain grew more and more active he smiled broadly, showing his wolfish teeth, and threw himself from his bed. Good news would await him that morning. By covert watching he had seen where The Prince was to be stabled, and late the night before had gone in person to tell Dan Travers just how to go about the work. It was ridiculously easy—to make way with the colt—and ere this the thing had been done, for Travers had seemed eager for the undertaking. As he set about dressing Marston reviewed it all mentally; the success of his hireling's venture, the dismay and consternation of the Dudleys, the total lack of proof as to who committed the crime. But the consciousness that those whom he hated would know positively who was back of the crime was the sweetest thought of all. And Travers was coming this morning to make his report; this had been Marston's last order. He might arrive at any moment, and Marston wanted his breakfast before listening to good news, for it would sound better upon a full stomach. He opened a door and rudely bawled an order into vacancy, but a fear-filled negro's voice answered him in assuring words. His rule was one of absolute terror. His servants were no more to him than so

many dogs, and they obeyed him as such. When he sat down to his meal a few minutes later an ill-favoured negro youth waited upon him, and a slatternly wench appeared at times from the kitchen, bringing new dishes to the door. Marston ate repulsively, as befitted his birth and character, and took an intense delight in his meal, which was coarse and poorly prepared. Throughout it all he listened repeatedly for his expected caller, and when he rose from the table there was not the slightest suspicion in his mind that anything had gone wrong. He would go to the stable and have a look at his favourite racers. The last barrier which stood in the way of their supremacy had been removed, and he would gloat over them with increased pleasure now. He issued some harsh orders for directing his caller when he should arrive, and left the house with quick strides.

As he walked around and about the noble animals which were his greatest pride his heart swelled with exultation. But when he came out of a stall presently and saw the man for whom he had been waiting standing before him, a swift alarm seized him and made his dark face pale. For a moment they stood staring into each other's eyes, one with mounting anger, the other with sullen passiveness. Then Marston strode forward and thrust his darkening visage close to Travers' face.

"Didn't you do it, you sneak?" he demanded, his upper lip curling back, showing his fangs. "Don't you dare to tell me you have failed me!"

Travers' accustomed nervousness had vanished.

He was perfectly calm as he stood within arm's length of the infuriated Marston.

"I'm the man to make a fuss," he answered, "for you steered me into a hole which nearly cost me my life. I was discovered, captured, and had to tell all the business to get off with a whole skin!"

Marston's face grew black, and he shook in his track with rage.

"You coward! You traitor! Who was there to capture you, and wring anything from you? Tell me, before I knock you down!"

Travers pushed back his coat sleeves and held out his wrists. Each was ringed with purplish bands, and swollen. Then he related his experience in detail, and ended by delivering, word for word, the message which Glenning had sent. As Marston listened his rage rose up and choked him. At the conclusion of the recital he was wild, and moved about threshing the air with his fists. When he at length came to a standstill his face was the colour of ashes, and he was shaking from the violence of his emotion.

"He said that, did he? The upstart! He'll shoot me, will he? He's going to tell me what to do, and what not to do! I'll attend to him! He'd better have stayed where he came from."

Then, muttering to himself as was his wont when enraged, he wheeled and went towards the house, leaving Travers to look out for himself.

The landlord of the Union House did not tarry long. He had done a thing which yesterday he would not have believed himself capable of doing. Now he

went slowly down to the yard gate, wondering at his bravery, got into a wornout road-cart which he had borrowed in town from a country friend, and began his return trip.

* * * * * * *

When Glenning had dispatched a hasty breakfast he sought the clerk in the hotel office and told him to have his bill ready some time that forenoon. That worthy at once evinced a loquacious interest in the new doctor's affairs, and would fain have inquired his departing guest's plans for the future, but John merely replied that he had no intention of leaving town, and went up to his room. Here he was soon joined by Tom Dillard, who came in wearing the most dejected air possible, tendered a perfunctory good morning to John's hearty greeting, and sank upon the edge of the bed, his round, soft face wofully elongated.

"Sick this morning, Dillard?" queried Glenning, busy with the damaged clothes which still lay on the chair. "I'd as lieve have you for my first patient as anybody."

Dillard sighed, and shook his head dolorously.

"Not exactly sick, and not exactly well," he replied, "but it's precious little sleeping I did last night."

"Indigestion?"

"No; worry."

Glenning, briskly wielding a clothes brush, glanced at Dillard. He was evidently in the depths of despair, and had most likely come for consolation or advice.

"Do you suppose I can help you?" queried John, sympathetically.

"I'm going to tell you about it, anyway, and see what you think. Maybe it looks pretty queer to you that I should come here and make a confidant of you when I hardly know you, but I have all kinds of faith in you, and this matter touches people I like immensely, and I know you'll regard all I say as confidential."

He stopped, and let his fat hands stray vaguely over his knees.

"Certainly I'll keep still, Dillard, and I'll be glad to help you all I can."

"You see it's about the Dudleys. I don't suppose you know it, but they're poor as Job's turkey. All they've got is that house and an acre or two of ground and that horse, and—fifty shares of bank stock. The old man bought this stock when he got too bad off to manage his racers properly—sold them, you see, and invested his money this way, so that he wouldn't have any worry, and it'd bring 'em in just enough to live on. The bank's boomin', doin' the best business it ever has, and has been declaring a five per cent. semi-annual dividend. That's ten per cent. a year on the Major's investment, which means five hundred dollars per annum for him and Miss Julia to live on—nothin' handsome, you see, but it'll keep 'em from gettin' hungry. Now these people are my friends, and I hate to see 'em suffer."

"Well, what's the worry? Is the bank insolvent? You just said it was doing a fine business."

"Best in its history! There's a dividend due the last of this month, but it's not going to be paid!"

Glenning wheeled from where he was bending over his open trunk.

"Why isn't it going to be paid?"

"I'll tell you."

Dillard looked around to see that no doors were open, then leaned forward and spoke in a loud whisper.

"The president of our bank is a Mr. Marston. He's rich as Jersey cream, and he owns the bulk of stock in the institution. He hates the Dudleys like snakes, and he never loses a chance to do something that'll hurt 'em. The last meeting of the directors was the one at which the six months' dividend should have been declared. We've earned it all right, and more besides. There's no just reason under the sun why it shouldn't have been paid. The whole board was in favor of it but Marston. They had a warm session. They hold their meetings in a back room at the bank, and while it was a closed meeting, I knew that an argument was in progress, for they were there an hour and a half. But they can't go against Marston's wishes. I learned later that he insisted on buying a new safe for the bank, which costs a pile o' money, and also declared that some improvements had to be made in the bank building. The whole thing was bosh, for we have a good safe, and there are no improvements needed. It was just a well-aimed blow at the Dudleys, but it went through. The new safe and the improvements were ordered to record, and the dividend was passed. If that doesn't mean starva-

tion for our friends then I don't know what I'm talkin' about."

Glenning did some quick thinking. Then he came over and sat down by Dillard's side.

"Is this generally known?"

"No; but it will be when our statement is published in the *Herald* next Friday."

"I feel a warm personal interest in the Dudley's affairs, Dillard, and I thank you for speaking so frankly. You have been open with me, and I will be the same with you, and together we will fight this low scoundrel. Listen. I arrived in your town night before last, a total stranger. Since then I have learned this much. Devil Marston hired an emissary to burn that stable. Yesterday, in that room over there, he and the man who conducts this hotel concocted a scheme whereby Travers should kill the Dudley's colt last night. I overheard them, and went directly to the Dudleys with my story. They had no one to help them, so I volunteered. They consented, and I stood guard last night in the smoke-house where the horse was quartered. Travers came to do the foul deed and I caught him—literally caught him and held him with my hands and made him promise to go to this Marston and tell him that I would kill the next man who came to the Dudleys with mischievous intent."

Dillard looked at the earnest face before him with wide eyes and open mouth. He could scarcely believe the words he heard, though he did not doubt they were true.

"Now," resumed Glenning, firmly, "we at least know our man, and that is something. I do not fear him, but with you it is different. Yet if we confound him in the end I believe that you will have more to do with it than I. Let us speak with perfect candor. You are dependant for your living upon your salary?"

"Yes, there's ma and me. We haven't a thing, and our living comes from my salary at the bank."

"Just so. Then you couldn't afford to openly oppose your president. You would quickly lose your position if you did. We must move very carefully. Does Marston take an active interest in affairs at the bank? I mean is he familiar with the books, and the accounts—in other words, is he a live president, and not a figure-head merely?"

"He's in every day, poking and prying around. There's nothing goes on that he doesn't know about."

"Does the clerical force like him?"

"He hasn't a friend in the bank, not even the cashier. We all know he's a rascal, but he's so powerful that we're afraid to say a word aloud when he's around."

"What is your position, Dillard?"

"Head bookkeeper."

"Then let me make a suggestion to you. Watch Marston. Watch his every movement. You know the national banking laws. See that he doesn't infringe on them. A man as unscrupulous as he is liable to attempt anything. Watch him. Watch every mark he makes with a pen, and the first time he steps

over the line come to me and let me know. Will you do it?"

"I'll do it, doctor, and I don't believe I'll have to wait very long."

Then they sat in silence for a few minutes, each thinking of what the other had said.

Glenning spoke.

"I hope you will understand me, Dillard, when I ask how Major Dudley's account stands?"

"Certainly, doctor. I was looking at it yesterday, and it's almost even. Only a few dollars to his credit. I swear I don't know what'll become of 'em!"

Glenning knit his brows thoughtfully.

"They'll have to live in spite of Marston," he said. "How this will be I can't say now, but they shan't want because a low-lived rascal has the upper hand for the time. * * * I shall want to begin a small account with your bank today."

"All right. New depositors are always welcome."

"And I must get away from this hotel, Dillard. After my experience last night I think it wise for me to change my quarters. Don't you know of a vacant room upstairs over some one of your business houses, and isn't there a private boarding-house where I might get my meals?"

"I'm pretty sure I can fix you up that way. Suppose we start now, before I go to work? You can come back and finish packing."

"Good; I'll appreciate your help."

By three o'clock that afternoon the new doctor was thoroughly established in Macon. The boarding-

house where he secured accommodations was diagonally across the street from the house which he had seen Doctor Kale enter the day before—and which he learned later was the old gentleman's residence—and he had secured two rooms over a dry goods store on Main street, just opposite the courthouse, which suited his purposes admirably for offices. The back apartment, which was entered first, was a consulting room, and contained his library, while the front one was his office proper. As a finishing touch John swung his sign over the sidewalk below, then came upstairs and sat down by an open window with a book. But his mind was not in a proper condition for either reading or study. Dillard's revelation had proven a source of much concern, and he had not been able to get away from it. In vain he tried to argue with his conscience that the Dudleys were nothing to him, and that he would have his hands full making his way in his new field of labor. This course of reasoning proved futile. The sweet face and trusting eyes of Julia dispelled the illusion, and he realized that he had to take a hand in the game which Fate had prepared. The conviction being established, the next thing was to work out the solution. But no plan would come; he knew that he was bound and helpless.

It was an ideal mid-afternoon in summer, and as Glenning gazed listlessly from the window he saw an almost deserted thoroughfare. A negro lad went whistling down the opposite pavement, clattering a stick along the iron palings of the courthouse fence;

the leaves of the trees in the courthouse yard hung motionless in the quiet atmosphere, and even the ever-busy English sparrows seemed taking a siesta.

Directly several men emerged from one of the lawyer's offices which made up three sides of Court Square. None of them wore coats, and one was without either coat or vest. From the remainder of his apparel he was evidently a farmer. An old man with a long, white beard, holding in his hand a staff longer than himself. He was much excited, for he hopped about in a bird-like way, wagging his whiskers and scratching his head and ever and again thumping the earth with his staff. An altercation was evidently in progress among the men, and the voice of the old fellow was always loudest. He was plainly insisting upon a point which was meeting with some resistance. Another party now joined the group, and Glenning at once recognized Doctor Kale. As he made his appearance, the old fellow with the rod danced up to him with a gesture almost threatening and began a loud-voiced harangue. Doctor Kale was obdurate. He shook his head and thumped about, and remained firm. He of the long whiskers was rapidly working himself up to the fighting point, when a man who had been standing somewhat apart came up, caught him by the arm, and pointed across the street to a point directly beneath the window where John sat. What he said worked like magic. The old fellow beckoned Doctor Kale, grasped the arm of another member of the party, and the three at once started across the

road. Another moment John heard heavy footsteps climbing the stair. Before he could reach the door it was opened hurriedly, and the men trooped in.

"There he is!" grumbled Doctor Kale, starting on a tour around the walls of the room, sniffing his wrath, and ignoring the necessity of any sort of an introduction.

"I want a doctor! I ain't sick 'n' my fam'ly ain't sick, but Dink Scribbens took with the small-pox las' night 'n' me 'n' my folks has to pass his door ever' time we come to town! That ol' hippity-hop (indicating the still marching figure of Doctor Kale) 's skeered to go, though he never caught anything in his life!"

"I'm not afraid!" promptly fired back Doctor Kale. "I've waited on small-pox, chicken-pox, rosiola, measles, and every skin disease you ever heard of, but I'm not going to give my time to these damned paupers! Paupers 've got no business gettin' sick!"

"Are these people—paupers?" asked John, addressing the question to the third man, who up to this time had maintained silence through necessity. He was a large, stout individual, bearing plainly upon his face the marks of conviviality. He came forward heavily, and held out his hand.

"I'm Joe Colver, county judge," he said, dragging his words as though each was anchored in his chest. "Uncle Billy Hoonover come in a while ago sayin' the Scribbenses had small-pox. I don't know whether he knows what he's talkin' about or not, but they live in our county and it's our duty to investigate it and

if necessary put a quarantine on 'em." He smiled laboriously as he continued. "We usually give cases like this to the young fellers. The old hosses git above it, you know. If you'll go and take charge I'll promise the county'll allow you a reasonable fee. And you'll save Uncle Billy Hoonover a fit of some kind if you'll go pretty quick."

"Fit!" shrilled Uncle Billy, prancing up and down. "Who wouldn't have a fit with the ketchin' small-pox under his nose? Tell me that?"

"I'll go, judge," said Glenning; "where do they live?"

"Under my nose!" reiterated Uncle Billy. "A crick 'n' a narrer fiel' 'twixt them 'n' me! The win' could blow it right in my door if it set right!"

Doctor Kale had at last brought himself up, and he now cast a withering look of scorn upon the excited layman. He was plainly too full for words, for in a moment he clapped his hat on his head and bustled out with it riding his ears.

"Old Kale's a caution," commented the judge, laughing lazily, "but he's got plenty o' doctor sense. He's got the cream o' the practice about here. The best people want 'im, and they'll wait for 'im if they ain't pretty bad off. I knew you was on a cold trail, Uncle Billy, when you struck Kale."

"He'd better quit if he can't 'ten' to the sick. I don't b'lieve in 'scrimination, nohow. He might 'a' knowed the county'd 'a' paid 'im for his work. There never was a county without paupers in it, 'n' they're always gittin' somethin' worse'n anybody else!"

Judge Colver waved his hand and turned to go.

"Uncle Billy'll show you where they live, doctor. I wish you'd bring me your report as soon as you get back. We haven't had small-pox in the county for thirty years," he added, as his big figure moved ponderously out the door.

Mr. Hoonover had carried his point, but that fact in no wise stilled his tongue. He must talk. An argument was always better suited to his temperament, which was naturally belligerent, but when controversy was impossible he rambled on anyhow. While Glenning was making his brief preparations Uncle Billy's tongue was going.

"I hope you'll run ol' Kale till he takes in his sign!" he piped. "A doctor oughter be for ever'body, but ol' Kale's for the quality stric'ly. I do b'lieve he'd be glad if I was took with the small-pox, so't he could git a dig at me."

"Oh, then he is your family physician, too?"

"Yes, yes; I'm a fool like the balance of 'em. But it don't pay to git stuck on any one doctor, for they'll either neglect you or bulldooze you when you do. If you c'n cure the Scribbenses, durned if I don't switch off 'n' have you for a spell!"

Glenning smiled as he picked up his medicine case and reached for his hat.

"We don't cure small-pox as easily as we do some things," he said. * * * "I understand these people live some distance from town?"

"Yes, on the Hillville pike—that is, you go that

pike for a couple o' mile, 'n' then strike out a side road passin' my place."

"Am I to go with you?"

"Yes, my buggy's ready—" Uncle Billy stopped at the foot of the stair they had been descending, and squinted suspiciously up at John, one step above him. "But how'r' you goin' to git back? I can't tech you nor be a-nigh you after yo've handled the small-pox!"

"I'll have my horse and buggy here in a day or two—from Jericho," mused Glenning. "I tell you. I'll get a vehicle from the nearest stable. Where is it—your nearest livery stable?"

They came out on the pavement, side by side.

"Yonder." Uncle Billy pointed with his pilgrim's staff. "Half way down the square where them men are settin' tilted back talkin' hard times—that's what they're doin' if I can't hear 'em. I know ever' blessed one of 'em from here. See the place? Got a big red hoss painted over the door. Ask for Steve Duncan or Lige Lane—they run it, 'n' are good men. Say I sent you. Yonder's my nag, hitched to that lamp post."

The pilgrim's staff came swinging vigorously around to do its duty as an index, and caught Mr. Devil Marston's hat midway, knocking it into the dust of the gutter, where it rolled over a few times as knocked-off hats invariably do. The victim of this harmless accident would not, under ordinary circumstances, have taken it lightly. Mr. Hoonover made a motion to recover the property he had unintention-

ally mistreated, but Marston, cat-like, had the hat in his hands, brushing it with his sleeve, before Uncle Billy's wits could fully take in the situation.

"Mind what you're about, you damned old buzzard!" he gritted, his small eyes glinting wickedly. "If you've got to carry a fishing pole around with you why don't you stay in the cornfield, where you belong?"

Uncle Billy's booted feet began to go up and down. His straggling whiskers trembled from anger and he combed them with restless fingers as he fired back—

"I didn't go to do it, 'n' I's goin' to pick it up for you, you—you—you son of a nigger!"

A big brown fist came like a lightning bolt at the old fellow's convulsed face, but swifter yet was Glenning's stroke which threw up the threatening arm, and this was followed by another which sent the burly form reeling, though it did not fall. Then as John dragged Uncle Billy into the little passageway at the foot of the stair some men came running towards the scene. They arrived in time to lay restraining hands upon Marston, who had his revolver out and was advancing to renew the trouble. By main force they held him for a time, until he had become calmer, and it was big Joe Colver who took his pistol from him and told him he would be arrested if he did not go on his way peaceably, and at once. This he reluctantly consented to do, and the judge walked with him to the bank, which he entered.

While this was going on, John had literally held Uncle Billy captive. The touchy old man's ire was

aflame at its highest pitch, and he wanted to fight. When the coast was clear John reminded him of the urgent need which called them to the country, and escorted him to his buggy. Then, assuring him that he would return immediately, and begging him to remain in his buggy, Glenning hastily sought the livery stable. While he was waiting for his horse to be gotten ready he saw, diagonally across the street, a brick building with the words Macon National Bank, in large letters over the door.

## CHAPTER VIII.

By the time the start was made Mr. Hoonover had cooled down somewhat. He went in front, of course, in his capacity as guide, but all along the two and a half miles drive he was constantly jerking about in his seat to look back and shout some question or remark to the man in his wake. Thus before their destination was reached he had proven, in tones loud enough for all the countryside to hear, that the man who had attacked him was indeed part negro, that he himself always lived at peace with his neighbours, and that from this day forward he intended to go "loaded" for Marston. The garrulity of the old farmer annoyed Glenning somewhat, who had his own forebodings as to the result of the unfortunate encounter on the street, and he replied to Mr. Hoonover's demonstrations only by a nod of the head, or a smile. So busy was that gentleman looking behind to see that his remarks were heard, that his horse drew him almost in front of the Scribbenses before he knew it. When he suddenly discovered his proximity to the infected shack, and realized that his horse was moving in a slow jog, he tightened his reins and began to belabour his beast with the staff he held. As he dashed at a gallop past the dreaded spot he shouted some unintelligible communication wildly over his shoulder, and was out of sight before Glen-

ning drew up at a broken down stake-and-rider fence skirting the road. He looked about him as he got out and hitched his horse. The spot seemed the abomination of desolation. The by-road was rutty and not kept; deep sluices showed on either side of it, where no effort had been made to check the ravages of heavy rains. A worthless species of grass grew in sickly clumps, dust-covered. Blackberry vines, sassafras and sumac bushes made one inextricable tangle of vegetation along the zigzag fence. There was a gap in the fence which served for a gate. John went through, then stopped for a moment. Not from fear at entering the stricken place. He had no bodily fear, nor ever had. But the awful loneliness of the spot weighed upon him. Low hills, bush-dotted and gullied, arose on every side except the southern one, where a small field, untilled and marshy, lay along a creek bed, now nearly dry. Beyond this, and perhaps half a mile away, on higher ground, was a rather pretentious looking farmhouse which he guessed, rightly, to be the home of Mr. Hoonover. The miserable log shanty facing him was pitiful in its decay and loneliness. The ground all about it was bare, and a few stunted, shrivelled cedars stood at one side. The chinking had fallen from the stick-and-mud chimney, and it looked like the torso of some giant skeleton. The door was shut; the one window darkened from the inside by what appeared to be a ragged quilt. A lean brown cur lay by the rotten log serving for a door step, too lazy or too near dead from starvation to lift its voice at the intrusion of a stranger. The

dog was the only sign of life. All the rest was silence, poverty, desolation. No birds sang here; not even the shrilling of an insect cut the great stillness. A feeling almost of awe came over John Glenning, standing there alone in the strong sunlight, vigorous, assertive, confident of his power to do. He scarcely wondered that Doctor Kale had refused the case. But he was glad he had taken it. Not alone to get a start in the community, for this was a beginning at practice which most men would not value, but here was a fellow being, sick, friendless and helpless. He would save him if he could, although the pauper's life could scarcely be of use to anyone, and he would be better off dead.

John's grip tightened on the handle of his medicine case and he walked briskly and firmly to the door, and knocked. The cur arose and slunk a few paces to one side, then lay down again, with his yellow eyes fixed on the man. The door was opened a crack, and a rasping female voice said:

"Go 'way. My man's got the small-pox!"

"I'm the doctor," answered Glenning; "let me in."

There was a moment's hesitation, during which a brief argument took place between the woman and some one else inside, then the door was grudgingly opened wide enough for John to enter, when it was promptly closed.

"Thar he is," said the woman. "Go to 'im; he's purty bad."

The sudden transition from the bright sunlight to

the gloom of the cabin made it impossible for Glenning to see distinctly. He was vaguely conscious of the presence of a number of persons, and he could barely discern the outlines of a figure stretched on a bunk in a corner.

"All of you'll die if you don't have light and air," he announced, almost harshly, and striding to the window, removed the flimsy curtain. Then he turned abruptly to the woman who stood with mouth agape in the middle of the room. "Open the door!" he commanded; "let some air in here!"

She was a slatternly creature of uncertain age, her stooped shoulders and lined face showing her kinship with want and all physical suffering. She looked with curious intentness at the tall young man who seemed to so fill the small room, and did his bidding.

"Ye don't b'long in Mac'n, do ye?" she asked. " 'Pears to me I've never saw ye before."

"I belong there now," replied John, shortly. "Came several days ago."

His quick eyes were taking in the meagre appointments of the room, and its occupants, as he was walking towards the sick man in his corner. The place seemed swarming with children of all ages and both sexes; they were thick as rats in a corn-bin. He could not believe all of them the offsprings of this destitute pair, and he voiced his idea as he knelt by the pallet.

"What are all these children doing here? Send them home. Don't you know they're in danger?"

"They *air* home, thank ye!" rasped the woman, in

quick defense of her brood. "They're *our'n*, I'd hev ye know, ever' blessed one, 'n' they've got more right here than you hev, ef you *air* a doctor!"

"No offense!" mumbled Glenning, taking the hairy wrist which listlessly lay on the ragged counterpane and feeling for the pulse with tips of practiced fingers.

The children had huddled like sheep against the wall furthest away, a tattered, unkempt crew of misbegotten humanity; terrible fruit of a union of ignorance and brute passion. They said not a word, but clung to each other as though menaced by some visible danger. The woman stood in the center of the floor, also silent, her hands clasped under her dirty apron, and her stringy neck outstretched as she watched the doctor. The thing under Glenning's hand must have been made by God, but it hardly looked it. It would not have looked it in health, and in the grip of a loathsome disease it was doubly repulsive. The man's figure was thin and bony. He lay sick in his shirt and trousers, for he had no night clothes, to say nothing of underwear, which in all probability he had never known. His shoes were off, and his feet, knotty, and grimy with the ground-in dirt of many months, stuck from under the narrow coverlet which lay over him. His soiled shirt was open at the throat—a throat presenting alternate ridge and hollow, and covered scantily with colorless hair. His face was gaunt; his teeth broken and tobacco-stained; his nose twisted oddly. His hair was a sandy mop. His eyes were cunning and treach-

erous. His face was already marked with dull red spots, and he was burning with fever.

Glenning's face was solemn.

"How long have you been sick?" he asked.

"Two weeks off 'n' on, I reck'n," answered the man.

"How long have you been in bed?"

"Tuk bed yistiddy."

"You should have been in bed ten days, at least. You're pretty sick, my man."

A shadow of alarm flashed over the bestial countenance.

"I won't *die*, doc, will I? Yo' don't mean I'm gunta *die!*"

In his eagerness he grasped the sleeve of the figure kneeling beside him.

"You've *got* to cyore 'im, doc!" wailed the woman. "I can't live 'ithout my man!"

She walked about wringing her hands.

"You've waited too long before seeking help," continued John, getting to his feet. "There's a chance for you—a slim one, but I'll do what I can."

He found a rickety chair, and sat down gingerly.

The older children began to snuffle, and the younger ones burst out crying and ran to their mother, hiding their dirty faces in her dirtier clothes.

"Small chance in this reeking hole for a man with small-pox," mused Glenning, then he looked at Mrs. Scribbens, and said:

"That man should have a bath, first of all, from head to foot; a *scrubbing*. Can you give it to him?"

"I 'low I kin," responded the woman, briskly, "but

weuns ain't much on the wash. Will lye soap do, doc?"

John cast a look at the sick man, and guessed at the texture of his skin.

"Yes, lye soap will do, but have your water hot, and rinse him off well when you're through. I'm going to leave some medicine which I want you to give him through the night."

Mrs. Scribbens disappeared out a door in the rear which led to the back premises, and busied herself making a fire under a large iron kettle which hung from a blackened limb, itself supported by two forked sticks sunk in the ground. The numerous progeny trooped after her *en masse*, vaguely sensing an omen of evil in the presence of the doctor, and turning, like little wild things, to their best friend and protector.

Glenning had his case on his knees, rapidly preparing the doses to be given that night. There was a slight movement from the pallet, and a terror-laden voice called—

"Doc!"

John turned his head.

"Doc, fur hones'! Tell me! Don't be skeered it'll finish me right off. Now, while the woman 'n' the chil'n 're gone, tell me!"

A beam of pity struggled to the brown, tired eyes of the man sitting above him. After all this was his brother—this thing in its filth and misery and callousness had had a soul breathed into it by a common God years ago. Should he not feel compassion for

anyone whose feet had come so near the brink of the Valley of the Shadow? He did feel compassion; the wave which swept him as the pleading, untaught tones came to him was almost protecting. His brother! Though one's feet had never left the shallows, and the other's, not long before, had fared through strange and awful deeps where dreadful monsters lurked in the guise of innocence and beauty so rare that it was blasting.

With a quick movement John leaned down and took the hard, seamed hand.

"You haven't got even chances," he said. "I can't promise anything but this: I'll do for you what I'd do for the richest man in Macon!"

"I never heerd sich talk!" exclaimed Scribbens. "What sort o' man air ye?"

"A pretty poor sort, but I've studied medicine mighty hard. You've got to pull like blazes to get through. * * * Can you do it. Keep a stout heart, I mean, and believe all the time you're coming out all right?"

"I dunno. I hurt pow'ful, 'n' I'm burnt to scorchin'."

A paroxysm of abject fear seized him, and he pulled the quilt, full of holes, up over his head to hide the wild expression on his face. He lay there and shook with dread—dread of dying—dread of the vast unknown, and of the punishment he felt surely was awaiting him. John went on with his work. The packages were done up and the medicine case snapped to and placed on the floor. Still the coverlet was

convulsed with erratic movements. Directly the man jerked the quilt from his face, showing it all a-sweat with anguish.

"Doc!" he groaned. "I can't! I can't go this way! It mought be tonight—in the dark! I feel cur'is! D'ye think I'll go tonight?"

"I think not, Scribbens—cheer up! You're not that sick yet."

"But ye can't tell!" persisted Dink. "Th' ketchin' small-pox is orful. I've heerd uv it before. It gits ye w'en ye're not watchin'. 'N' say, doc, I've got somethin' to tell—"

He raised himself on a sharp elbow and glanced dreadfully at the back door.

" 'Fore the woman gits back. 'Tain't wuth while to bother 'bout a preacher ur a priest. I've never j'ined a church—ain't Cath'lic—ain't nothin'. But I've got to tell somebody. It'll make it easier. I'm goin' to tell you, doc."

He fell back, and his hands strayed about nervously over his breast.

"Tell me if you wish," said Glenning, gently; "if it will help you."

"Oh, it will, doc! It's been eatin' on me ever' since I done it. I's never shore 'nough bad till that man made me bad. I'm always been pore as a dawg, 'n' wuthless, 'n' no 'count fur nothin'. I've stole, sometimes, w'en the kids was hongry, but that don't bother me none. Them that I got frum never missed some cawn ur a chick'n now'n then. 'Tain't that, doc."

He stopped again, breathing fast. It was hard for him to lay bare the story of his wrong-doing.

"I heer ye tell th' woman that ye come a few days ago," he resumed, in a steadier tone. "Then ye don't know many folks 'bout here, I reck'n. But thar's some mighty bad uns, 'n' I reck'n Devil Marston's the wust. I 'low yo's heerd uv how a stable wuz burned a few nights ago, at the aidge o' town? Thar wuz a hoss in that stable, 'n' some feller ur 'nother drug 'im out. It wuz Major Dudley's. Thar's a good man, doc. He's give to me w'en I'd go to 'im with a tale o' no work 'n' hongry kids at home, 'n' maybe he wuz hongry at the same time, fur all his big house he's nigh bad off as I am. But his hoss's a wonder, 'n' Devil Marston's got some hisself whut kin run some. He comes to me one day, Marston did, 'n' shows me a ten-dollar greenback, 'n' said he'd give it to me ef I'd take some powders he had with 'im, all wropped up, 'n' slip in 'n' put that stuff in th' hoss's feed. I knowed it wuz wrong, doc. I knowed it wuz p'izen, but I tuk it, 'n' the money, too, 'n' that night I slipped in 'n' done whut he tol' me to do. The nex' day he come to me b'ilin' mad, 'n' 'lowed I'd tricked 'im. He said the hoss's still alive, 'cause he'd saw 'im, 'n' that I'd took 'is money 'n' didn't do whut I'd said I'd do. But he lied, doc, 'cause I toted fa'r. But he tore up snakes, and said he's gunta hosswhip me, 'n' come put nigh hittin' me. 'N' he cussed me some more 'n' pulled out another ten-dollar bill, 'n' th'owed it at me, 'n' 'lowed that ef I'd go that night 'n' burn the stable up with the hoss locked in it he'd

call it squar. I didn't want to do it, doc, I sw'ar I didn't, 'cause Major Dudley's been good to me, but I's skeered not to. That Devil Marston jist looked at me with his snake eyes 'n' 'lowed that if I failed 'im ag'in he'd come 'n' shoot me daid. 'N' I went, nigh onto midnight, 'n' I got some straw out'n the lof'—a hull big armful o' dry straw, 'n' piled it ag'in the door o' the stable, 'n' sot fire to it. Then I run. I run till I got home, but I saw the light in the sky, 'n' knowed the hoss wuz gone this time. But the nex' day I heered o' some feller draggin' 'im out! Then I tuk sick, 'n' I s'pose it's a jedgment on me fur bein' so wicked. But he *made* me do it! He *made* me! 'Twarn't so much his money, but I's skeered uv 'im. You don't know Devil Marston, doc. His name's fittin'. 'N' now I feel better, doc; I sw'ar I do!"

For a moment Glenning sat silent.

"Yes, I know Devil Marston," he said at last, "and he is a bad man. And I know the Dudleys, too, and I know the man who went in for the colt."

"Ye won't tell, doc, will ye?" asked Scribbens, in sudden alarm. "Ye won't give me 'way?"

"I'll promise that no harm shall come to you because of the things that you've told me. But you're a bad man, too, Dink Scribbens—a low down, dastardly coward!"

The figure below shrank back under the stern, accusing voice.

"I know it! I know it! It's kep' me 'wake ever since I done it!"

He was almost whimpering now, and John realized

the utter futility of a sermon at this time. The arrival of Mrs. Scribbens at this juncture with her corps of satellites put an end to further confidences. John arose.

"I've het the water!" announced Mrs. Scribbens, standing with a chunk of lye soap in one hand and a battered and dented tin washpan in the other from which steam was rising.

"Very well," said Glenning. "Get him clean. Give him one of these when you have finished, another at midnight, and a third in the morning. Have you a clock?"

His gaze swept the pitifully bare room and failed to reveal one.

"Humph!" sniffed Mrs. Scribbens. "The roosters crow, don't they? He'll git his dose at midnight!"

"Keep the children out of doors as much as you can; make each of them bathe every day and do the same yourself. I'll come back in the morning and bring something for each of you to take to keep you from catching the small-pox. Good-day."

The sweet summer afterglow which immediately follows the going down of the sun was spread mysteriously over all the landscape as John got in his buggy and began his return trip. The confession to which he had just given ear did not occupy his mind much. He knew beforehand that it must have been some creature like this; some degraded, conscienceless, cast-off devil. Dink Scribbens didn't matter, but Marston did—Marston, whose heavy figure was beginning already to loom on his life's horizon por-

tentously. Now, since the occurrence on the streets of Macon a couple of hours before, he knew that trouble was ahead for him, swift and sure. Marston hated him well enough before that incident, providing Travers had delivered his message properly, but now —to be struck on the chest and almost knocked down! Glenning heard the little voice which always speaks to us when we are alone saying that he had done right, that his course all along had been true and proper, and that he had no cause to regret anything. He must simply keep his eyes open, and at the same time not let his brain get rusty. Innocent people were in actual distress at that moment, and the girl of the trusting brown eyes, proud and brave, would soon be hungry. *Hungry!* The word stung his brain like something hot would sting the flesh, and he clicked his teeth and drew up his lines, urging his horse faster. He was passing a gloomy looking house set considerably off the road, surrounded by doleful firs and funereal cedars. It was of brick, square and not ugly, but the shutters to all windows visible were closed, and the front doors were inhospitably shut. Some gaunt dogs of ferocious breed were stalking about the yard. He had not noticed this house when coming out, but he might well have passed it unseeingly, all of his attention at that time being demanded by Mr. Hoonover. But instinctively he knew who lived there. The place savoured of its master; forbidding, grim, merciless. John was not sorry when it lay behind him.

Deep twilight had come. The time when vague stars shine shyly, uncertain whether or not to show

their faces. Objects along the roadside were becoming slightly blurred, and the unsightly things of the garish day were softened into pleasant lines and tones. The man riding townward felt the witchery of the hour. It entered into him and lay upon his soul, speaking of peace. He breathed more gently, and let his horse take its time. From the gates of the west which had unclosed to receive the going day, a breeze had surely blown from Paradise. And alone there, in the soft dusk, two faces rose up before the man. One was fresh, unfretted, appealing, beautiful, with brown eyes which looked innocence and trust. The one beside it was crowned with a bewildering glory of bronze-gold hair, full of sullen splendours, like a stormy sunset; an oval face of perfect lines and charm ineffable, and winey eyes which lured. He looked upon the two, and his eyes grew strained; that look of awful weariness stole over his face, as though the battle were almost too hard, and he groaned in his throat while a shudder swept him, making him tremble from head to foot. He was conscious of a sound, far away, but growing more distinct. *Clickety-clack! Clickety-clack! Clickety-clack!* It was a horse on the highway ahead, running fast. *Clickety-clack! Clickety-clack!* It was just around the bend in front of him. In a dull way he drew his horse somewhat to one side. A huge black shape thundered into view, seemingly of mammoth proportions in the dim light. Straight to the middle of the road it clung, its hoofs striking fire at every leap, its rider making no effort to swerve it. Glenning called, and

pulled his horse sharply aside. Horse and rider swept by, so close that the man's knee brushed John's sleeve. In that fraction of a second their eyes met, and each recognized the other. But neither stopped. Marston rode on till his horse drew up quivering at his gate, and Glenning, a new, strange light in his eyes, drove on towards town.

Arriving at the livery stable he inquired for Judge Colver. That gentleman lived in the country, and had gone home. He would have to make his report in the morning, when the people could be advised by bulletin of the presence of small-pox in the county, the proper quarantine established, and measures taken for preventing the disease from spreading. He suddenly remembered that, in the business of getting established, he had neglected opening the account at the bank, and had also forgotten his hotel bill. It was too late to keep his promise to Dillard that day, so he turned down street towards the hotel, resolving to settle his bill there. Supper was in progress when he entered the office, and the place was comparatively empty. He paid his reckoning to the smiling Jones, and was preparing to leave, when Travers came out of the passage leading to the hotel bar, and called his name. John turned, and coldly faced him. The landlord beckoned, and retreated to the passage. John hesitated a moment, for he desired no further dealings with this person, but upon second thought he followed. Travers' nervous manner had returned. He fidgeted, and shifted his weight, and toyed with his watch chain.

"I want to tell you I have kept my word," he said, in a low, cautious voice. "You played fair with me, and I have some appreciation. I went out to Marston's place this morning and told him all about it, to his face, and I told him what you said, word for word. I did, 'pon my honor!"

"That's more than I expected," answered Glenning, icily. "But I admire your pluck. It took a man to do that."

"I did it, doctor, and for a while I thought he was going to kill me. But he didn't touch me."

"I suppose he made some threats?"

"Yes, he talked mighty ugly about you. I'd advise you to be on your guard. You'd better carry a gun with you all the time."

"I've never carried a gun, and I don't intend to begin now. I fancy I can take care of myself without that. Thank you, Mr. Travers. I'm glad you told me this. Good evening."

He had turned to go, when he heard his name spoken in an agitated whisper. He stopped, and faced about.

"That ain't all, doctor. You've done me a fine turn, and I want to break even."

"Well?"

"Marston's just left here. He's been in the bar drinking for an hour or more, and he's been talkin' mighty reckless. It was about you, and he boasted he was going to make you sorry you ever came here—that he was going to run you out of town. He'd just been at the long distance telephone, and he said he'd

found out something, and would know more tomorrow. He'd been drinking heavily, you know, and didn't care what he said. He leaves on the early mornin' train. I was standin' close to that swingin' door, and heard every word he said. He wasn't talkin' to anybody in particular—just easin' himself. But he'll hurt you if he can."

Glenning's voice was very low as he asked—

"Where is he going?"

"To Jericho," said Travers.

## CHAPTER IX.

John slept very poorly that night. The news which Dan Travers had given him was enough to keep him awake. Marston was going to Jericho the next morning! What would he bring back? What would he have to tell upon his return? Ah, God! could a man never escape the slightest misstep? Must it dog him to his grave, even though he had won through by days of anguish and hours of wrestling in the silent night? What a morsel this would be for vile tongues to handle! What possibilities for enlargement, and opportunities for misrepresentation! Haggard with wide-eyed watching as the black moments slowly passed—it was not new to him, this grim facing of an ever-present spectre—he managed to gain a few hours sleep just before day. But his cheek bones showed more plainly when he appeared upon the street the following morning, and the faint lines about his strong mouth had deepened.

He found Judge Colver and made his report; there was a caucus of the board of health in Doctor Kale's office; dodgers were ordered printed and distributed telling the fearsome news and instructing the public as to what sanitary measures they should employ to keep down the plague. The local physicians gave him respectful attention when he talked, and adopted his suggestions cheerfully. This was pleasant, but

it did not lift the weight which had fallen upon him. When the business meeting was over, John found a piece of yellow cloth at one of the dry goods stores, armed himself with a supply of disinfectants, and started on his second trip to his pauper patient.

He had a half formed notion when he left town to stop at the Dudleys for a moment, and when, driving somewhat slowly in front of the house, he saw Julia bending over gathering nasturtiums, his tentative idea became a fixed resolution. He left his horse at the gate, securing him to one of the iron palings, and went up the drive afoot. She had seen him coming, and she walked forward to meet him, her face tinting delicately, and a smile showing through the look of anxiety which she wore. She gave him a pliant palm, holding a huge armful of vari-coloured blooms to her breast with her other hand—the flowers spread out over her, a wonderful breast-plate of gorgeous hues. Some matched her cheeks, and some her lips, and some her throat, which had assumed a shy pink as she came within arm's length of John, standing with hat breast high, and searching eyes. He took her hand and held it a moment longer than was necessary, but she waited until he released it, and made no effort to draw it away. He did not attempt to veil the candid admiration which beamed from his face.

"You are looking *very* well this morning, if you will allow the compliment," he said, gravely, and she quickly noted the weary note in his voice. "I'm sure this flower bed is the most fitting environment you could possibly have. You seem one of them."

The blood rushed up in torrents at his words, and she turned scarlet. To hide all this she buried her face for a moment in the armful of nasturtiums. Her eyes were a-sparkle when she lifted her head at once, and said, reproachfully:

"Why did you run away yesterday before any of us could see you?"

"One saw me, and I left a message with him. It was too early for either you or your father to be up. Did Peter not tell you that all went well?"

"Yes, he told us that, and I went down myself to look at The Prince. * * * Come here a moment, Doctor Glenning."

She crossed the drive with a faint swish of drapery, and walked across the lawn to the base of a large maple, not many yards from the front door of the mansion. Beneath this tree, resting against it, was an iron settee of ornamental design. Lying upon the settee was a large revolver. Julia picked it up, cocked as it was, and held it out, muzzle earthward.

"I found this, too, inside under the window. It isn't yours, is it?"

John recognized immediately the weapon he had wrested from the hand of Travers, and which he had neglected to procure before leaving the smoke-house.

"No, it isn't mine," he replied, readily.

"Peter said that you told him to say to us that nothing had happened."

"He did not quote me correctly. I told him to say that nothing of *consequence* had happened."

"Whose revolver is this, Doctor Glenning?"

"It belongs to the man who came to shoot The Prince."

Julia gave a little start, and uttered an involuntary exclamation.

"You—" she began, then stopped and looked at him, her breath coming faster.

"I didn't see any use in making a fuss about it, you see," explained John, smiling. "Travers came, as we all knew he would, and I just waited and let him walk into the trap which Uncle Peter set when he cut that window, and baited when he led the colt in. That's all there is to it."

"Let's sit down," suggested Julia.

Then, side by side upon the settee, the revolver still in her hand, she resumed:

"This is a fearful looking thing. Did he have this?"

"Yes, that's what he came hunting with near three o'clock in the morning. It would kill an elephant if properly handled."

"How did you happen to get possession of it?"

"I see you must have the whole story," said John, with his inimitable chuckle, and thereat he proceeded, very faithfully and very accurately, to recount the entire tale.

Julia drew back in wonder as she listened.

"And you *held* him!" she exclaimed, her eyes wide and her brows contracted in surprise. Doubtless she did not know it, but her gaze went sweeping over the man, from top to toe, and her mind was wonder-

ing where all that power was stored, for he was very lean, though wonderfully broad of shoulder.

"Yes, it was easy, for I really took him at an unfair advantage, but it was the only way—that or nothing."

"Yes," she said, but nothing more, for she could not understand him. But she knew there was a sweet feeling of security when he was near. He could do anything; of that she was entirely confident.

"There's small-pox in the county," said John, presently, with such sudden irrelevance that the girl half rose from her seat.

"Where?"

"Some paupers out this road—I don't think you need be scared. I'm waiting on them."

"You!"

"Yes, I'm a doctor, you know. Old Mr. Hoonover came in yesterday afternoon with the news, and I am constrained to believe that it was more a matter of personal interest with him than it was love for his neighbour. He lives close to them. * * * But what's worse than small-pox is the fact that I was compelled to strike Devil Marston yesterday afternoon on the streets of your town."

He rapidly detailed the encounter. Julia was all interest and concern, and hovered on his words eagerly, yet with dread.

"Travers told me last night that he's gone to Jericho," concluded Glenning.

"What for?"

"To try and ruin me, Miss Dudley!"

John turned upon her with a face every lineament of which bespoke suffering and strength.

"I came away from there, my friend, because had I stayed I would have gone to hell, along the broadest and most flowery of all the broad and flowery ways which lead there. My feet had turned in at that wide gate—God forgive me!—when all at once I awoke! I can't tell you now—I have no right—but some day I will tell you, some day when we know each other better, and there's nothing which makes for quick and understanding companionship like a common danger. We are each threatened, you the most, poor girl, for you cannot fight—but I have strength for two—" he stopped, and shut his teeth. He had nearly gone too far. Then he leaned towards her and took one of her hands, crushing it in both of his almost roughly. The flowers fell in a gorgeous heap between them, strewing her lap with their fresh beauty. He looked steadily into her eyes, and she looked back into his, fearlessly and earnestly.

"Trust me!" he said, in a strained voice. "Trust me! Believe in me! It will come to you! Devil Marston will not let his news suffer for want of garnishment—and you will hear! Am I asking too much to ask for your faith and trust? It means much to me—now! It means more to me than all of life, I believe—right now! Will you do it? Will you believe in me? It is going to be a strong test, Miss Dudley. Answer me!"

The situation was new and strange to the girl who had never known aught of life save that which the

peaceful environs of home had disclosed. She knew nothing of the world—of its wickedness, trials and sins. She had never seen a strong man wrought up to a pitch like this; she had never heard such words before, and now she but vaguely sensed their meaning. She knew that she was trembling, but she was not afraid, for cowardice did not run in her blood. She knew that her hand was aching under the force he had unconsciously put upon it. Her eyes beheld the melancholy shadows which dwelt perpetually in his; she saw the fresh scars on his forehead and cheek where the burns had not yet healed—the singed hair. And back of it all she seemed to see his soul, suffering, but clean! A half sob struggled in her throat.

"I don't know what you mean!" she said, with child-like candour which was almost pitiful. "But I know you are a man! Nothing can change that opinion, Doctor Glenning. I do believe in you, and I have faith in you, and trust you!"

"Thank God!" he said, huskily, and released her hand.

They sat without speaking for several minutes. Peter appeared upon the other side of the lawn, hoe in hand, diligently searching for any weeds which might have come up within the last few days.

"Father is not very well this morning," Julia began, her hand straying absently among the scattered nasturtiums. "He fears a breakdown, and has been talking a great deal of his brother, my uncle Arthur, who went west before I was born, and from whom we haven't heard for years. We don't know whether

he's living or not, and this distresses father, for he says he would like above all things to see him now."

"That is strange. How long has it been since you had a letter?"

"Oh, many years. Not since I was quite a little girl."

"I'm sorry to hear the Major is indisposed. Try and keep him in a cheerful mood if you can. It won't do for a man of his age to grow despondent. I fear these troubles which have come to him are the cause."

"Yes, he is so unlike himself. * * * I suspect I had better go to him now."

She arose and began gathering up her flowers. Glenning picked up a few which had fallen upon the ground, and gave them to her.

"Won't you come in?" she asked.

"Not this morning, thank you. Give Major Dudley my regards, and tell him I'll call soon. I must go see my pauper now; the poor fellow's pretty sick."

He pressed her hand quickly and firmly and strode rapidly away. She went slowly towards the house, her head bent over the armful of flowers. Her thoughts were new, many and tumultuous, but they were not bitter. At the portico steps she remembered that this was the day when the town paper was issued. Ordinarily she cared little for what was going on in the vicinity, but now something made her turn and call to the old negro—

"Uncle Peter, will you please go to town at once, and bring the mail?"

The old fellow retreated to put his hoe away, and

Julia, casting a glance at a buggy now being driven briskly down the road, went in to her father.

The Major was decidedly unwell. He was up and dressed, and was sitting in his favourite chair by the window. But his posture was not his own. Always erect hitherto, standing or sitting, this morning he slouched down in his chair, listlessly, and his shoulders had pulled forward. An expression almost of hopelessness was on his face, and Julia noticed, as she came quietly in, that there was no book in his hand. This fact, apparently trivial, worried her more than the dejected appearance her father presented. For she did not remember of ever seeing him alone before when he did not hold a book; if he was not reading it he was nursing it. The girl quickly and noiselessly arranged the flowers in sundry vases and bowls, then came and knelt by her father's side and took one of his passive, unresponsive hands.

"Daddy, don't you feel a little better?" she pleaded.

He did not look at her. His eyes were directed on the floor, and he merely shook his head slowly in answer to her solicitous query.

"What is it, daddy dear? Do you hurt anywhere? Won't you go to bed, or lie down on the couch and let me sit by you?"

The tender words from his beloved child roused the Major. He lifted his head and mechanically adjusted his stock. Then he turned to her and placed his hand caressingly upon her brown hair.

"Ah, little Julia! Little Julia!"

That was all for several moments. He sat and

looked at her for some time, and the love in his soul beatified his countenance.

"I'm not sick," he said, after a while. "That is, no doctor on earth could help me. It's just the letting go, sweet daughter. I'm old, you must remember, and I can't endure things nor fight as I once could. It has come in the last few days—I have seemed to crumble—to wither, and it has weighed me down horribly. I should have risen above it. I do not care about myself; my life is lived, but you, dear child—it is the thought of your future which fills me with alarm and well-nigh breaks my heart. I have no inheritance for you—I have nothing to leave you but poverty and danger. Don't you understand?"

His voice was gravely tender as he spoke to her thus, and it made her heart ache, and the burning tears come to her lids.

"Oh, daddy!" she cried; "you must be mistaken! You will—you *must* stay with me many years yet, for I could not get along without you. Tell me you will try—you know the mind has so much to do with the body. Brace up, daddy, for your Julia! You say you have no sickness; then try and let your spirit be bright—for me! Won't you?"

She arose, glided into his lap, curled one arm around his neck and kissed him on the forehead.

"For such a daughter one should try very hard for life," he replied, and the twinkle she had not seen for several days shone in his eyes. "I'm stricken, lassie, but I'll promise you this: I'll make the best fight of my life now, in its last days, and that shall

be to stay with my precious little girl as long as I can. * * * Does that satisfy you, young miss?"

The Major's last words were almost gay, and Julia's heart bounded with joy as she heard him speak in his old, brave way. It must be her constant duty to buoy him up and cheer him on. She smiled into his eyes happily, and asked him what book she should bring him. He mentioned a certain volume relating to archaeological research, which she at once procured, and seeing Peter coming up the drive she gave her father another caress and went out, almost tripping, for so quickly do we respond to conditions of joy or sadness. Peter bore nothing but the town paper, which he delivered with an obsequious bow, and immediately sought his hoe again. The lawn, next to The Prince, was his greatest pride, and some weeds were beginning to come up.

Julia sank down upon the portico step, and opened the still damp pages of the *Herald*. She tried to make herself believe that she was merely conning the column bearing on local happenings and people of the town, but surely such disinterested employment as that would not bring the blood to her cheeks, nor an added sparkle to her eyes. Directly she found that which she declared to herself she was not looking for, and which she read merely because she happened to see it. The item was in regard to the small-pox, and the attending physician. The *Herald* had some very nice things to say of the new doctor; in fact, he and his actions took up a goodly portion of so much of the *Herald* as was printed at home, because the fire

had to be told of, with all things relating thereto. Truth to tell, Julia had never fully nor properly appreciated her town paper until this morning, when she found it brimming full of the most interesting news in the world. It seemed that John Glenning's name appeared in nearly every paragraph. There was also a notice of his encounter with Devil Marston, and this was most adroitly written, the editor evidently not wishing to offened the rich bank president, and at the same time endeavouring to keep the friendship of Uncle Billy Hoonover, who had a large county connection, all of whom subscribed for the *Herald*, and paid for it promptly. The editor opined, in conclusion, that it "was an unfortunate incident, and everyone hoped and believed it was now amicably settled."

But it was a news item on the other inside page which made the colour die out of the girl's face as the clouds grow gray in the west after the sun is gone. It was a news item only, printed without comment, but a cold hand was laid upon Julia's heart as she read on and on, down to the last bitter word, then sat crushed and shivering in the warm June sunshine. The item told of the passing of the bank dividend, giving in explanation the reasons which Marston had declared to the directors of the institution. She could scarcely believe it. It was their maintenance—their sole support. Without it was abject poverty, starvation. They could not live another month, to say nothing of six months, shorn of this income. Slowly her numbed mind came back to its normal state, and

she tried to think it out. Why had it been done? Did the item say? Who had done it? Were there any names given? In a dazed way she lifted the paper which she had allowed to fall to the ground, and read the paragraph again. No names were given. "The directors deemed it necessary" because of the reasons which followed. She could not doubt its truth. She sat gazing in front of her, stunned, hopeless. Fate was surely unkind. Neither she nor her father merited treatment like this. Her spirit grew rebellious, almost wicked. After a time Aunt Frances came to receive orders for dinner. "Anything you can find" was Julia's reply, and she continued to gaze straight in front of her. A buggy passed, and its occupant lifted his hat, but she made no sign. She did not see the buggy, nor Glenning. He wondered that she did not return his salutation. Then he saw a newspaper crushed in her hand, and his active mind guessed the truth. He drove on with his heart seething at the injustic of it all, and his inability to help.

The moments passed, and still Julia sat like a woman of stone, a look on her fresh young face which was piteous in its tragic helplessness. "Daddy must not know! Daddy must not know!" This one sentence coursed through her mind with each throb of her pulse, and its constant reiteration almost maddened her, for how could she hold the truth from him? She saw nothing, not even the figure which presently laboured up the drive, wiping the streaming perspiration from its face as it came. Not till Dillard stopped in front of her, waiting to be recognized,

did she lift her eyes to him, dully. But she said nothing. She felt as one who had suddenly come to the end of life, unexpectedly, in the heyday of his youth and happiness.

"Good morning, Miss Julia," said Dillard, "may I sit down? I can't stay but a moment."

She brushed her skirts aside, and the young man took the seat made vacant by her movement. He was breathing hard, and had evidently come in a hurry. He, too, noted the paper, and he saw where it was opened.

"It's a bloomin' shame, Miss Julia!" he blurted out, twirling his straw hat nervously between his hands. "You've read it, I know, and I've rushed out here at my dinner hour to tell you that it's the meanest trick I ever knew anybody to do, and—"

"Who did it?"

Her voice sounded hollow and old.

"Who did it?" he repeated. "Devil Marston did it! He did it just to spite you and the Major. We made the dividend, and two hundred and fifty dollars of it belongs to you, but Marston's word is law in that bank. Oh, it's a shame! I've come out here to let you know. I can't do anything. Nobody can do anything, but I wanted you to know that it wasn't the bank that played you false. It was Marston, and he did it to ruin you and your father! * * * I know I'm talkin' plain to you, and I beg your pardon if I'm too outspoken, but I've known you a long time, Miss Julia, and we've been friends, in a way. I'd give my right hand to set matters right at the

bank, but I can't move an inch. Does the Major know?"

"Father is not well, and this news must be kept from him," she answered. "The paper—I will destroy it myself, now." She began to tear it into strips, methodically. "It's good of you to come, Tom, so good of you, and I'm grateful. I'm glad to know who was back of this crime—for it amounts to that as far as we are concerned. It has a bit gotten the best of me."

She stopped her occupation of shredding the *Herald*, and gazed pensively at the ground in front of her. Dillard's round, baby-blue eyes dwelt upon her in a protectingly hungry way. His pudgy face showed his keen distress, and his fat hands toyed unceasingly with his hat. It was plain there was something else he wanted to say, but he could not find the words in which to express himself. Then, too, the time was not propitious. If he had loved Julia Dudley silently and in a worshiping way for six years, he surely could love her that same way a few days longer, when he would come to her with the offer of his honest heart, and plead with her to come with him away from all the troubles which beset her. So he got to his feet rather awkwardly, dropping his hat as he did so, and remarked—

"It's hot as blazes today, Miss Julia. If I can do *anything* for you or the Major, call on me."

"Thank you, Tom. But I'm sorry to have been the cause of you coming out here in the sun at noonday."

"That doesn't matter a fig. I felt that you would want to know, and I wanted to be the one to tell you. Good-bye; I must be back by one."

He held a red, moist hand towards her. She smiled at him and took it with a few added words of appreciation, then Dillard was departing down the avenue with such dignity as his avoirdupois would allow, for he felt that the eyes of the girl were following his retreating form. Such was not the case, however. Julia arose the instant her caller's back was turned, gathered the streaming bits of paper into a tight wad in her two hands, and going to the kitchen, flung them in the stove.

The rest of the day was a waking nightmare to the poor girl. She had nowhere to turn; there was no one to whom she could go and ask for advice or help. She dared not broach the fearful subject to her father, for his despondency would be sure to return, and it might be she could not raise him from it again. The blow had fallen upon tender shoulders, unused to the bearing of loads, but she did not murmur after the first flame of resentment had passed. She even brought herself to accept it as right, and all that afternoon Major Dudley saw no change in the smiling, sweet-voiced, bright-tempered being who flitted about him, attending to his wants or engaging him in light conversation.

After tea the old gentleman seemed markedly improved, and readily retired at a rather early hour upon his daughter's suggestion. Then, when she knew he was asleep, the desolate girl stole out upon the lawn,

down to the spot where that morning she and Glenning had sat, and throwing herself upon the settee, she sobbed and cried for nearly an hour. It was awful—awful! and she was so helpless! Then bitter despair seized her and she prayed to die. She asked God to take her with her father and not leave her alone to fight these strange and awful battles with the world. When her grief and terror had spent themselves in tears she grew calmer, and still lying prone and motionless, strove to think of a way out. The problem was set for her. Could she solve it? She thought, and thought, and in time her thinking brought results. Marston had done this; then Marston alone could undo it. The money was theirs; he was stealing it from them. What then? Was there no law to protect the innocent? She did not know, but she presumed there wasn't, in this case. There was but one way, and that was a horrible one. She must go to Devil Marston in person, and demand that which was her right. Insist that he revoke his cruel order to pass the dividend, and compel him, if she could, to have it declared yet. She sat up as she reached this conclusion, a strange thrill sweeping through her. It would be terrible to go to this man, this being whose nature was a composite of many dreadful and evil strains. But she would go—she knew it on the moment—and she would go quickly. Tomorrow morning, as soon as she could slip away from the Major, she would make the venture. It was the only chance to escape genteel starvation. There could be little doubt that he would be at home. He

was seldom gone longer than a day at a time. Doctor Glenning had told her that he went away that very morning. Would he return that night? She must know. She would sit up for the train from Jericho. It did not come until eleven, or thereabouts, but she was not sleepy, and she loved the calm, mysterious nights in summer. The time sped swiftly. Some of the thoughts which came to her chilled her very heart; some brought anxiety and worry, and some filled her virgin soul with strange, elusive whisperings; premonitory warnings of something wonderfully sweet. If she dwelt upon these most; if her mind's eye saw beside her at times in the starlight a long shape, lean of limb and lean of face, with eyes constantly filled with troubled shadows, but true and unfaltering—who would say her nay? For the approach of love is a beautiful mystery, fraught with emotions which frighten while they charm, which awe while they inspire, and there is no more sacred or precious time in a young girl's life than that when her soul quickens in response to the summons of love.

So preoccupied was she that Julia barely heard the shriek of the express from the north as it thundered into the station in Macon. But the sound of the whistle recalled her to herself—made her remember why she was sitting there. It was hard to give up dreams for reality. But she faced the road and pressed her lips together, and waited. She heard the train pull out and resume its journey southward; its rumble became fainter and fainter and was lost in the distance. Then she fell to listening for another sound

which she dreaded, yet hoped to hear. She wanted him to return that night. She wanted the fearful task over and done while her courage was high. She was perfectly aware that nothing short of desperation could have driven her to this determination. She felt it of the utmost importance that he should return that night. But the minutes passed, and he did not come. A vehicle went by, and later a horse at a canter. Neither of these was Devil Marston. She did not need the aid of light to tell her when he rode by. The air began to grow a little chilly. She had come out without wrap of any kind, and all at once she realized her imprudence. She arose with a slight shiver, and stood for a moment with head inclined attentively. What was it? Hoofs? She held her breath and waited. An indistinguishable sound was on the air. It was lost; it came again faintly. Then suddenly it burst upon her ears unmistakably—the noise of a horse running at breakneck speed. She shuddered involuntarily, but tarried yet a moment longer to be sure. Then he passed in his whirlwind way—she heard again that sound in the night which never failed to bring terror to her heart—and then she went in and locked the door and went up to her room. She had grown calm. She was surprised at her own coolness, and the deliberateness with which she went about her preparations to retire. Even when she opened her bureau drawer and took therefrom a pearl-handled, thirty-two caliber revolver, she was not stirred. Her father had given it to her on her sixteenth birthday, and had taught her how to use it.

She could shoot straight. She even smiled as she laid it down in front of the mirror, after breaking it to see that its chambers were full. Her adventure in the morning would be fraught with danger, and the revolver which she knew so well how to handle should go with her when she made her call on Devil Marston.

## CHAPTER X.

That night John Glenning sat alone in his office with a letter spread out on the table before him. Something had come to pass which he could not understand; which had plunged him in a maze of incredulity in spite of visual evidence. The letter had come that afternoon—had been forwarded to him from Jericho—and he had taken it from the post-office upon his return from his second visit to Dink Scribbens. The letter was dated and post-marked New York City, and read as follows:

"JOHN GLENNING, ESQ.,
Jericho, Ky.

Dear Sir—The death of our client, and your uncle, John Glenning, on the 14th inst., reveals the fact that one of his life insurance polices was executed with you as beneficiary. Proofs of his death having been properly forwarded to the company by us, we are this day in receipt of a draft for $2000, payable to your order. Find said draft enclosed. Please acknowledge receipt.

Yours truly,
BENNER & LOCKE, Attorneys."

This letter, with the draft beside it, lay upon his

table in the light of a lamp none too clean. Letter and draft had been lying there for about an hour and a half, and a coatless, tumbled-haired, hunted-eyed man had been sitting in front of them for the same length of time, alternately fingering the thin piece of paper which represented two thousand dollars, and staring at the larger sheet, with its short, business-like message. Many men would have rejoiced wildly at this piece of good luck, and it may be told in a whisper here that few could have needed it worse than the one to whom it had come. But it had a quieting and peculiar effect upon the new doctor. Parents he had none. An older married sister lived in Missouri. He had fought pretty hard since he was sixteen, hugging honour and truth to his heart as priceless possessions in the great struggle before him. He did not come of wealthy folks, nor even well-to-do. They were poor, but were people of quality. Misfortune came, such as may come to the best, and so the death of each parent was hastened. Yes, he had an uncle John. He was named for this relative. He had seen him only once or twice in his life. He had heard his father speak of him as a crotchety, peculiar person, who all his life long did the most unexpected things. He lived in New York, but had never married, and never amassed money. This freak he exhibited in privately taking out life insurance in favour of his namesake was characteristic. Possibly that accounted for it—the name. John didn't know. He had never seen this uncle since he had been grown. Once he was tempted to write to

him and ask him to give help in getting him (John) through college, but he had refrained from writing this letter. He had, instead, written one telling of his struggles, and how he knew he would get through. To this he received no reply of any kind. So John had put this strange relative out of his mind, and had scarcely given him a thought in years. And now, behold how he had misjudged him! The proof of his love for his brother's child was here, silent, but convincing.

How good it was to take this first upward step towards independence! With a balance like this in the Macon National Bank the people would have greater respect for him; practice would come if he was diligent and attentive, and— Suddenly his eyes set, and an undefinable look settled upon his face. At first it seemed dismay, unbelief, then through varying gradations of emotion the changing features passed until firm resolve was fixed upon them, mingled with an expression of acute happiness which was almost painful. Then he got up, the first time in two hours, slipped the edge of a book over the precious draft as a weight, and crossing his arms on his chest fell to walking up and down. A smile had crept to his sensitive lips, and a musing, tender gleam to his eyes. It was plain his thoughts sat well with him. Up and down, with measured tread he walked, minute after minute. He was laying a plan, and if it involved deception it evidently did not disturb his conscience. When he at length resumed his chair, put his elbows on the table edge, and ran the long

fingers of each hand through the hair above his ears, he appeared nearer absolute content than at any time since he had come to Macon.

The night was hot, the lamp almost touching him was hotter, but he did not know it. He did not know that perspiration was streaming from his forehead, and that the backs of his hands were beaded with moisture. It was no time for such small physical concerns. He was lifted up. He was above such trivial things as heat and cold, hunger and thirst. He had known in that hour the first sweet joy-pangs of sacrifice! The way was not all clear; only the beginning was plain. But he would light the entire road by the might of his will, if it took till morning. He had accomplished tasks of lesser import by setting his head to them; this paramount problem he would make his own. He did not hear the passing on the street, though both his windows were up as high as they could go. But when a tolerably heavy step began to ascend the stair he looked up almost with a scowl. He didn't want any callers that night. It was one night in his life when he wanted to be let alone. If some one was sick—there were other doctors! At any other time he would have welcomed the approach of a possible patient, but now his whole being rebelled against the leisurely oncomer. Would he never get up the steps! Another moment young Dillard came dragging into the room with his hands in his pockets, glanced about for a chair, and finding none, perched his bulk upon the end of the table, and

sighed. John rose and shoved the chair towards him viciously.

"Sit down!" he growled.

"Damn if somethin' ain't got to be done!" was the rather peculiar response, and Dillard looked almost scared when he said it, for it is doubtful if he ever swore before in his life.

"What's the matter?" queried John, quelling his choler as he suddenly realized that his visitor was the only person in town who might be able to assist him in the work he had mapped out for that night.

"Matter! Don't you know that both Major and Miss Julia'll be dead in four weeks unless we can put our heads together to some purpose? I was out there today, between twelve and one, and I found her sittin' on the front steps huddled over that *Herald* like a bird with a broken wing. She'd just read what that—that *devil* had done, and she was crushed, man, literally crushed!"

Dillard's voice rose with his anger, and he slid to his feet, his blue eyes blinking and blazing, and his round fists clenched till the knuckles showed white. Glenning, in striking contrast, stood disheveled by the lamp, the angles of his face strongly outlined and his hair falling over his forehead. One hand rested on the table, the other lightly on his hip.

"It was a terrible sight, doctor—a terrible sight! I shan't forget it if I live to be a thousand. There she was, a girl, alone, for she told me the Major was sick and she couldn't tell him. Alone, I say, to bear

unaided this villain's hellish blow. Innocent, mistreated, helpless, but brave! We've *got* to do it, doctor, you and I; we've *got* to find a way—do you hear?"

Almost beside himself with love and rage, Dillard strode up and shook his fist in his new friend's face, forgetting, no doubt, that Glenning shared his views.

"Yes, we've got to find a way, Dillard," repeated John, in even tones, and he looked down at the table where the papers lay.

"Then how, *how*, I say?" demanded his caller, furiously. "It's got to be done quickly—at once! Major hasn't ten dollars in bank, and Marston's positive orders are he shan't overdraw!"

"No, he shan't overdraw," again repeated John, and his gaze was still downcast.

"Then how in hell are you goin' to manage it?"

Dillard's religious training was slipping away in the stress of the moment.

John went into his reception room and came back with another chair. This he placed on the other side of the table and occupied, motioning his friend to draw up to the spot where he had formerly sat. When Dillard, fuming and wrathful, had done so, he again fired the query:

"How are you goin' to do it?"

"This way," answered John, and he quietly picked up the draft and laid it between Dillard's hands.

The bank clerk's fingers closed upon the paper, and when he had read the wording on its face, simple

amazement and a total lack of comprehension was reflected from his flushed countenance.

"What's this got to do with it?" he asked, almost petulantly. "This is to you—this is your money."

"It's my money tonight. The question is, how can we make it Major Dudley's money without them, or anyone else, suspecting anything?"

Tom's mouth came open, and he lifted baffled eyes to the face before him.

"You mean—this money—what *do* you mean, anyway, doctor?"

Glenning merely repeated his last speech, enunciating it more clearly.

Dillard sank back in his chair, a nerveless mass.

You mean you're goin' to *give* them this money!" he gasped; "this little fortune!"

John's arm shot out across the table, and his slim fingers twined about the soft hand which lay there, inert.

"See here, Tom Dillard!" he said, earnestly. "You say you are a friend to these people. I believe you, or I'd never have taken you into my confidence. I'm their friend, too, and Fate has said that I shall be the one to bring relief to them in their present predicament. Promise me to work with me, now, to the perfecting of some plan, and to keep all this a secret to your dying day! Promise, boy, and then we'll plot!"

"Yes, I promise!" replied Dillard, in an awed voice. "But are you sick, or crazy, or —"

"Neither. I've nothing. Let that alone. It has nothing to do with this."

A dull flush was on the speaker's face.

"Then—" began Dillard, but he stopped, reddened, and glanced aside. In that moment jealousy was added to his other worries. He had never supposed for an instant that Doctor Glenning was in love with Julia Dudley. The idea was silly, for their acquaintance had been limited to a few days. But what did this mean? His mind was not preternaturally acute; in fact, he was rather dull than bright, but a simpleton would have cause to suspect something when a man, himself almost penniless, was willing to sacrifice a considerable sum of money in order that a destitute old man and his lovely daughter should not suffer humiliation and hunger. It was possible for this act to be one of pure philanthropy, but even Dillard's slow-moving intellect could not see it in that light. It simply meant that another man had found and appreciated this sheltered flower of womanhood that he had watched grow, and bud, and bloom, and that she had aroused in this other man a passion akin to his own. These thoughts traveled with unusual rapidity through Dillard's brain, the while his companion sat with head thrust forward, watching him.

"Then—what?" queried Glenning. "What were you going to say?"

"What are you doing this for?"

"What would *you* do it for, if you could?"

"Friendship for the family," was the somewhat sullen reply.

"Friendship fiddlesticks!" retorted John. "You'd do it for no such reason, but for that sweet girl-woman in distress!"

He brought his fist down on the table as he said this so that the lamp jumped and the blaze shot up the chimney, and glared defiance at the man across from him.

Dillard's heart seemed trying to pump the blood through his skin, but he only looked at John as though he had been addressed in Arabic or Chinese.

"There's no use side-tracking the truth," resumed Glenning. "We've agreed to work together in a common cause, and do it as friends who trust each other. There can be no good work nor full trust where there is concealment. I know you love Miss Dudley—why shouldn't you! So own up, and let's get to business!"

"I've loved her for six years!" Dillard said, the words struggling through a tight throat. "But I've never told anyone before, not even her. I'd give ten years from the other end of my life to have this check, instead of you! * * * I've told you the truth; you do the same," he added, with a sort of eagerness mixed with dread.

"That's fair. This is the truth. I've never met a more lovely character or beautiful face in a woman. I've been drawn towards her strongly—so strongly—almost irresistibly. It must be the rare and indefinable charm of her personality; her pure, sweet, unsullied nature. She is entirely unlike any other woman I have ever known." A shadow of pain came

and went from his mouth unobserved by the one to whom he was talking. "You want to know if I love her, and I tell you truly, Tom Dillard, so help me God, I don't know! But I'll say this in all candour: were it not for her I'd never turn this money over to Major Dudley. Now you may think me a liar if you wish, but that is as near the truth as I can come tonight. Now we find ourselves back to the business in hand. A mutual exchange of confidence is good. I really fear I am drifting on the shoals, old fellow, but I'm not near enough to them to declare it positively. Are you satisfied?"

A grayish pallor had settled on Dillard's face as John talked.

"If you go in it's all up with me," he said, despondently. "But we'll play fair."

The eyes which he lifted were honest and straightforward.

"You're a man, Dillard; shake hands!" said John.

They did, in a firm grasp.

"Now to business," resumed the speaker, producing a black briar pipe and filling it slowly from a "hand" of natural leaf which lay on the top of his desk. "You're a banker, Dillard. How's a fellow to transfer money to another fellow and not let the other fellow nor anyone else in the world know anything about it?" The round face before him broke into a smile, at the same time becoming thinly veiled by the smoke of a light cigar.

"That takes me back to school," he answered. "It sounds exactly like one of those puzzle problems in

arithmetic which I used to sweat and groan over. It's about as hard, too, don't you think?"

"Harder, by far. It seems impossible on the face of it, but it must be done. You're the banker; you can't expect me to teach you your business. I'll give you half an hour to solve it. In the meantime I'll be thinking, too, just for mind culture."

"You'd better think of something closer to hand, for I'll never unriddle it."

"Not another word for half an hour!" commanded John, placing his open watch upon the table between them. "We'll pass this night in silence periods of thirty minutes duration each, then have five minutes recess after each, unless one or the other has solved the great question. It is now ten-thirty. * * * Aren't you sorry you came in?— To work!"

He tilted his chair, elevated his heels to the other end of the table, let the long-stemmed pipe sink between his two hands, and lapsed into a meditative silence.

Dillard kept his feet on the floor, probably because of his extra amount of flesh, and likewise endeavoured to think. Just as the first half hour was up the figment of a tenable plan floated into Glenning's brain.

"How goes it?" he asked, squinting across at the placid face of his friend.

"Slow. You're right; it's worse than arithmetic."

"I've started," announced John, quietly elated. "Give me another thirty minutes, and I believe I can let you go home."

"Proceed," was the laconic reply, and again silence.

Glenning, searching desperately about in his mind, had really hit upon an entirely feasible way to carry out his idea. The project quickly developed as he brought his brain into active service, and long before the time he had asked for had expired, it was all clear, and ready to his hand.

"There's no use wasting further time in reflection, my boy," said John, suddenly lowering his feet and swinging around. "Listen, and I'll a tale unfold."

"I'm listening. You're a wonder if you've got it straight."

"There's not a hitch in the whole thing. Here's my plan. I can't write my name on the back of this piece of paper, walk in your bank and request the teller to place it to the credit of Major Dudley. That would cause comment, and Major Dudley would naturally and rightly refuse to touch a cent of it. And I would be in bad odour with them and the community. My plan is to make Major Dudley deposit this money himself."

He stopped for a moment to enjoy the look of undisguised curiosity and blank amazement on Dillard's face.

"Now I know something of the family history, in spite of the fact that I have but recently become a citizen of the town. There was a brother, you perhaps know this also, who went west many years ago, and disappeared soon after. They suppose he died long ago, and very likely he did, but for our pur-

poses we will say he died last week. He was on his way back to Kentucky, to see his brother once more in the flesh. He reached St. Louis, and was taken ill. His sickness assumed a malignant turn, and he realized that he must die. He sent for a reliable lawyer, who happened to be my college friend and chum, Will Porter. While not attaining riches, this brother, Arthur Dudley, had something over two thousand dollars in cash with him. The surplus was enough for his board, doctor bill, lawyer fee and burial expenses, and he had Porter purchase a draft with the two thousand left, payable to his brother in Kentucky. This draft Porter forwarded to Major Dudley, with a brief letter explaining all the circumstances. Now if you don't think I'm a first-class rascal with a long head for schemes I don't know why. Can you find a flaw in this skein of base duplicity?"

Dillard rose to his feet and slowly shook his head.

"You're a marvel. You've got it. When are you going to do this?"

"Tonight. Now. We'll have to explain the whole thing to Porter, but he's true as steel, and will do his part without fail. Two days for my letter to go to St. Louis; two for his to get back. Major and Miss Dudley will be relieved of their financial embarrassment the fourth day from tomorrow!"

John took a pen and endorsed the draft to the order of his western friend in a firm, bold hand, free from flourishes.

Ten minutes later Dillard was gone, and by the

light of a smoky lamp a man sat driving a pen frantically across sheet after sheet of paper. He had to make things plain, or Porter would think his mind had gone wrong. He wrote feverishly, and soon the message was done, sealed and addressed, with the draft inside. He looked at the envelope for several moments fixedly, then suddenly he sighed, cast his arms across the table and let his face fall in them, his laced fingers writhing and an inarticulate prayer falling from his lips. The old phantom had returned, even as he wrote—that dread night visitant which had robbed him of so many hours of sleep, and planted gray streaks about his temples. It came tonight with its eyes of languor and its scented hair and its smile of temptation—to drag him back! Its power was awful; its presence so real. Would not his present act be some expiation for his past weakness? Would it not serve to help banish this haunting vision which still sought to claim him?

## CHAPTER XI.

Julia slept soundly and sweetly, but awoke early and arose at once. It was an awful thing—this sudden transition from carefree, blissful girlhood into woman's estate, with the attending hardships and strange trials which she had to face. Her plan of action for that morning was not at all clear. She merely knew that she was going to face a desperate and wicked man who had wofully mistreated her and her father. She conceived this to be her duty, and there was no shrinking or hanging back in her soul when she thought of it. But as she combed her hair into place and put on a flowered muslin—she could not wear her riding habit, because her expedition must be kept from her father—she did not know what she would do, or say, when she came before Devil Marston. Her face grew hot as she thought of the swiftly approaching encounter, but this only heightened her unusual beauty. That moment, for the first time in her life, she wished that she was plain. Her beauty had not brought her love or happiness, but had cursed her instead with the obnoxious attentions of a beast in the shape of a man. Concealing the revolver in the folds of a light wrap, she went down stairs. The Major had not risen. Swiftly she passed through the library and dining-room, and entered the

kitchen. Aunt Frances' fat person was bustling about, and breakfast was in preparation.

"Good morning, Aunt Frances!" said Julia, cheerily; "where's Uncle Peter?"

"Mawnin', missus—whar he allus is 'cep'n' w'en he's sleepin'—foolin' roun' dat colt ob a Prince!"

There was a degree of asperity in the old colored lady's speech, coupled with an ominous shake of the head. But Julia had been accustomed to the family difficulties upon which Peter and Aunt Frances throve, since infancy, and she paid no heed to the present demonstration of a ruffled temper.

"Thank you," she answered, sweetly. "I want to see him, so I'll run down to the smoke-house."

She passed onto the small kitchen porch as she said this, and here the old negress' voice halted her. There was a protesting, plaintive, sad inflection in the one word—

"Missus?"

Julia stopped and turned abruptly, vaguely alarmed.

"Yes, Aunt Frances?"

"Missus, de flour bar'l done gone plum', clean em'ty; de side meat goes dis mawnin' foh breakfus', 'n' de meal bar'l ain' much bettuh. I done kotch a chick'n foh dinner yistiddy, but de Massa lub his biscuit breakfus', dinner, *en* suppuh!"

"You are right to tell me when things get low," she answered bravely, but in a peculiarly low voice. "I'll send Uncle Peter into town with an order this

morning. Be careful not to let the flour run out completely again."

"Bress dat chile!" exclaimed Aunt Frances, lifting the corner of her apron to her eye as Julia disappeared. "I wonduh ef she t'inks she's foolin' her ol' mammy? Hain't I lived heah always, 'n' hain't I seen dis house go down 'n' down 'twell now hit mos' tech rock bottom? Some'in's gwi' drap, sho! But me 'n' Peter'll be hyar w'en it comes!"

She tossed her turbaned head, and, stanch old Methodist that she was, began crooning a "'vival" tune, wherewith to bolster up her sinking courage.

Julia came to a standstill in the smoke-house doorway. Within, with his back to her, stood Peter. A currycomb was in one hand, and a brush in the other. He had evidently come to a halt while making The Prince's morning toilet, to spend a few moments in silent contemplation and admiration. He had withdrawn several feet from the satin-sleek form of the young colt, and reposed in an attitude of adoration, his skinny, ridged neck stretched towards the object of his devotion. Julia was compelled to speak his name twice before he heard her. Then he turned with his customary profound bow, and greeted her deferentially.

"Uncle Peter, I want The Prince this morning," she said, coming straight to the point, for she knew too well the old fellow's garrulousness to attempt circumlocution. He would have kept her there till noonday.

Now this was the first time Julia had ever said she would ride The Prince, and the wilfully deafened ears of Peter refused to recognize this first declaration.

"Mom—missus—mom?" he ejaculated, bending slightly from the waist and looking up at her keenly and suspiciously. "D'ye say de Prince look well dis mawnin'? 'Deed he do! He's had he breakfus' 'n' a good rub down—not quite finished, though. I's tekkin' a breathin' spell w'en you come. Hahd wuk foh an' ol' nigguh gittin' de duht 'n' stuff off'n a hoss w'en he's slep' in it. 'Scuse me, missus, 'n' I'll finish wid 'im now!"

Peter was sly and Peter was jealous. He heard plainly enough what his mistress had said, but he could not bear to think of the colt leaving his sight, even for a short time. His subsequent harangue was given simply to cause his mistress to forget her idea, or to forego its execution. He now approached the colt and began a vigorous attack upon its flank and hind legs, where there was no particle of dirt, and no hair out of place.

"Uncle Peter!" called Julia, firmly, "did you not hear me?"

"Yas'm'; I heah yo', missus!" he replied, between grunts. "I's proud you's pleased wid de way de Prince looks. Oh! he's peart, let me tell yo'!"

"Come here, Uncle Peter; come to me!"

He could not disobey the direct summons. He straightened up with a groan and a wry face, partly feigned and partly caused by a "ketch" from rheumatism, and shuffled forward.

"I said I wanted The Prince this morning," repeated Julia, quite positively, "and I meant it. I shall want him for perhaps an hour—certainly not longer. It does not matter that I have never ridden him. I have ridden real vicious horses before father sold his racers, and this colt is gentle, and we are friends besides. He knows me—see him looking at me now?— Good morning, Prince!"

She smiled and waved her hand at the intelligent face turned towards her.

"Now, Uncle Peter," she resumed, "listen to me, and pay attention to what I say. I'm going to ride down the road for a short distance this morning, and I don't want anyone to know about it, not even father, or Aunt Frances. Can I trust you, Uncle Peter, to keep this secret with me?"

" 'Deed yo' kin, missus; 'deed yo' kin!"

"I thought so. Dudleys don't lie, and you are a Dudley, Uncle Peter, always remember that! When you give me your word, I trust you as I would anyone else. I want you to bridle and saddle The Prince at once—you know where my saddle is hung. Then take him through the back lot and the side meadow around to the road. *Don't* lead him down the drive. It is very necessary that my father should know nothing of this. You must stay with The Prince until I come, which will be soon, immediately after breakfast. Do you understand now, and can I rely upon you?"

" 'Deed I do, missus; 'deed yo' kin! I'll fotch de sad'l 'n' tek 'im right roun' to de road!"

"Be careful that no one from the house sees you; hurry, now."

Upon her return she found breakfast ready, and the Major waiting for her. He gave her a morning kiss with his old air of doting pride, and the quick look with which she surveyed him told her that he was in excellent spirits, but whether feigned or real she could not tell. When the meal was over the Major settled himself in the library with a book, and Julia's chance had come. She dared not wait a moment. Already her heart misgave her as she realized to the full all that she was about to undertake. Charged with a subdued excitement which shone in her eyes and glowed on her cheeks, she put on a hat, found her gloves, and secreting the weapon as she walked, she left the house by way of the long side porch and sought her rendezvous with Peter. He was waiting for her like a faithful Arab, with one arm over the neck of his charge. She whispered a few added words of caution to the mystified old servitor, mounted, and started slowly down the road. The distance was short, and she wanted to have herself well in hand, and decide upon the best method in which to approach this enemy to her house.

It was a bright June morning. The air was balmy and fresh and invigorating; it came to her nostrils as the very essence of life from the earth's great laboratory, and it gently lifted the curls which clung about her forehead and neck. The sun had not gathered its full power; its rays blessed while they did not burn. The dense foliage of the roadside trees rustled

gently, showering down upon her an elfin song of gladness. All nature was a-thrill with the joy of living, and only this poor little human seemed sad and out of tune. The Prince, too, felt the call of the new day. His pointed ears were up and attentive to every sound; his neck was arched, and his nostrils stretched to the sweet waves of air. It was with some difficulty his rider succeeded in holding him down to a walk. He longed to run—to race with the morning, for this was his breeding through a long, long line of ancestors. To feel the keen wind in his face, to have it rushing past his ears and plucking at his mane and dashing in his eyes; to know the earth was reeling beneath his flying hoofs and that nothing could gain a place in front of him! But his rider kept a firm hold on the reins, and pursued her way in a walk. She would reach her destination soon enough. How she wished the interview was over and done, and she was now on her return trip! She believed she would have let The Prince run, then. The road took a turn a few rods in advance. She knew the place. When she had rounded that bend the house of Devil Marston would be in view. She shut her eyes as she neared it, and breathed a little prayer for strength and guidance.

As the sombre brick pile burst on her sight her face grew white, and she felt a chill of absolute terror settling over her. She told herself fiercely that this would never do—that a contained presence and visible courage she must have, or assume, as they would be invaluable allies in the success of her scheme. The thought of her old father, almost helpless, and the

cruel wrong they had each sustained, brought a sudden flood of resentment, and borne on this same current was self-possession and assurance. She turned off the highway directly in front of the gloomy-looking house girt with funereal cedars, and came to a farm gate, loosely hung, and sagging. It was hard work for her to drag it open from the saddle sufficiently wide for The Prince to pass through, but she managed it in time, conscious that the exertion had brought the rich colour back to her face. A rutty, unkept road led towards the yard fence, where it swerved around the corner and went on towards the stables. But there was a small gate in the fence, which, while not intended for the use of horsemen, Julia rode through. It was a dreary place into which she had come. There was no pavement or walk of any sort going up to the front of the house. The yard was covered with some rank and worthless variety of grass, which was tangled and long. Bushes, shrubs, all run wild, and an occasional flower which had come up by chance, were dispersed about. The flowers seemed sickly and afraid to grow, as though they had made a mistake in attempting life amid such surroundings, and wished to bloom and die and be done with it as quickly as possible. The cedars were nearer the house, and created a doleful, grave-yard-like air. The sun was lost among their dark branches, and the breeze which passed through them soughed mournfully. The ground beneath the trees was bare and brown.

Julia had involuntarily reined in the colt when she

entered this almost gruesome demesne. She had not imagined anything so repellant. Yet it all was a fitting environment for the master of it. It was in perfect keeping with the unholy spirit of the man who dwelt in the house beyond. Up to this moment Julia had seen no sign of life, but as she urged The Prince forward towards the shut front door gleaming dingily green between the vivid colours of the cedars, a monstrous dog appeared from somewhere and disputed her passage with a low growl and bristling hackles. It was a fierce beast, half-starved, huge, savage as a tiger. It was a boar-hound of foreign breed—Marston had a number of them, though Julia, of course, knew nothing of this. The Prince stopped as this spectre of war took its place in front of him, and Julia felt the rigour which swept his frame. But he did not attempt to bolt. He merely stood with bright eyes, watching the sinister apparition. The dog was not inclined to be aggressive; he merely appeared to be a sentinel, his duty being to stop further progress of the intruders. Julia did not know what to do. She would not retreat now. She was before the lion's den, and she would see him before she withdrew. She *had* to see him, for life and death hung in the balance. If she did not see him she was surely lost; if she did see him, there was a chance. The dog had no notion of retiring, and the situation was rapidly becoming strained. Just as she had made up her mind to call, and try and bring some one to her aid, a shrill whistle sounded somewhere in the rear. The brute before her turned its head, and its tail drooped. The whistle was

repeated, louder than before, and thereupon the guardian of the way forsook his post, and retreated in a trot around the corner of the house. Julia promptly rode forward. There was some open ground between the trees, and she presently found herself in a clear space just in front of the house. Some flagstones were placed before the wooden step under the portals, and an iron knocker was imbedded in one of the panels of the massive doors. Should she dismount, and raise a summons? The very atmosphere was oppressive, in spite of the enveloping sunshine. She hesitated again; she did not know what to do. Everything was so different from all to which she had been accustomed. Here was silence, mystery, secrecy; a house without a window or door open to that glorious morning. And the only sign of life that had been evinced was a ferocious dog, and a whistle from some hidden source, which must have come from human lips. She looked about her piteously, undecided. How still everything was! There were no birds singing—but how could bird hearts break forth in song under that pall of cedar? She turned again to gaze at the heavy iron knocker, and just then a piercing animal yelp of pain or fright reached her, followed by a foul malediction in a man's rough voice. More yelps ensued, mingled with snarls and vicious oaths, then around the corner of the house they came—the dog which had stood in her path, with Devil Marston in hot pursuit. Plainly the dog had trespassed in a most unwarrantable manner, for between his strong jaws was a roast of beef, which

thus far he had refused to deliver to its owner. Its pursuer was armed with a heavy cudgel, and he did not temper his blows with either mercy or judgment. In this wise they swept into view, the dog but slightly in advance of the man, who was swinging his bludgeon to an accompaniment of awful curses.

It happened that Julia was facing this spectacle, and its presentation made her weak and faint for the moment. Never had her tender ears listened to such words before as fell from the lips of this man. His swarthy face was working and twitching from the volcano-like violence of his rage, and his fangs showed even as did the beast's he was pursuing. The sudden and altogether unexpected appearance of Miss Julia Dudley before his door, mounted upon The Prince, was not sufficient to calm on the instant his superlative passion, which at times almost amounted to a fit, or frenzy. It is true he stopped short in his mad rush, but before he could bring himself to any degree of control he hurled the cudgel in his hand after the fleeing hound with all his strength, at the same moment delivering a half smothered, parting malediction.

Julia sat like a stone statue upon The Prince, which had shied violently at first, and in a way which would have unseated a less skillful rider. Her head was up, her brows slightly contracted, and her fine eyes set straight at the being who now walked towards her, his hat in his hand.

By a superhuman effort of will Marston had composed his features, and as he halted a little to one side of The Prince's head, he was smiling, if the in-

congruous facial expression he now assumed could be designated that way.

"Good morning, Miss Julia," he said.

The covert insolence in his voice was thinly veiled by a respectful intonation.

"Good morning, Mr. Marston."

Julia was surprised at the steady tones in which she responded to his salutation. She had feared a quiver would run through the words.

"I believe an apology is due you," resumed Marston, "before I inquire the cause of this visit. I'm glad to see you, you know."

He paused a moment to gloat openly over her face and figure. The girl felt herself grow colder before his bold gaze, but said nothing.

"That da— that dog was called to his breakfast, and took a fancy to my dinner, which was on a shelf near. Of course I tried to get it away from him, and in the chase we ran into you. * * * But I haven't welcomed you to my home yet; shake hands with me!"

He advanced to her side and held up his hand.

For a moment a mist swam before Julia's eyes, and she hesitated. All the hateful story which her father had told her rose up in detail, and she felt that to touch this monster would blast her. But she had come to sue for a favour—really to demand justice, but it meant the same thing. She could not afford to affront him, or anger him, if she could help it. She bent and placed her gloved hand in his, silently. He held it in a firm, fierce grasp until she forcibly withdrew it.

His little, pig-like eyes were flaming with a different emotion from that which had possessed them a moment ago.

"Come—get down," he said, hoarsely. "You have come to call and I want to receive you in my house. I will get a boy to hold your horse."

He looked at her with hungry cunning as he spoke, and the proud spirit of the Dudleys within her rebelled.

"I shall not dismount," she said, backing The Prince a few steps ere she was aware of what she was doing. "My business here can be told briefly, and I haven't time to stay."

She tried to choose her words carefully, for there was so much involved.

"Ah!" he snarled; "so you refuse my hospitality!"

"I do not mean it that way, believe me. But I must hurry, and we can talk as well here."

He came a few paces nearer, covering the distance she had placed between them when she unconsciously backed The Prince.

"I don't like this!" he exclaimed, half rudely, looking at her with bold deviltry in his heavy face. "We are too far apart; friends should be nearer when they talk."

He bared his protruding teeth in a horrible grin as he said this. His shrewd if debased intellect had told him from the first that nothing but the direst need would bring a Dudley to his door on any sort of mission whatsoever. And as he realized that both girl and horse were for the time in his power, a Satanic

joy possessed him, and made him toy with the situation, in order to prolong it as far as possible.

"Let me insist on your being my guest as long as you stay!" he leered, trying no longer to cloak the wicked passion which seethed in his tainted soul. "I have wine—refreshments. Come into the parlour where we can talk undisturbed."

A feeling of actual physical nausea shook Julia. She grasped the pommel of her saddle and swayed the least bit, then the sickness passed, and she was erect again, though whiter than one dead. She seemed the wraith of the girl who had ridden down the road. She did not know why this man should insist so strongly on her entering his door. She knew that he had pretended to love her, but that was over now, and gone. They had not seen each other for months. He could not wish to entertain her for any worthy reason, and though she could neither comprehend nor even suspect the depths of vileness in his heart, she knew that she had best remain where she was.

"Please don't insist," she pleaded, her voice slightly tremulous in spite of her will. "I must speak quickly, and be gone. I do not feel that I have come to ask a favour, but simply to ask you to do right. Won't you please have the dividend declared at the bank, instead of passing it? You know it means very much to father and me."

Although she endeavoured to present her cause coolly, her voice was that of a suppliant. It vibrated with pent-up emotion, and had a strange effect upon the man before her. His expression changed; his

hands clenched at his sides, and he seemed battling with some internal feeling. He had taken his eyes from her, too, and was looking at the ground. But as she watched him, waiting breathlessly for his answer, he lifted his face again, and she almost cried out from terror, for she was in the presence of an incarnate fiend. His eyes seemed swimming in fire, and his countenance was that of a demon. He did not move nor speak for several moments; he was literally holding himself in his tracks. He was a moral outlaw; the lawless offspring of lawless parents; begotten in basest sin and nurtured in infamy. He had never put the slightest check on any of his wishes or desires. With him desire had always meant gratification. And now, in the murky gloom of his black soul's recesses a new desire had been born; or, rather, a new flame had been given to an old desire. Even when driven from Major Dudley's home he had not forsaken the idea that some day this fair young thing should be his. Subsequently the idea had slumbered in his breast, but he had been only waiting—waiting and plotting. Now she had come within reach of his hand, alone, and he would have given his left hand to have grasped her with his right. No one but his hirelings were near, and it was no innate, dormant worth or goodness which stayed his hand. In part it was the innocence and unconscious purity of the girl herself, which wrapped her as in a garment and held an invisible but powerful shield before her. This moral atmosphere which enveloped her was so evident that even the dulled and warped sensibilities of Devil

Marston, at their best but unformed and sickly fungi, recognized it, and trembled before it. Yet the lash which was driving him would in time have made him dash aside this shield, in all probability, had there not been another powerful, though absent factor. The face and form of John Glenning kept constantly recurring. Should he dare touch this girl's dress, to say nothing of forcing his beast's lips on hers, he knew that his life would pay the forfeit. He knew that John Glenning would certainly kill him. So he was torn horribly by different emotions, as he stood and wrestled silently. At length he spoke; the voice of a beast made articulate. It was croaking and harsh; the blending of a bellow and a growl.

"So—you—need money, do you?"

The words in themselves was an insult, independent of the wagging of his bull-like head, which slowly moved in mockery.

The terrible trial was telling upon Julia. Her great eyes were strained, and lines of distress were forming at the corners of her mouth. She shifted the reins to her left hand and thrust her right under the loose folds of a light wrap which she carried. When her fingers closed upon the handle of the revolver, new courage came. She would go on, though something told her that her quest was hopeless.

"Yes, we need money, but we don't want any that isn't rightfully ours. I have read in the *Herald* all about the affair at the bank, and how the dividend was passed that you might make improvements and

buy a new safe. Can't you do these things, and declare the dividend, too?"

"We *might* do without these things altogether," he answered, darkly.

She grasped at the straw.

"Oh, please do! I felt that if I would come and ask you to give us what was really ours, that you would. Won't you have it done, Mr. Marston? Tell me, and I'll not detain you any longer."

Again he smiled his wolfish smile, and gazed on her in a sinister way.

"We do not get things for nothing in this world," he answered, in a cold, deliberate voice. The paroxysm of passion which had shaken him was gone now, and had left him maliciously cool and scheming. "You want me to declare this dividend. I can do it yet, for I'm the bank, you know. I kick those pups around down there like I do these dogs and niggers here at home. The question is—how badly do you want this dividend?"

A rosy flush flared up into Julia's waxen cheeks.

"It is not quite fair to flaunt our need in my face," she answered, all but imperiously. "But you know how we are situated, as does every one in Macon, and this county. Father's bank stock is his only source of income, if you will have me say it."

"You have not exactly answered my question," pursued Devil Marston. "I told you that everything worth having must be bought. What will you give me for this dividend?"

"I do not understand what you mean. It belongs to us—or our part of it does. Why will you not let us have it?"

She could not look at him; his face was repulsive beyond measure, and she kept her eyes on the delicately-veined ears of The Prince as she desperately fought her battle of words.

"I will let you have it—but, there is a price to pay. You cannot get something for nothing, from me!"

His voice rang hard and exultant on the last sentence.

"Please be plain," she urged. "Tell me what you mean, quickly."

"The dividend has its price, if you will pay!" he said, drawing a step closer. "A little price to save you and your father from starvation. * * * Get down, come into my home with me, drink a glass of wine with me, kiss me once!— Will you pay it?"

## CHAPTER XII.

There was the sound of rushing water in her ears, and for a moment she was blind. How dared he! To her, a Dudley! Then she knew she was looking full at him with unutterable scorn in her eyes. He saw the contempt and indignity which his words had aroused, and his face blackened.

"Just as you will!" he said, roughly. "It's nothing to me. There was a time when I would have made you mistress of this house, and had it not been for a scoundrelly, meddling doctor you might have married me! You love him now—I know! I'm not a fool, but precious little happiness you'll get from him. They ran him out of Jericho for mixing up with a married woman, and if you want to marry a rascal like that you're welcome to do it!"

He stopped, and glared at her like a baffled animal.

She could not yet find her voice. In a vague way she knew that she had been hurt, sorely wounded; that a profane foot had trodden in the holy of holies in her breast, and that a profane hand had snatched at the sacred fire which burned upon the altar there. She knew that never in her life before had she felt as she did now. Her purity had been affronted, and a friend's dear name had been attacked. She was crushed, dumb, and realizing that she had failed miserably in her mission, she dully turned The Prince's

head towards the gate, and started to ride away. But on the instant Marston's hand was on the bridle near the bit, and Marston's figure loomed in her path.

"Not yet!" he gritted, venom flashing from his little eyes. "There is more to tell, and I don't think I'll have a lovely opportunity like this again soon! You refuse? You refuse my price?"

Still the girl did not answer. She could not answer, for her tongue seemed paralyzed. A rabid sort of anger was mounting again in the fiend before her. She saw its signals flare in a renewed gleam in his sodden eyes, in the dull red, gorged muscles of his thick throat. His coarse lips were twitching, as though forming words too awful for her to hear. At this moment, too, a cloud passed before the sun, and a quick lessening of light was perceptible. To Julia it almost amounted to gloom, seated as she was in the dank shade of one of the funereal cedars, and she could have cried out in pure physical terror had her voice at that moment been subservient to her will. For there before her, almost within arm's length, stood Devil Marston, like a huge spider in his loathesomeness, compelling her to remain where she was, and listen to whatever tale of malice, flavoured with a grain of truth, perhaps, which he might care to relate.

"The terms! The terms!" he said, again, thrusting his face towards her with all its projecting teeth visible. "You won't be hurt! What's a glass of wine and a kiss? Tut! The first is nothing, and I'll bet that jackanapes of a doctor gets plenty of the second! Isn't *one* for *me* worth two hundred and fifty dollars?"

This speech broke Julia's reserve, with its cruel, brutal accusation.

"Hush!" she exclaimed, all the dormant and deadened forces of her nature awaking to full and vigorous protest. "Don't dare to say such things to me, Devil Marston! I came alone to your house this morning, because, though I knew that you were a bad man, I believed that I would be received and treated with proper respect. You have forfeited all right to any kind of consideration; you have trampled upon my finer feelings and made me suffer keenly—and you shall pay! You shall pay!"

She leaned from her saddle-bow towards him, setting her flame-tinged face with its large, distressed, undaunted eyes in opposition to his vulgar visage lit with fires from hell.

He started at the sudden vehemence of her speech, and the quick transition from almost lethargy to almost violent action.

"*I* pay?— What do you mean, girl?" he cried, gripping the bridle firmer and throwing a quick glance in the direction of the highway, which was no great distance off, and visible for several rods from where they were standing.

"I mean what I say!" she repeated, undismayed. Her courage was perhaps unnatural, induced by that low speech wherein Marston had cuttingly spoken of the kisses she had given Glenning. "My father shall hear of this, and Dr. Glenning, too—he whom you have vilely slandered! I withdraw the request which I made a while ago; I don't want a dividend if it has

to come through *your* influence and *your* power. Though it is rightly ours, I do not want it now, for it would degrade anyone who touched it after *your* word had made it possible! I scorn and detest you! I defy you, and dare you to do your worst, you pitiful thing whom God made like a man, and gave the nature of a brute instead of a soul! Now I am through. Let me go! Take your hand from my bridle-rein! Miss Dudley is ready to ride back home!"

Erect in her saddle now as a young goddess, she gazed down upon him with high-held head, disgust and anger blending charmingly on her lovely features. She did not feel herself. Never in her life before had such storms of feeling swept her. She knew she was unreal; that this side to her nature she had never seen—had never known of its existence. The flood which had carried her to that grand height where she could brave and dare a man like Devil Marston in his own yard, was receding. It was too powerful to last. It had given her a glorious strength to say what was in her heart and mind, in clear words which rang with sincerity and conviction, but now, that she was done, was sitting with her proud chin up and disdainful eyes fastened upon the object of her displeasure, she felt the ebb of tears which followed the flood of courage. She was surely and quickly coming back to her own; the normal woman in her was being reinstated. She knew that she must go, at once, or her next words would struggle through sobs. Though her face showed naught of it, her breast was filled with a fearful anxiety, as she watched

the effect of her words. At first the man was stunned. He could not believe his ears. That anyone, to say nothing of a girl, should come before him and speak such things, was past his comprehension. He actually blinked at her, stupidly, as she went on, and his face turned a yellowish gray. But when she concluded his brutish rage had gained the ascendency.

"You're ready to go home—I guess you are! But I'm not ready to let you go! You defy me! You dare me! You call me ugly names! I'm not as pretty as your doctor friend who went regularly every evenin' to see that married woman back in Jericho! Ha! ha! ha! You don't like that, do you? But it's true, anyway, I —"

"Let me go—let me go!" sobbed Julia, the strain overcoming her at last, breaking down the frail fabric of her brave young courage. "You shan't say such things to me!"

She attempted to urge The Prince on, but the iron grip of Marston held him.

"Go easy, young lady! Don't hurry!" mocked the monster. "There's more to tell. I'm saving the choicest morsel of scandal for the last, then I'll fix this long-legged fellow of yours!"

Julia had purposely delayed bringing her weapon into play, but she saw now that the time was ripe for her to use it. She drew it from its place and quickly leveled it at the man.

"Unloose my horse, or I swear I'll shoot!" she said, and Marston, looking in her eyes, knew that she meant it.

He feinted, dropped the bridle, and pretended to draw aside. But the next moment he took a rapid step forward, threw up his arm, and sent the revolver flying through the air. It alighted on the thick grass, without exploding. It happened that the gaunt hound which had disputed Julia's passage at the beginning of her call, having finished the roast of beef in a further corner of the yard, was passing that moment on his way back to the kitchen porch, his hunger doubtless still unappeased. He was a brute used to sudden foray and quick brawls, and this movement of his master towards the horsewoman seemed to him a signal—a call to battle. So, as Marston deftly disarmed Julia, the dog promptly leaped at The Prince's front with a savage roar. The wonder is the poor girl kept her senses, but this attack of the dog was her salvation. The sensitive animal which she rode reared and swerved with the agility of a cat, eluding the hound's spring and colliding with Marston, who was sent sprawling upon the ground. The way to safety was clear! She touched The Prince's side with her heel, drew up her reins, and told him to go in a low voice of entreaty. But he needed no urging. Down the yard they flew, and Julia put him at the fence, for there was no time to be lost with the narrow gate. He went over the barrier with the ease and grace of a swallow, and on towards the road. The farm gate letting onto the pike she had left open, and as she dashed through it she almost ran into a buggy coming from the direction of town, with a man in it. The Prince swerved around the obstacle—he was running

at last, and his rider made no attempt to restrain him—and was gone down the white limestone road like a greyhound in chase.

The top of the buggy which the man drove was down flat, for it was a summer morning, and he loved sunshine and air. He drew his horse up to a standstill, and turning in his seat looked back at the fleeing twain, now rapidly diminishing in a cloud of gray dust. The glimpse which he had caught of the two as they passed was almost as brief as that one gets of a landscape on a night of storm during a lightning flash. He thought he knew the colt—surely there was none other like it anywhere, and he was confident he knew the rider, although her face was white, terror-stricken, tear-stained. Whether she had recognized him or not he could not say. Her haunting eyes had looked straight at him for a moment, but no gleam of understanding had lighted them. Now they were gone; the distant hoof-beats had died. The man turned half way around, and looked again. This time his eyes swept the home of Devil Marston and its vicinity. As he looked his mouth grew hard, his eyes drooped at the corners, and the muscles of his cheeks ridged themselves under his skin. He understood. He slowly and deliberately got out, led his horse to the roadside and carefully hitched it, then passed through the open farm gate and strode briskly on. Two minutes later John Glenning, with folded arms, stood fronting Devil Marston between the cedars. The hound had disappeared. The two men were absolutely alone. There was no word of greet-

ing exchanged between them. Each knew that civilities would be superfluous and out of place. They simply met as two things of primeval creation might meet, and the feelings which governed each of them in that moment were wholly savage. In every one this old strain is running: animal first, then soul, and mind, and heart. Mere being first; then civilization, with its accessories of education and refinement. Two animals met between the cedars; the mask had been flung aside. They had come face to face moved entirely by the world-old battle lust. The one naturally evil; the other made so because he knew that in some way the woman he loved had been mistreated and abused. Words were out of place and unnecessary, but a sense of right and decency crept into Glenning's seething brain, and made him speak.

"I want to apologize for striking you on the street in Macon."

The sentence was cold as ice, and formal. There was no feeling in it. The man to whom it was addressed stood with arms hanging loosely at his sides, his face sullen and crafty. He did not reply.

"You know I had to do it," went on the steel-like voice. "I regret the necessity more than I apologize for the blow. You deserved that. Let it pass."

Marston spoke.

"What in the devil do you want here? Begone, before I put the dogs on you!"

"I am here to give you a thrashing you won't forget as long as you live! You are a coward and a cur!"

The stinging words brought no added colour to Marston's face. They did not hurt him; his sensibilities were hardened, and were difficult to reach. But he cast an involuntary look of longing towards the revolver lying partly concealed in the long grass a rod or more away. The sombre eyes watching him with hawk-like intentness noticed the glance, and instantly turned in the same direction. Glenning saw.

"Don't you wish you had that in your hand?" he said. "I know you haven't one on your person, or you would have shot me before now. To relieve you of any apprehension I don't mind telling you that I am totally unarmed. * * * How did that come there?"

He nodded abruptly in the direction of Julia's revolver.

"I don't see that I'm in a witness box!" Marston answered, viciously.

"Take comfort," retorted Glenning, evenly. "You will be if you live long enough. * * * We are wasting time and bandying words to no purpose," he resumed briskly. "I met a young lady coming from your house in evident distress a few moments ago. She was riding hard and she was scared. Did *you* scare her, and had she anything to do with that revolver?"

The words of the last sentence came hard as lead bullets against Marston's ears, and frightened him. The face of his caller had suddenly grown white and fierce. Glenning's knotted fists were writhing under

his folded arms. Marston knew he had better speak, and speak the truth.

"She came to see me of her own free will. I invited her in, and she drew her pistol on me. I knocked it out of her hand to keep from getting shot."

"A likely tale, and the skeleton of truth alone, I daresay. What did *she* want with *you?*"

A smile of triumph lit the dark features of the hybrid.

"Something *you* could not give her, but *I* could!—Julia Dudley came for a favour to *me!*"

"Keep her name out of it, damn you!"

Glenning, white hot, drew two steps nearer, though still holding himself in check.

"We can talk without the use of names. What favour did she want?"

"She came to ask me to have the bank dividend declared, or they would starve!"

"That was no favour. The money is Major Dudley's. You have stolen it from them by withholding it. She came to demand her own, and her own was denied her, no need to tell me that."

Marston thought of the price he had put upon the dividend, and, while he longed to goad and torture his enemy to the utmost, he feared to tell him of that part of their conversation.

"No, she didn't get it!" he answered, roughly.

"Look at me, Mr. Marston!"

Little as he liked the command, Marston centered his ever shifting eyes upon Glenning's. But they would not stay, despite his will.

"You've been to Jericho," went on the even voice. "You came back last night. What did you go for?"

"What in hell do you mean?" he flared out, with a bluster. * * * "I went on business."

"*Your* business, or *my* business?"

This time Marston coloured perceptibly, and shrugged his shoulders. He did not answer.

"See here!" resumed Glenning. "I know why you went to Jericho. Now listen. If you begin spreading lies about me in this community you shall suffer. Tell the truth—the whole truth—and I'll not say a word. But you don't know the whole truth, nor any part of it. You didn't go to get the truth, but all the low, indecent scandal and gossip you could scrape together. Usually that side is not as hard to get as the other. It is not my fault that we have been enemies from the night I came to Macon. I would not have you for a friend, believe me, but we might at least have been civil. You've heard a great deal of stuff while you were away that your informants wouldn't repeat to my face. And I tell you they are all lies! * * * Did you voice any of them to Miss—to her?"

Again Marston felt the truth dragged from him. But a sardonic smile of malicious pleasure spread over his face as he answered—

"I told her a little about my trip, and how a certain friend of hers had another sweetheart back up there, but she broke away before I could tell her all—"

"*Broke* away!—Devil! Did you hold her?"

Restraint for the moment was cast aside.

Glenning's long hands grasped each of Marston's arms just below the shoulders, and so he held him motionless.

"I didn't touch her!" was the snarling answer. "I held the damned colt by the bridle until she drew on me—"

John flung him backward with an oath.

"*Strip!*"

He hissed out the word with sibilant wrath, and threw off his light coat. Then, trembling the least bit while fighting inwardly for calm, he began rolling back his sleeves. He ceased these preparations long enough to toss his hat upon his coat and discard tie and collar. Marston cast another hungry look at the revolver, while making no move to comply with the order he had received. Glenning came towards him.

"Are you going to fight, or must I slap your face, you dog?"

The concluding word gave Marston a happy thought, and he quickly pursed his heavy lips, and whistled shrilly. He had no mind for an encounter with the young man where the weapons employed would be fists alone. He was probably stronger, but he secretly felt that he would be punished severely should they come to blows. He had much rather that his boar-hound fight for him, so he issued the summons.

"No more of that!" said John, sternly. "Make another sound and I strike you, whether you are prepared or not. Are you coming, or shall I break a

switch from one of your bushes, and lay you across my knee?"

This taunt was more than flesh and blood could bear. It pierced even Marston's seared sensibilities, and stung like something hot. He got out of his coat with one lightning-like movement, and at once assumed the offensive. This was what Glenning wished. It would have been degrading to knock down and batter about some one who made no resistance. The men presented an interesting contrast as they stood on guard. Glenning wore a white negligee shirt, and gray trousers, neatly creased. He was clean shaven and his straight black hair fell over his forehead as he leaned forward, alert and vigilant. One could see now the broad expanse of his back and his wonderful breadth of shoulders. Marston at home was not the Marston in town. He wore a sort of gray flannel shirt, carelessly buttoned, shapeless corduroy trousers and rusty shoes. His thick neck was corded and hairy, and there were dry, red veins in his cheeks caused by the excessive use of liquor. He came at his opponent carefully, in spite of his anger, and delivered his first blow so swiftly that Glenning only partially succeeded in parrying it. The big fist slid off his arm and caught him on the shoulder, turning him half way around. He responded at once with a side swing, which Marston avoided. He was remarkably quick on his feet for so heavy a man. Then they circled, warily. Suddenly Glenning let drive from the shoulder. It was an unexpected move, and caught Marston unprepared. A row of hard knuckles lodged

against his chin and sent him reeling. The trunk of a cedar tree intervened, and he did not fall. His face was awful as he came on again; enough to unnerve the strongest man. But Glenning had found himself. He was calm now, and confident. Marston was raging, blind mad. He struck out wildly, trusting to brute strength. Again Glenning's long arm straightened, and for a moment the breath left the chest of his antagonist. He staggered, and dropped his guard, but Glenning did not follow up. Marston, with an inarticulate cry of rage, sought to close. He no longer attempted to fight as boxers do, but came with outstretched hands, feeling blindly for his foe. There was no mercy in the heart of the iron-faced man fronting him. A third time Glenning struck, and his fist caught Marston over the eye, crumpling him on the grass like a thing of reed. He did not move. John knelt and leaned over him. His eyes were shut, but he was breathing, spasmodically. Glenning arose.

"This is for the pain you caused her, and for the lies you told on me!" he muttered. He walked to the spot where he had thrown his clothing and put the various articles on. As he finished this he saw a negro in the side yard. "Come here!" he called.

The negro obeyed.

"There's your master. He's hurt, but not badly. Carry him in and pour water on his face and give him some whiskey."

Glenning wheeled, picked up the pearl-handled revolver as he passed, and went on towards the road.

## CHAPTER XIII.

During the week which followed a number of things happened. First, Dink Scribbens took a wonderful and sudden turn for the better. The fact that none of his family had become infected was a matter for marvel throughout the county, and the credit for their miraculous escape was of course given to the attending physician. Uncle Billy Hoonover would not pass the hovel guarded awfully and mutely with a tiny yellow flag tacked to one corner of it—an emblem with more power to repel than a legion of soldiers—and he could not stay away from town. Unless the lamp-post where he invariably hitched renewed acquaintance with his gray nag every morning, Uncle Billy almost felt it would walk away in indignation and disappointment. Then, too, municipal, county and national affairs needed his attention every day in front of the county clerk's office. He occupied a chair there as regularly as he did at home, and his word was final. By this I do not mean that it was always accepted, but it surely was always the last spoken. Provided he secured the last word, he felt that his opinion was the correct one. During these days Mr. Hoonover "drove through." That is to say he made a more or less direct route for town through his own and one of his neighbour's farms; a trip at-

tended with much discomfort and some peril, for the way led over ground tilled and untilled, across unexpected gullies and into grass-hidden sinkholes.

One morning, a week after John's encounter with Marston at the latter's home, the usual gathering began to assemble in the shade before the door of the county clerk's office. Some were smoking pipes; some were chewing tobacco. The use of the weed in some form was universal. Conversation was desultory and spiritless for a time. The morning was extremely hot, and one would have thought that fact responsible for the listlessness which pervaded the group. The truth was, however, that their ringleader had not arrived.

"Uncle Billy must be sick," drawled big Joe Colver, tilting his chair onto its two rear legs and leaning his weight forward on his knees.

"More like he's fell in a ditch 'n' broke his laig!" chimed in old Tim Mellowby. Old Tim was the town drunkard, a privileged, harmless character, whom every one tolerated. He remained in a perpetual state of comfortable inebriety; was inoffensive; in former years had been a boot and shoe maker, and during that period of his life had accumulated enough money to support himself in drunken idleness the rest of his days. His favourite haunt was the spot he now sat. He loved to listen, and also to express himself from time to time. A general laugh greeted Tim's sally.

"Mr. Hoonover will arrive, never fear!" piped a third voice.

It came from against the wall, and the speaker was Colonel Whitley. He was an old, dried-up little man, with keen eyes, bushy brows, hawk nose and fuzzy gray side whiskers. He was the learned one of the group—quite a scholar indeed. He had been "abroad" in his day, too, and this fact invested him with an added dignity in the eyes of his stay-at-home townspeople. His profession had formerly been the practice of law, but he had retired several years before. Nevertheless he always came up to the courthouse yard every morning to read his paper, and occasionally to let his voice be heard.

"Possess your souls in patience," he added, "and presently you will witness the fulfillment of my prediction."

His head went down behind the paper. His hearers were accustomed to his bombastic style of speech, and admired him too much even to smile at the fulness of his rhetoric.

A figure came thumping hurriedly across the yard, a black medicine case in its hand, its vest secured by a single button at the bottom, wearing a white shirt streaked with ambier, and a derby hat much to large.

"Hullo, doc!" greeted Judge Colver, as the newcomer halted and glared around as though expecting some hostile move. "The small-pox didn't spread, did it?"

"Who said it would spread?" snapped Doctor Kale.

"It has a trick o' doin' it, I believe!" retorted the judge.

"Not if it's taken in time, and handled right. You can't kill a damned pauper!"

"You didn't try 'im!" grinned old Tim Mellowby, "or maybe you'd had better luck than the new man!"

Doctor Kale wheeled, but when he saw from whence this remark originated he turned his back in silent contempt.

"I've come from Tom Dudley's, and it's a good day with them," he observed, abruptly, his harsh crust melting before some powerful inner force.

"I presume one of them is ill, to require the presence of a physician," piped the voice from the wall again. "Then how can you say it is a good day with them?"

For a wonder Doctor Kale did not retort. He heard Colonel Whitley plainly, and his ears detected the note of irony in the question, but his asperity seemed suddenly to have melted; to have merged with and become engulfed in the warm feeling of joy which surged in his heart.

"You know they've been in bad lines," he said, looking on the ground, a rather pathetic figure in his ill-fitting, haphazard agglomeration of garments, none harmonizing with its neighbour. "They'd come almost to a crust, gentlemen, and such of you as are business men know upon what they depend. That was cut off something over a week ago. I was passing this morning, and was called in hurriedly. This is good news of one of our best citizens, therefore I give it to you. Major had had an attack with his heart, brought on by excitement caused by the morning's

mail. I straightened him out, then Julia told me all about it. Most of you will remember Arthur Dudley, Major's brother. He's been away for a score of years, and they lost him, totally. Thought him dead. This morning Tom got a letter from a lawyer in St. Louis, with a check in it for two thousand dollars. Major's brother was on his way back here. He took sick in St. Louis, sent for this lawyer, died, and the money came on."

"Whose money?—What money?" exclaimed Uncle Billy Hoonover, hastening up at that moment in time to catch the last words.

Doctor Kale promptly growled something about an engagement, and departed with the same haste which marked his approach.

The paper by the wall was lowered once more, revealing a hawk nose, bushy brows and sharp eyes.

"I told you, gentlemen, Mr. Hoonover would arrive!" the thin voice of Colonel Whitley declared. "Good morning, Mr. Hoonover!"

"What's that sour old coon been tellin' you?" demanded Uncle Billy, bearing down upon old Tim Mellowby, who had inadvertently occupied his chair. "Git up! Don't you know that's my seat?"

He made a half threatening movement with his staff, but old Tim slid off his perch good-naturedly and sought the ground instead, no more chairs being available.

Judge Colver thereupon essayed, in his longwinded, heavy way, to impart to the new arrival the story they had just heard. Uncle Billy listened with be-

coming patience for one of his excitable temperament.

"Well, 'pon my soul!" he ejaculated, when the recital was done. "Things happen nowadays as queer as Jonah an' the whale! Arthur—an' who'd 'a' thought?—two thousand dollars! He's a stiff old codger, but nobody c'n say anything ag'in 'im! He's got a right to live by hisself an' not neighbour any."

"Is Dink up yit?" asked a very sober looking, lank individual, who up to this moment had remained silent. He was the jailer. The question, simple as it was, proved an unlucky one, for the ire of Uncle Billy arose at once. He began to thump the earth with his staff and comb his whiskers with his fingers.

"Ain't I late this mornin'?" he demanded, instead of making direct reply to the question. "Oughtn't I 'a' been here a half-n-hour ago?"

He glared from one to the other as though daring them to refute it. Each person present maintained a discreet silence, though one or two nodded acquiescence.

"Late! Late to town!" he stormed. "And what for? That pesky Lizy Ann Scribbens had the owdacity to come to my *front* door this very mornin' —a beggin'. My *front* door! An' her just been cooped up with that diseased rat of a husban', Dink, an' small-pox microbes a-crawlin' all over her! Didn't I pack her off? I swear, gentlemen, I got my shotgun before she would leave! Paupers oughter live in the poorhouse an' not purten' to be decent. Dink won't admit he's a pauper, but he lives by stealin', what's

worse. * * * That's why I'm late, an' if I don't ketch it I don't know why!"

The paper rustled against the wall.

"I should think, Mr. Hoonover, that you should apprehend no danger of contagion, as you had no personal contact with your caller. Of course that is a layman's view only, but I would not give it another thought."

A pistol shot, startlingly near and distinct, punctuated the carefully uttered speech of Colonel Whitley. The group leaped up as one man—save the one who had last spoken. Colonel Whitley was in a comfortable position, and his paper was only half read. The shot sounded from Main street, and Judge Colver, as fearless as he was big, started in a lumbering trot across the yard to ascertain the cause of the disturbance. But almost immediately three men appared around the corner of the court-house. One was a deputy sheriff, another was a blacksmith, and between them, struggling violently to free himself, was a low, poorly dressed, unkempt person.

"What's up? What's Hank done?" queried the judge.

"Shot Dick Goodloe!" answered the deputy, quickly, he and the smith hurrying their man forward as rapidly as possible. On the other side of the yard was a little gate, and it was for this they were heading, it being the nearest approach to the jail. "Keep back the crowd, Joe, till we get Hank in!" called the deputy, and they pushed on.

The crowd as yet, however, was entirely harmless,

and was centered about some indistinguishable object in the middle of the street. The live assassin was far less interesting than the fallen officer, for Dick Goodloe was the town marshal; an honest, sober, efficient fellow whom everyone admired for his adherence to duty. Not three minutes had passed since the shot split the warm, still air. Before, the town had seemed only half alive; a few people on the street, a few men in the store doors, a few loitering negroes. Now a seething mass of humanity of all ages was congregated in front of the postoffice, almost from curb to curb, and those who had first reached the marshal were so pushed upon and hampered that they could do nothing.

John was in his office when the unmistakable sound came spitefully through his window, and caused him to seize his hat and run down stairs. The mishap had occurred at the other end of the square, and when he reached the scene it was to find his way blocked by a human wall.

"Get out of my way!" he called, in a loud, clear voice, and begun pushing his body in, using his hands, elbows and knees irrespective of who they touched. "Stand back! You'll smother him! * * * Back! Back!" he commanded, and the stern voice carried weight. They made room for him, and directly he was kneeling by the prostrate form. A brief examination showed him it was bad enough. A ball through the man's right side, with blood spouting from the wound.

"Where does he live?" he asked, quickly, turning

his head and looking up half savagely. "How far?"

"Half mile, I reck'n, anyhow," answered a bystander, with his hands in his pockets.

"Lift his feet; I'll take his head and shoulders," said Glenning, to a determined looking man in front of him. "Into the drug store yonder. It's quick work now, or he's gone!"

They came up with Goodloe's weight between them. The crowd was apathetic with curiosity.

"Back!—damn you!" gritted John Glenning, his patience leaving him at the asinine stupidity of the class with which he was surrounded. The lower element of Macon, which formed the inner line of that congested caldron of people, had begun to press forward again to get a glimpse of the senseless form which many of them had seen daily all their lives. They gave, half in fear; a lane was opened, and Dick Goodloe was carried across the street into the drug store.

"Lock your door!" ordered Glenning, then he was coolly removing clothing and calling for this and that, and battling with all the skill that was in him for the life of this stranger whom a half-drunken, altogether mean ruffian had tried to kill. The front of the drug store was darkened by the thronging crowd which pressed against the windows and door—trying to see! The better class of citizens began to assemble, but these were content to wait; they wanted to be on hand when the doctor's verdict was given out. Squads of men had already formed up and down the street to talk it over. Business was sus-

pended for the time, and an atmosphere of gloom began to settle over Main street. Very soon it became known that Goodloe had only a thread of a chance for his life. The bullet had been found and taken out, but the wound was in a vital part. The chances were against the marshal. These things Glenning told quietly and willingly to such as inquired after his patient as he left the drug store, giving instructions that the man be carried to his home as soon as possible.

The being whose wanton hand had stricken down the officer was a totally worthless character; shiftless, depraved, wicked. He had that morning, while under the influence of liquor, provoked an altercation with a colored labourer in the street. He began using vile language; ladies were passing. Goodloe warned him to stop, and take himself off. Then the miscreant had shot him. That was all. And now this thing which masqueraded as a human had been given the protection of the law, had been sheltered in the jail from the just wrath of his fellowmen. There were low murmurings running about the streets of the town all that day, and men came and went, went and came from the humble cottage which was Dick Goodloe's home, getting news of the sick man and disseminating it to the scores who inquired of his condition. The reports were not good. And as the afternoon waned word came that the marshal was delirious. Some apprehensive friend had sent Doctor Kale to wait upon the marshal, with instructions to stay in the house. The old fellow stormed and swore that he

wouldn't take any man's patient from him, that professional etiquette forbade it, and damned if he'd go! Glenning persuaded him to change his mind, urging him to go and do all he could. John was out of town most of the day. His practice had increased three patients that week, but those who had sought his services lived rather far in the country, and it required some time for him to make his rounds. It was dark before he returned to Macon. He did not go to supper, but ate at a restaurant. Then he bathed, changed his linen, and started afoot for the Dudleys.

It had taken him exactly seven days to get his own consent to call here. During that time he had not seen Julia, even at a distance. He wanted to see her, more than he had ever wanted to see anyone in his life, but he did not know how she would receive him now. What had Marston told her? To be sure he had warned her against Marston in time, but a woman's heart is ever an unsolved riddle, and the story she had heard may have stung, and blighted, and seared. He was at last determined to know. He had remained in ignorance as long as he could. Better to hear from her own lips that she cared no more to see him, than to hide from her like a coward, and by his silence and absence confess his guilt. One thing gladdened him as he strode along in the starlight. That morning a letter had come from Will Porter, stating that he had carried out his part of the plan, and sent Major Dudley the money.

Glenning's accustomed ease had entirely deserted him as he knocked at the open front door. He was

painfully harassed, and uncertain of himself. He scarcely knew what he would say, or do. He heard a step, heavy, flapping. Aunt Frances appeared at the rear of the long, shadowy hall, and came waddling towards him.

"Ebenin', Marse Glen'n'." She greeted him a little stiffly.

"Where's your mistress, Aunt Frances? Tell her I am come, if you please, and would like to see her for a few moments."

He came in and placed his hat upon the hall rack, but the old coloured woman made no move to do his bidding.

"What's the matter?" he queried. "Isn't Miss Dudley in?"

"She am wid de Majuh, who's sick. She can't see nobody."

"Did she tell you that?"

"Yas'r."

"Did she say that you were to tell me that if I should come?"

Before Aunt Frances' thick lips could form the affirmative reply which was on her tongue, a soft voice descended from the upper hall.

"I will be there in a moment, Doctor Glenning. Please be seated."

Aunt Frances turned her turbanned head and rolled her eyes in the direction from whence the voice came, then with a snort of disgust retreated, mouthing as she went in an undertone.

John took a chair near the door which commanded

the full sweep of stairway, and thus he watched Julia descend a few moments later; very sedately and with the hint of haughtiness in her air. He arose to take her hand, and he could not help contrasting this meeting with their first. Her hand in his tonight was almost lifeless, and there was a rebellious look in her dark eyes as she raised them briefly to his, he fancied accusingly.

"I told you not to believe him!" was the mute cry in John's heart, where little devils were beginning to cut and slash, but he smiled at her as he clasped her hand warmly, and asked of her health.

"I am well, thank you."

How cold she was! She remained standing, although there was another chair a short distance away. She did not look at him. She knew that she was hurting him, but she could not help it. She had wanted him so much the past week, and he had not come. And she had had nothing to do but think. Marston's awful words never left her mind, and the more she dwelt upon them the more clearly she became convinced that the love of her life was centered upon John Glenning. She *would not* believe that which she had heard, but he had told her he had sinned—back there in Jericho! But he had also said that he had fought through and had come out clean! She had sobbed half of one night through in her distress, and had waited day by day for him to come. At last, on the very eve of the day he did come, she had given orders that she would not see him. But the sound of his voice had melted her resolve. She

stood before him now, her heart hardened in that strange way which all lovers have, and which must forever remain inexplicable, seemingly as unresponsive as a being of marble.

"Miss Dudley!—Miss Julia!" pleaded John, purposely throwing a note of tenderness in his voice, "what is wrong? Can you not tell me? I should be so glad to do—anything for you!"

A tremor shot over her. How strong and good his voice was!

"Father is unwell, that is all," she answered, in the same expressionless voice.

"For how long? Is it—anything to cause you worry?"

"No."

Colder than ever was the monosyllable, and Julia felt herself growing wickeder and wickeder, and she knew that directly she would be bad enough not to respond in any wise to whatever he might say.

But John had had some experience in this game of love. So he promptly did the very best thing possible; he withdrew. He deliberately picked up his hat and walked to the door, where he stopped and turned.

"I suspect I had better go, Miss Dudley," he announced, in a most formal voice.

"Very well—if you wish," she added, with the adroitness of her sex.

"I have reason to believe that I am an unwelcome guest this evening," replied Glenning. "Be pleased

to tell Major Dudley that I inquired after his health, and know that I am always at your service."

He bowed low, and without offering his hand in farewell—she making no sign to give him hers—he went out.

Julia stood where he had so ceremoniously left her, amazement and anger uniting on her face. Then tears began to race down her cheeks, and she flew to the old sofa in the library to cry it out in the dark. She had not counted on this. He was cruel; he cared nothing for her, as he had led her to believe he did. When she went upstairs in response to her father's ring, she felt that she had never been so totally miserable in her life before.

## CHAPTER XIV.

When Glenning reached the highway he did not go towards town, but turned in the opposite direction. He had a wild craving for solitude. He wanted to be away from everyone, to be alone in the night with his thoughts. These were not pleasant. His reception by Julia had been more severe than he had even anticipated. He did not believe that her conduct towards him reflected her true feelings, but how was he to know! She had been an iceberg that night; she had assumed a role of which he had not deemed her capable. That low-browed man in the lonely house was responsible. Would he win after all? Had his poisoned lies really done their work, and robbed him of the one perfect thing which he had grown to love with a fierce intensity? He stopped short, and was tempted to go back, and demand an explanation. Should he permit himself to be discouraged thus easily; should he lose her for no other reason than that she had been cold and proud to him? He could not go back tonight. Her heart was hardened against him, of that he was sure. He would let a few days pass and try again, and if she sent him away that would be the end. He resumed his swift walking, on and on, up hill and down, unconscious of any fatigue. He met no one. When he finally came to a halt on a small bridge he realized that his surroundings were

unfamiliar, and that he was several miles from town. He was in no hurry to return. He filled his pipe and fell to smoking, watching the starlight dimpling on the ripples of the tiny stream which flowed under the bridge. In some moods this would have soothed him, but tonight it served as an irritant. He was at war with himself, and the gentle harmonies of Nature fretted by their very peace. He would have welcomed a storm. He would have been glad had the rain come driving its tiny fists in his face; had the vivid lightning staggered athwart the sky; had thunderbolts shivered the earth about him; had the demons of storm torn at the writhing trees. These things would have brought relief. He was keyed for strife, and the musical water, the calm starlight and the soft warm breeze maddened him. He pocketed his pipe with a gesture of annoyance and swung about in his tracks. A long walk lay before him, and he was glad. But action failed to bring relief. As he passed the Dudley home his breast was surging with unconquerable feelings. He felt that he was capable in that hour of leading a forlorn hope in battle. It was near midnight when he reached the edge of town. Presently he overtook a pedestrian, but he passed him without a sidelong glance. Further on he passed another. At a bisecting street he saw a group, and as he went by them he noticed that they wore masks. His mind took a revolution and came back to the topic of the day. What did these sinister preparations mean in the dead of night? Had Goodloe died? Were these his avengers? Mob law was no new thing in Ken-

tucky. Were these men massing to wreak a summary and swift vengeance upon the marshal's slayer? A sudden idea struck Glenning, and with it a species of wild joy. He turned up his coat collar, drew his hat over his eyes, and hurried on. He passed other men, all masked, but no one spoke to him or tried to intercept him. Directly he broke into a run, and in a few moments was at the jail, and thundering on the panels of the door with his fist. The jailer must have been up, for he answered the summons at once, fully dressed. Evidently he expected trouble, for he was pale with fright, which he made no effort to hide, and he was trembling.

"Quick!" said Glenning. "They're coming! Arm yourself!"

The man stood shaking in the doorway, but did not answer. John grasped him by the shoulder, and spoke again.

"Don't you hear? They're coming for your prisoner to hang him! Protect him! Get your pistol and guard the jail!"

"Who?—What?" stammered the terrified man.

"The mob! I've seen them gathering! You've no time to lose!"

"I'll give 'em the keys if they ask me for 'em!" exclaimed the jailer. "They'd shoot me if I didn't!"

"You're sworn to duty!" expostulated John. "Don't let them murder this fellow. Has Goodloe died?"

"I don't know—but they can have the keys!"

He drew them from his pocket and jangled them in his hand, a pitiful object.

"Listen!" whispered Glenning. "They're coming. Hear their feet? Give me your keys! Bring me your pistols—quick!"

He took the bunch of heavy keys from the unresisting fingers, and the jailer hastened indoors. He was back in a moment with a brace of revolvers which he held out eagerly.

"Here they are!" he managed to say. "Keep 'em off, doc, if you can!"

"Go hide in the cellar, if you have one!" returned John, contemptuously, and walked to the iron-barred door set in a stone wall, which gave entrance to the main passage of the jail.

In front of this door was a small, elevated platform, not over six feet square. Above the door a lamp burned in an iron sconce set in the masonry. This was placed there for convenience in housing prisoners at all hours. John looked at the lamp a moment in doubt, then walked to it and turned the wick higher, so that the low flame sprang up and illuminated the platform upon which he stood, as well as the ground in front for several yards. As he faced about a reckless, devil-may-care smile was on his lips. At one side lay a goods-box, some three feet tall. John stooped and dragged it to the platform, and stood it on end in front of him. His purpose was not to form a shield, for the frail pine of which it was made could not have withstood a bullet, and it came scarcely to his waist,

leaving exposed all vital parts. Glenning quietly dropped the keys in the long grass at the edge of the platform, took off his hat and placed it to one side, then lay his two revolvers upon the top of the box, gently rested his hand upon the butt of each, and waited. The revolvers were of forty-eight calibre, and brightly nickeled. They caught the gleam from the lamp, and shone suggestively. The jailer had disappeared. John had heard him locking and barricading his door. In all probability he had deserted the place by some rear exit.

The faint sound of many moving feet which had been audible a few minutes before had grown into a pronounced tread. As John stood and listened to this portentous advance, his heart did not quicken a beat. Indeed, he had grown calmer. The fever of unrest which had been tearing at him was departed now. Here was that danger for which he had vaguely hoped—here, before his face. Something like a hundred men came to a halt before the jail door, and at a respectful distance from the platform where a tall, bareheaded man stood, almost in a careless attitude. The mob was masked; there was not a face visible.

"Out with the keys, Bill!" jeered a man in the rear; "we mean business!"

The speaker had mistaken John for the jailer.

"Bill—hell!" growled another, nearer the front. "That's the new doc, but whut the damn fool's doin' here I don't know!"

Glenning had not said a word, nor had he shifted

his position. But his most searching scrutiny had failed to reveal the presence of a single weapon among the besiegers.

"On! On!" cried some one in the rear. "Ain't there enough of us to 'tend to that feller?"

They began pushing, and the mob surged closer. Those nearest the platform were within a dozen feet of the solitary watcher now, but there was no menace in their attitude. Glenning had been sharply viewing the *personnel* of this mass of men, and from apparel, bearing, and general appearance he judged most of them to be of the rougher element. The three or four in front, who were evidently the leaders, may have been gentlemen. It was to these Glenning now spoke.

"Good evening," he said, pleasantly. "Perhaps I know you and perhaps I don't, for you have seen fit to hide your faces. You have come after Hank."

His accents were deliberate, and he appeared as much at ease as if he were chatting with friends in his own home. His last sentence was not a question, but a declaration.

"Yes, we've come after Hank 'n' we're goin' to git 'im!" came a rough voice from one side.

A leader turned.

"Keep still, will you?" Then to Glenning. "May I ask by what authority you take your place there with two loaded pistols? Are you a sworn deputy, or officer of any sort?"

"I am not, as you well know, and I have no authority, other than a strong feeling for fair play.

May I, in turn, ask by what authority you come at dead of night to defy the laws of your State, and seek to place a crime upon your soul?"

"We have the law of might, and that's enough. Stand aside now, or take the consequences!"

The man was deeply in earnest.

"Had it not struck you that you were talking to the wrong man?" asked Glenning. "Do you want to enter this place? Then the jailer is the man you want to see. What's the use of battering these doors down and arousing the town when you *might* get the keys from him, and *maybe* get in quietly? You need some one to lead you, men. What good is it to stand dickering with me? Rouse the jailer! He's the man you want to deal with!"

Before the words had left his mouth three or four shadowy forms had detached themselves from the group and run to the front door of the jailer's residence, which connected with the prison proper, only a wall intervening. They thumped, and pounded, and called, forgetting caution in their untrained zeal. They gained no response, and, fearing to force an entrance there, returned to their friends, baffled.

"Knock 'im down! * * * Git 'im out o' the way!" The cries came again from the rear.

"You've told Bill we were coming," said the man who had formerly spoken, "and he's run off, or hidden. We can't waste time. Stand down! We are armed, and you will suffer if you resist!"

"Wouldn't you rather have the keys?" asked John, simply, "than to run the risk of bringing the citizens

who love order about your ears? You can't force that door without dynamite."

"How can we get the keys when we can't get Bill?" demanded the spokesman, led on to conversation in spite of his haste by the apparently ingenuous frankness of the man before him.

"Bill gave them to me," answered John, naturally, "not ten minutes ago."

"Then you have them? Pass them over, please, at once, or we shall be compelled to take them from you by force."

"I haven't them now."

"You're fooling with us!" retorted the man, angrily. "For the last time, get out of the way!"

"I'm not fooling you! I had the keys in my hand, but I have lost them. They are not on my person."

"To hell wid you 'n' de keys bofe!" exclaimed a burly form standing well back in the shadows, and with that it made a rush. The figure was to one side; there was no one else in line. Swiftly John raised the revolver in his right hand, and fired low. His wish was only to cripple, and he succeeded. The man dropped with a howl of pain and fright, and his mask fell off, revealing the face of a brutal looking negro. He sat up and nursed his shattered knee, and mouthed curses.

"Shame on you, men of Macon!" cried Glenning, standing erect and pale under the flickering light of the iron sconce. "Do you bring such a thing as *that* with you to hang a white man, however low?"

"Nobody told 'im to come!" called a voice. "He hooked on!"

"Listen to me a minute, men!" resumed Glenning, speaking very earnestly. "Most of you don't realize what you want to do tonight. You've come out to commit murder. Do you know that—murder! Every man among you would be guilty of that crime did you break into this jail and drag out the fellow you are after and string him to a limb. What good would it do? I know what the Bible says—'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' and 'Whosoever sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed.' But let the law do it, men. If you do this thing you will be as lawless and as guilty as that cringing thing back there in its cell. You would deserve his fate! Let us not behave as barbarians. Don't make the records of our State blacker than they are. I'm not here to fight. I know you can overcome me. Accident alone apprised me of what was going forward tonight, and I've come here to try and show you where you're wrong. Don't let tomorrow's papers tell the news to the civilized world that down in Kentucky a mob trespassed the law and hung a prisoner by night! It's been done too often already. We're good people, but our blood runs hot, and we're hasty. We act first, and think after, which is wrong. You haven't thought this thing over. Somebody started it and you fell in with the plan. Go home now, and go to bed, and in the morning you'll thank God that your consciences are clear!"

For a moment there was a tense silence, broken only by the low groans of the suffering negro.

"He shot Dick Goodloe, and he's got to die! Dick was my friend!"

It was the ringleader speaking, dogged and unpersuaded.

John leaned forward suddenly, and looked at the man.

"Is the marshal dead?" he asked.

"He wasn't dead half an hour ago, but he was mighty low," came a voice from the darkness.

"There!" exclaimed John, triumphantly, standing erect. "You have no sort of right to take this man now! You shall not hang him! I'll make a compact with you, gentlemen—fellow citizens! Send at once to the home of Dick Goodloe. If he is dead, I'll find you the keys, and step aside. If he lives, you are to go home and leave this jail unmolested. Do you agree?"

Various voices expressed assent to the plan, and even the ringleader nodded acquiescence, without speaking.

A messenger was accordingly dispatched at once, a youth with nimble legs, who started on a run. During the period of waiting the men were quiet, though some conversed in low tones. No one paid any attention to the wounded negro, who attempted to drag himself away, but found the effort so painful that he gave it up. In a short time the messenger returned with his news. Goodloe was sleeping, and Doctor

Kale said that his chances for recovery were better. Instantly the crowd melted as silently as they had come, and soon Glenning found himself alone before the iron-barred door, while there upon the grass before him the negro moaned ceaselessly. There was no resentment in John's heart towards the object his bullet had stricken down. Now he merely saw something in distress which needed his help. He lifted the lamp from its socket and went towards the negro, who tried to shrink away at his approach.

"Be still!" ordered Glenning, and placing the lamp on the ground, he began an examination.

The hurt was not serious. The knee-cap was shattered, but the tough bone had deflected the bullet.

"Where do you live?" asked John, brusquely.

The negro told him, stuttering with fright.

"You belong in there!" returned the doctor, sternly, waving his hand towards the dark mass of stone behind him. "Don't you ever get tangled up in anything like this again. Now you can't walk a step, and won't for some time to come."

He took his handkerchief and bound it about the wounded limb.

"I'll have a wagon here to take you home in a few minutes," he continued, "and I'll come in the morning and dress that knee."

Then, without waiting to hear the profuse thanks and humble apologies which followed, he replaced the lamp, secured the keys and the revolvers, and bent his steps in the direction of Main street. He stopped at the livery stable and gave instructions for removing

the negro, then went to his office, tired, victorious, but unsatisfied.

What did it all amount to, he asked himself, wearily, when the love in his soul received no answering affection. Of what account were good deeds, if his own life was empty. His recent thrilling experience faded from his mind, and in its stead the sweetly alluring face of Julia came up before him. She was always with him now; waking, sleeping, reading, or during his professional calls. She had crept into his heart completely, and her coming had been wonderfully charming—unlike that other, which had thrilled him with a painful joy! The other was gone now. He felt that the awful hold had been shaken off at last—if only Julia had not treated him as she did that evening! Such things tend to throw a man back, but his hardly won battle had been too dear an experience for him to waver now. He would be strong, though the future were empty. He was facing the glass door giving onto the landing at the head of the stairway, sitting dejectedly by a small table whereon a lamp was burning. He had thrown off his coat and hat, for the atmosphere indoors was almost stifling. He did not think of seeking rest, for, though tired, he was not sleepy. It seemed to him that his affection for the Major's daughter had grown immeasurably since darkness had fallen. His thoughts had dwelt constantly upon her, and in his heart he had called her many tender names, and had imagined his lips upon her hair, and forehead, and cheeks, and mouth. He dropped his chin to his breast and closed his eyes,

his forehead showing deep furrows beneath the straight black locks of overfalling hair. "Julia! Julia!" he said in his mind; "don't treat me this way! I have served you faithfully from the moment my eyes first saw you, and I have loved you almost as long. Believe me, little girl, and let me know that you care for me, that I may speak all that is in my heart. Julia! Julia!" Again and again the single word throbbed through his mind, as though an imperishable record was in his heart, and every beat thereof sent out the message on the current of his blood. * * * *What was that!* He stopped breathing, but did not open his eyes. He felt that she was near him! All in a moment he knew that the cry of his heart had been answered. He heard steps, light steps, barely audible through the closed door. They came swiftly—tip-tip-tip-tip-tip-tip—up the stair—then silence.

He lifted his head and opened his eyes.

"Good God!" he cried, springing to his feet and overturning the chair in which he sat. Then grasping the small table with both hands he leaned across it and peered at the door, his face graying with each second that passed. She stood there, looking at him, such terror in her eyes that it made him tremble, absolutely fearless though he was. She wore a dark dress, and a dark veil was wound about her head, leaving the white oval of her face, with its terror-haunted eyes. The next moment she had entered the room and shut the door behind her, and was coming towards him like a sweet wraith. Yet he could say nothing. He had yearned for her and called her in

his soul, and she was before him now! There were new lines upon his troubled face, for he could not understand. What could it mean? It was past midnight; between one and two o'clock, he knew. She was alone. These were his apartments. He slept in the one where they now stood. She stopped within arm's length, pale and scared, her large eyes burning with the burden of the secret she carried. She spoke first, hurriedly and low. The sound of her voice brought John to his senses.

"Has he come? Has he come?" she asked, in a half whisper, while the interlaced fingers over her breast writhed from the stress of her emotion.

"Dear Miss Julia!" responded Glenning, taking her by the arm, "pray be seated—but no, you *must* not stay here a moment! I—what is it? What is wrong?"

"Has he been here? Oh, tell me! Has anything happened?"

Glenning got into his coat as he answered.

"I have just come in. I went into the country after leaving you. Who is it? Marston again?"

A sob, half hysterical, struggled from the girl's throat.

"Yes—yes! He will come! He said he would! He's determined to kill you! Oh! I couldn't stand it!"

She put her hands over her eyes, and shivered.

"Who is with you, Miss Julia? * * * You must not remain here another moment. You know walls have ears and eyes, even at this hour of the night. Who came with you?"

"No one; who could come with me? * * * But you! You must not stay here tonight. Perhaps he came and found you were out. He will return. Promise me!"

Before he could answer they heard a sound which each knew; the pounding hoofs of a horse ridden at full speed.

"It is he!" gasped Julia, her face colourless as marble. "It is too late!"

The hard-ridden horse stopped below with a crash and a rattle of small stones.

"Courage!" whispered John, leaning towards the girl. "Trust me; all will be well!"

Turning the lamp low, he quickly bore it into the front office and placed it upon his desk there in a far corner of the room. In an instant he was by her side again and had her hand in his, and even in the peril of that moment he felt her clinging to him, and his heart exulted. The apartment was now in almost total darkness.

"Come!" he whispered, and opening the stair door wide he led her out into the passage, and down it for a dozen feet. Here not a ray of light came, but he placed her behind him, holding her hand all the while in a close grasp. There was a heavy step below—a stumble—a muttered curse.

"He has nerved himself with whiskey!" was the low message Glenning sent over his shoulder. "Be perfectly quiet; there is nothing to fear."

Slowly a heavy form ascended the stair, feeling its way along the wall, and halting now and then. A

head and shoulders were dimly outlined, then the figure of Devil Marston stood in the open doorway. He waited a moment to steady himself, then entered. Glenning leaned forward to listen. The invader made no efforts to soften his movements, and presently John knew he had entered the front office. Then he placed his arm around the slight form by his side and gently drew her forward. Almost carrying her, they glided down the stair like shadows, then John took her arm in his, and they hurried along the deserted streets. Not a word was spoken until they had almost reached the Dudley home.

"Why did you do this?" asked John, an almost overpowering desire to clasp her in his arms assailing him as he felt her leaning heavily upon him, and thought of the significance of it all.

"There was no one else," she murmured, and sighed as she became conscious of the nearness of home.

"Tell me about it," he said, and he knew that she drew closer to him in the starlight.

"It was awful!" she replied. "I thought it would kill me. It was near ten o'clock. Father was asleep, and I slipped out into the yard to be alone, and enjoy the night. I had strolled down the avenue to the gate, and was standing there when he passed, going towards his home. I wore a white dress, and he saw me. He pulled up his horse, and without warning told me that he was going to square accounts with you that night, and get you out of his way. Then he laughed and rode on. I thought he was crazy. I went back to the house and tried to forget it, but I could not sleep.

I knew he was capable of anything. There was no one to send—Peter would not have done. So I came."

They had entered the avenue. The segment of a late moon was pushing its way through some ragged clouds above the eastern horizon.

"*Why* did you come?" repeated John.

They had reached the portico before she answered.

"To save you from him," she said, standing upon the step, so that her face was almost on a level with his own.

"But why?—*why?* What motive caused you to jeopardize your good name, to place yourself in a position which would compromise you forever were it known. Was it friendship alone?"

"I cannot tell you!"

"You can—you must!"

His face was almost fierce in the wan light, and his eyes were glowing.

"Not now; not yet."

There was a note of sadness in her voice, and her eyes fell.

Glenning took her hand, and came closer to her.

"Little girl, I *must* know!"

She looked up, and her brave, truthful eyes met his squarely.

"There is yet something in the way," she said, smiling as through pain, "before you may—"

"What is it?" he broke in, eagerly. "Speak!"

"Jericho!"

Then she was gone, and he was alone with the memory of the past.

## CHAPTER XV.

In the year of grace in which this story moved, the Macon fair began the tenth day of July. All things were now leading up to it, for July had come, and the days, while really long, passed quickly.

Glenning had a fearful task before him. Only once since that memorable night when so many things had happened—when he had been almost scorned by the girl he loved; when he had held a mob at bay and saved a worthless scoundrel's life; when he had received a young lady caller in his office at two o'clock in the morning; when he had walked home with her to be ruthlessly wakened from his blissful love-dream—only once since that night had he been able to get himself to that point of moral courage which would enable him to make his confession, and plead his cause unhampered and with a conscience at rest. And in that hour when his soul was trembling on the verge of a full disclosure of all that had passed during that hateful, bitter-sweet time in Jericho, an interruption had come at the inopportune moment, and his chance went, for when they were together again alone that very evening he knew that it was impossible for him to speak. He knew, too, that possession and a full reciprocity of affection would never be his until he had lain bare that hidden portion of his life. He wanted to tell it; he wanted her to know. It was not

a desire for concealment which held his tongue. That night when they stood in the wan moonlight by the portico steps, he had forgotten the untold secret. He knew only that she was before him, very close to him; that he had held her hand, had, for a few moments, pressed her young body to his as they went down the steps at his office; knew that she had filled him and thrilled him with a rare happiness, and that life without her would be commonplace, sunless and dreary. Another moment his consuming love would have been pouring from his lips in fervent words of fire, when he heard that name which he had come to hate—"Jericho!"

In the days which followed he fought with himself again, and some there are who will know what this means, and others there are who will not. But of all battles fought, surely this is the most terrible, when a man fights himself. It was not the old struggle with which he had contended night upon night after his arrival in Macon. That had been horrible, for the devil and an angel had locked in his heart then, and their efforts had torn him pitiably. But his angel had won in the end. The red-gold hair and the eyes of wine came no more to make a picture of living temptation above his pillow. They were banished. Now the same devil had come again, and the same angel, and it was all to do over again. This time the devil told him to keep his mouth shut, or tell only a part of the truth, since he had already been fool enough to say that something had occurred back in Jericho.

The angel bade him lay the whole story bare; this was the only honourable course. John was aware that the outcome of this fight must be decided by his attitude. The combatant to which he lent his aid would overcome the other. And while he knew perfectly well what he should do, the devil pulled steadily the other way, whispering all the time that to speak the truth would mean total loss, and that a partial falsehood, at least, would be excusable, considering all that was at stake.

The new doctor's leisure hours were getting less frequent now. His remarkable success in treating the Scribbenses had all at once lifted him on a wave of popularity. Then, too, the story of how he had whipped Devil Marston in fair fight had gone abroad some way, and this, coupled to his defense of the jail, had thrown him in the full glare of the lime-light, and had also raised him on a sort of pedestal for the good people of Macon. They had never had anyone in their quiet community who could "do things" before. They began to hold him in a kind of awe, and to honour him in every way they could. Some of the most substantial recognition came from the wealthy population, who sent for him when illness required the presence of a physician. Glenning began to realize that his position was secure and his future assured.

One day Dillard joined him on the street, and accompanied him to his office. He was worried, as usual. He preceded his opening remark by shaking his head solemnly.

"It's no use, Glenning; it's no use."

Delivering this characteristic speech in a despondent tone, he walked to the window, and looked out.

"What's no use?" came the sharp, quick question, charged with irrepressible vim and a trace of nervousness.

"He won't do it! He won't do it!" was the still doleful reply.

"Stop your riddles and talk sense!" snapped John.

Dillard turned at this.

"I told you we'd catch Marston in some crooked work, but I've changed my mind. He's a sly fox. He's scented something. I've watched him all right, and he's been straight as a shingle."

"I don't see that it matters now," replied John, coolly, busy at his desk.

"Why?"

"We don't want to ruin him just for the fun of it, do we? It was to help the Dudleys we planned his downfall. That necessity is removed now. Of course he should be punished for holding that dividend back, but that alone hardly merits the penitentiary, especially since our little plan about the insurance worked. They're easy now, but we must see that no more tricks like that are played at the bank. Marston's behaving very well now. At least he has quit annoying our friends."

"You're a devilish funny fellow!" commented Dillard.

"And I want him to be on hand at the races," continued John. "He has entered the pick of his stables.

Two of them—the best he has—go against The Prince. The colt will win. I want Marston to see him win. I want him to see a Dudley horse walk away from the fastest thing in a Marston stable!"

He swung around in his chair with flashing eyes.

"You're pretty confident, aren't you?"

"No more than I have cause to be."

"Do you know the private record of that big black, Imperial Don?"

"No, and I don't care to. I don't care if it's two minutes flat! I tell you, Tom Dillard, there's nothing on four legs that can outrun The Prince! It is uncanny! Have you ever seen him go with a loosened rein? It takes your breath away to watch him! Peter is going to work him out this afternoon at the track. Miss Dudley and I are going. When you come back you will understand what I mean when I say this colt was born of the wind and the lightning!"

Dillard flushed at the mention of Julia's name and looked embarrassed. John wondered. Had the poor fellow cast his die, and lost? His own uncertain position brought a warm feeling of sympathy to his heart, but he could say nothing personal.

"I don't suspect I can come," answered Dillard, in a changed voice, and John no longer doubted it was all over with his friend. "But I hope you're right. It would give me a lot of pleasure to see the Dudleys win over Marston."

"There are plenty of people around here who will enjoy that pleasure," muttered Glenning, turning to his writing materials.

"I'll be on hand at the race, anyway," said Dillard, walking to the door, "and I'll keep on watching Marston."

John's engagement with Julia was at five in the afternoon. The days were extremely hot, and it had not been thought wise to allow the colt his exercise until the sun had declined somewhat. The Prince was green. He was young. Conditions which older and hardened horses might not feel would likely affect him seriously. He had been sheltered and pampered since earliest colthood. Really he had not been given a chance to prove what was in him. The run this afternoon was a part of the process of hardening. The race wherein his name made one was to be a mighty game for blood and brawn. It was no place for a weakling.

Old Peter, sly and wise with his many years, years which had been given almost entirely to learning lore about horses, and acquainting himself with their moods and disposition—Old Peter knew all this, and he was making ready. With all his enthusiasm and confidence, he knew there was scant hope of his beloved colt winning in three straight heats. The race might be drawn out to four or five, or even six or eight, and then the horse with the greatest endurance would be the horse to win. But Peter knew what he knew. He knew that The Prince's sire, and his grandsire, had been noted for their staying qualities, and though the colt was slender of barrel and limb, yet hidden somewhere within that satin-smooth skin was power to go indefinitely.

Glenning presented himself at Julia's door promptly. She received him cordially, but with a sort of maidenly reserve which he had noticed ever since that night when she had almost asked him to lift the veil which hid his past. She was not quite as open and free as upon former occasions. Her appearance was charming, as usual. She disdained ornaments, a small cluster of some delicate flowers or a single blossom which had mayhap struck her fancy, being the only attempt she ever made to adorn herself beyond the delightfully simple costumes, which were always graceful and airy. Today she came to John swinging by its ribbons her hat—a boy's broad-brimmed straw—and wearing a gingham dress, belted at the waist and becomingly ruffled.

The man's heart surged as his eyes beheld her.

"Oh, let's walk!" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of a horse and buggy on the driveway.

"Certainly, if you wish. But the roads are dusty; even driving is unpleasant."

He tried to speak naturally, but invisible fingers had him by the throat, and his words were strained.

She flashed a quick glance at him.

"That's one reason why I proposed walking—because of the dusty roads. We'll go through, you know. Back through the garden, over a sparsely wooded upland, and down to the track. You did not know we were so near, did you?"

"No; but that will be fine. * * * Is the Major in the library? I should like to pay my respects, if nothing more than to greet him."

"Yes; walk in. He's reading, and seems much improved. He'll be glad to see you."

Major Dudley looked up from his book as they appeared for a moment in the doorway, side by side. He smiled, and essayed to rise. Then John was at his side, gently pressing him back into his chair.

"Sit still, I beg you!" he said, taking the thin, soft hand of the old aristocrat. "I've only a moment, for Miss Dudley has promised to go with me to the track, and we mustn't delay. I'm glad to see you looking so well, Major."

"My health seems excellent, suh! But I cannot undergo any exertion. My haht is gettin' a little tahed, it seems, but it's been workin' long enough to deserve a rest. Won't you take a chair, suh?"

"Another time, thank you. The Prince is in fine trim, I believe?"

"Great colt, suh! Peter reports his condition puhfect."

"You have no apprehension in regard to the race?"

The old gentleman's eyes shot fire under their gray brows, and his body became more erect.

"I'm as satisfied he'll win as I am the sun will rise tuhmorrow!"

"Good! I share your belief to the full. Let me say good-bye now. The sun will not last much over an hour."

A minute later Julia and John were passing through the garden, side by side.

"Of course you read in the paper about Uncle Arthur's death?" she said.

John flushed guiltily, and he gave her a covert look. Her face was a little shadowed, and very sweet.

"Yes," he answered, seeking vainly in his mind for an excuse to change the subject.

"It was all very queer," she resumed, puckering her brow and shaking her head slowly. "The letter from the lawyer was so formal, and was not explicit. We have feared there was some mistake, as we have not heard from Uncle Arthur for so many years. Father wrote to the lawyer asking for further details, but has heard nothing from him."

"It was queer," admitted Glenning, feeling the weight of his duplicity, while his conscience writhed as though a white hot iron had touched it.

"It saddened us so much to think that he was coming back to us, and did not live to get home. Wasn't it dreadful?"

"Indeed it was."

John drew a long breath, and fidgeted inwardly. They had reached the stone fence bounding the garden, and he seized his chance.

"Let me help you over!" he cried, leaping to the flat top of the fence and extending his hand.

She took it, and allowed herself to be drawn up. Then he descended and swung her to the ground with her hands in his. A gently sloping, slightly wooded hill stretched up before them, and as they began the leisurely ascent she spoke again.

"You know that local news comes to us rather slowly, and we have just learned of what you did to Mr. Marston—that day."

Her voice was low, and she did not look at him.

John's face darkened, but he did not answer on the moment.

"I felt that I should speak to you," went on Julia; "it was because of me you did it. You were very brave."

Her face was aflame now.

"Yes," he replied. "The cur had mistreated you in some way, and I could not stand it!"

Here was his chance to go ahead and tell her all, for there was no possibility of interruption. But he did not speak. Why, he could not say. They walked on in silence. Soon they were going down a rain-washed hill-side where it was necessary he should assist her. He offered her his hand without speaking, and she took it dumbly. So they reached the level again, and went towards the fair ground, now only a short distance off. They halted in front of the grandstand. Several horses were on the track, but their eyes were quickly drawn to the lithe, graceful figure of The Prince. He had just come from the track stables, and was walking down the home stretch with a withered, monkey-like figure perched upon his back. Uncle Peter saw the twain, and guided the colt up to the low fence enclosing the track.

"Well, Uncle Peter, are we too late?" asked Glenning.

The old fellow removed his tattered hat, and bowed.

"No, suh. I had jes' rid 'im out de stall. I gwi' limber 'im up treckly."

"How is he running?" queried Julia, anxiously.

"Lak a skeered dawg, young missus!"

"What horses are those over yonder?"

"Couple o' plugs dat Deb'l Marston sont out hyar!" he replied, contemptuously. "I'll go by dem lak dey's hitched to a pos'!"

"Are you sleeping with this horse every night, as I suggested you should?" asked John.

"Yes, suh! Him 'n' me, we bunks tuhgedder, 'n' he has de bes' bed, too!"

"He will bear close watching, and as the time draws nearer for the race you must be doubly careful."

"Dat I will, suh—doctuh. Yo' may 'pen' on me. Now 'bout dis heah hoss I'm a-settin' straddle uv." He fairly choked with pride and emotion as he moved his bony hand up the richly maned neck caressingly. "Dis hoss am de none-sich hoss, whut means dar ain't anudder'n lak 'im nowhahs. He runs lak a pig'n fly, goin' home. 'N' he's had de bes' o' kyar! Fo't-night, come tuhmorrer, I's been out hyar, rain ur shine, 'n' I rub dis hoss twel he shine lak a new stove. I feed 'im de right numbah yeahs o' cawn; de right size bunch o' hay. Den I gits on 'im 'n' rides 'im roun' dis track twel he drips lather lak soap-suds. A man frum town stood right dar whah you is dis minute de udder day, 'n' he tol' me dat he couldn't see 'im w'en he passed—he wuz dat fas'. Den I rub 'im dry 'n' put on de blanket, 'n' mek he bed, 'n' lock de do' 'n' we bofe go 'sleep. 'N' dat w'at I gwi' do twel de day come w'en he win de race! 'N' he gwi' *win*, simply 'kase he can't lose!"

He stopped for breath, and the knotty hand which

rested on the colt's neck trembled. His recital had moved him, for it was truly a matter of life and death to him.

John took out his watch.

"If you will pardon the suggestion, Miss Julia, I will say that we had better let Uncle Peter have The Prince go. It will be dark soon."

"Certainly. * * * Ride him around the track, Uncle Peter. Let us see what there is in him!"

"So please yo', young missus, hit bein' de bes' way, I'll staht 'im out roun' de track, 'n' let 'im lope easy-lak de fus' time roun'. Den, w'en he git soop'le up de fus' time roun', I gwi' *run 'im!* Yo' watch, young missus—I say I gwi' *run 'im!*"

His wrinkled face irradiated with a great joy, Uncle Peter gathered up the reins and clenched the slender body with his knees. Gracefully and slowly The Prince swung around the oval enclosure, revealing such marvelous freedom from exertion, such spontaneity of action, that the faces of the two spectators standing in the shadow of the grandstand expressed almost amazement. John shifted his position a little nearer to Julia—he wanted so much to take her hand—and they watched in silence. The small figure on The Prince's back was humped over after the approved attitude of a jockey, and was rising and falling with each long undulation as though part of the animal he rode. The twain by the fence kept silent. Back on the grandstand was a small group of men, also watching The Prince. Julia's heart swelled with pride as her own brave colt came down the stretch

towards them, gradually increasing his speed. He flashed past them with the lithe movements of one of the feline tribe, and as his nose was set to the next half mile he began to let himself out. His rider did not carry a whip. A slow slackening of the tightly-held reins was all that was necessary for quicker action. The Prince was born to run; to be held back was galling and unnatural. Rapidly and more rapidly his feet rose and fell, his movements as regular as the mechanism of a clock. Faster and faster he went, each prodigious leap increasing his momentum. When he swung into the home stretch the second time he was coming beautifully, and with a degree of swiftness which dumfounded both the girl and the man. Like an autumn leaf torn from a tree and whirled away on a cyclone, The Prince went by his group of friends.

"Splendid!" muttered John Glenning, intense pleasure showing on his face.

The girl turned to him with eyes which almost hurt.

"Can Marston's entries *possibly* beat him?" she implored, impetuously raising her hand to his arm, but refraining from laying it there.

"Nothing that runs on four feet can beat him!" declared John, enthusiastically. "And I, like you, have seen horses run ever since I was big enough to know what a horse was. Ah! he is a noble animal—and how gracefully he runs! No wonder you love him, and I congratulate you on possessing him!"

Her lips parted for a quick reply, but she stopped and gazed down the track instead, where The Prince

and his rider had at last come to a halt. She had started to say what was in her heart, to tell him that he had saved the colt for her twice, and that she would never forget it. Then that awful barrier had thrust itself before her eyes; that strange barrier of his terrible silence. She could not be free with him; she could not be as she was in the first days when they had met. Then she could say all she wished to say, but that was before she had awakened; before new thoughts and feelings and vague, unguessed desires had blossomed in her soul, at times almost drugging her with their subtle perfume. It was so different now. The world had changed. She had burst the chrysalis of girlhood, and her woman's nature was surging up in her, dominant, primordial, searching, calling, demanding its own! It gave her pain. She knew that with that hidden past cleared away, and the love words on his lips, she would have come to his arms with a sigh of content, and found rest, and peace, and joy. How he had proven himself! He was a man; gentle, strong, modest, brave. He was the incarnated hero of her girl dreams, standing this moment by her side—and yet how far away he was! Why would he not come closer! Surely he knew she would forgive and offer him the sweet haven of her arms, the solace of her lips and the caresses of her hands! Surely he loved her, for he was not deceitful, and that night, that awful, blissful night he had taken her to him and shielded her and led her home, and had plead with her for some tenderness. She could not give it then, though her heart was aching with love.

She could not give it now, unless he would unseal his lips, and lay bare the hidden years. It was the test, and she knew it. She acknowledged it with inward fear, and her soul quaked. She could do nothing but wait. Hers was the bitter part; the hard portion. To wait—wait—and daily place a restraining hand upon her love; to crush it down into submission hour after hour as it rose up and demanded its own. How long? How long? Already it seemed ages, and his presence had come to bring suffering.

Twilight was stealing over the earth. A gentle breeze came up from the south, laden with the scents of late summer. Peter was bringing The Prince back for an opinion of the colt's performance.

"You have done well with him, Peter," said Julia. "I shall tell father how nicely you ride him, and of his remarkable speed. He will be pleased. Good-bye. Take good care of him."

Glenning felt that he should add a word, but somehow it wouldn't come. Julia's voice had sounded unfamiliar to his ears. He had been keenly conscious of the swift change in her after the horse had passed. He had seen her start to speak, then close her lips, and he had wondered what the unuttered words could have been. Then he grew troubled as he stood silently by her side, watching her averted face. A shadow had fallen upon it, blotting out the bright expression of joy. He saw it change as a sun-kissed landscape might when a cloud veils the sun. Her sweet mouth had relaxed into a pathetic little droop; the rich undercolour had receded from her cheeks;

her eyes had shaped themselves to a look of weary sadness. Even her rounded, pliant figure seemed to lose part of its grace, and to sag of its own weight. He saw the breeze lifting the little curls upon her neck and ruffling the waving hair behind her ears. Then suddenly that which had been slumbering in him woke. It woke with a thrust like a keen knife-blade, sending a sharp quiver of pain throughout his body. Up, up it fought its way, ruthlessly tearing a path for its progress, and a voice spoke in his soul. It was his conscience which he had numbed, and smothered, and choked, free at last, and with a merciless goad in its hand. He saw how wrong he had been. He saw that, physically brave as he knew himself to be, morally he had been a coward! He had let her suffer—her, whom he told himself he loved! He had weakly remained negative, drifting with the days, when a positive course was the only one consistent with honour. He had shielded his own feelings, and sacrificed hers. He had dwelt in guilty security, and had stretched her, sinless, upon the altar! How sordid, and cruel, and selfish he had been! How he would have condemned this policy in anyone else!

Slowly they walked homeward through the magic afterglow. The light faded, and grew dimmer and dimmer, and the stars came out. Neither said a word. From the wooded upland the country about looked phantom-like, unreal. Far off a dog barked. Nearer at hand, in the branches of one of the oak trees about them, a screech-owl stirred, and babbled its harsh call. Away in the hollow where the race track lay a

light gleamed at the stables. The twigs cracked under their feet, and the dry leaves rustled as they passed among them. It grew darker. Julia caught the toe of her boot on something, and lurched forward. John grasped her by the arm, and quickly righted her. How good it was to feel his strong fingers drawing her away from harm! Then he took her hand without speaking, and thus they went on.

Later they stood at the portico steps.

"I have been a coward!" he said, abruptly, "and there is nothing I have shunned more all my life. I have been unfair to you, and if it is not too late I want to set myself right. Perhaps it is weakness to tell you that I have tried—but I have. The strength is mine now, and it will not desert me. Will you see me tomorrow night, and hear my story?"

The "yes" which came from her lips was faint indeed, but he heard, and pressed her hand in farewell.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Early the next morning a telegram came for Julia. From its condensed message she learned that her room-mate at college, who was likewise a dear and intimate friend, had been taken seriously ill, and wanted her to come on the first train. Major Dudley was present when she received the summons, and she immediately asked his advice. It was that she should depart on the noon train for the East, and remain as long as circumstances required. He was feeling prime, and Aunt Frances and Peter should look after his comfort.

Transfixed upon the horns of this new dilemma, Julia rushed upstairs and began mechanically to get her things together for a hurried departure. She knew that she would go, although she told herself repeatedly that she could not. She must be at home that evening, for her future happiness depended upon the issue of that night. Yet Bess was sick—desperately ill—and had wired her to hasten. Yes, she would go to her friend in distress, and send a note by Peter to Doctor Glenning, advising him of this unforeseen emergency. Perhaps it was just as well, she told herself at length, to prolong indefinitely the hour when he should tell her all. This, indeed, would be a supreme and unerring test.

So it came to pass that the train for the East bore

Miss Julia Dudley away from Macon that day at noon, and that Uncle Peter, for the second time, bore to Doctor Glenning a delicately tinted, square envelope. John groaned when he read the note, and let his hands drop despairingly. Of course it could not be helped. He realized that she was right in going, and he loved her the more for it, but the missive gave no date upon which the writer might return. There was nothing for him to do but live the days through as best he could until he should see her again, and keep himself strong. The waiting would be hard, but he could do it. All hesitation, all temporizing, had vanished. He would be ready for his part on the first evening after she came home.

Filled with a peculiar elation, a joyful exultation, he went about his daily work with a song in his heart. He was looking far better than he did when he first came to Macon. His step was firmer, his eyes less sombre, his face not so haggard. So ten days passed, and fair week came, and the place began to fill up with visitors from neighbouring towns. Fair week in Kentucky naturally represents a good time. In this State, if in none other, the horse is king, and all homage and honour are given him on the days of the races. And fair week, like Christmas, comes only once a year, and is looked forward to with equally as much zest and impatience. On this important occasion the business houses, banks, and offices in general close their doors at noon, and do not open them again until the last heat of the last race is over. The three or four days during which the festivities occur are

one big holiday for young and old, and business cares and business thoughts are thrown to the wind. The fair in Macon this year began the second week in July, and continued four days, commencing with Wednesday. It promised to be the largest and best attended meeting of the kind ever held. There were entries for the various races from all all over the State, and some rare sport was promised when the blooded champions met to decide the victor. The purses were generous, the half mile track was conceded to be the best in the circuit, and spirits rose high in anticipation. There was to be a brass band from Louisville, an experienced starter from Lexington, and the judges, for the most part, were horsemen selected from towns close at hand.

John grew more and more restless as the days passed and Julia did not come. He had one letter from her, but she gave no hint as to when he might expect her home. He wrote at once and urged her to come as soon as she could, and, receiving no reply to this, fell to calling on the Major, hoping thus to hear something definite. She sent her father a message every day, but it was always about the sick friend, who had taken a slight turn for the better, but would not consent for Julia to leave her.

It was the night before the day upon which the fair began, about eleven o'clock, when Glenning, sitting in his office with a worried face, received a call from the home of a wealthy merchant. He arose at once, and went to the house. It was a deep chest cold contracted by one of the members of the family which

he had to treat, but it was close onto midnight when he came into the front hall for his hat. The servant who was waiting to let him out stepped forward and said that there was an old friend in the parlor who would like to speak to him. Slightly annoyed at this further demand upon his time, John opened the door indicated, and entered the room.

A shiver as of the pangs of death enveloped him on the instant. He stood rigidly erect, his face growing whiter and whiter until the pallor which rested upon it was ghastly. The room was a sumptuous apartment; a bower of luxury. The furnishings were rich, but chaste, and blended harmoniously, creating an effect which soothed. A lamp burned on a table in the center of the room; a beautiful thing, glowing like some rare, exotic flower. The thick, ruby-tinted shade smothered the flame, and diffused it rosily. There was the odour of perfume in the air; not grossly rank, and offensive, but subtly elusive; a delicate hint of some rare and sense-numbing attar. She stood a little to one side of the table. She was rather low, but superbly shaped. Her hands were behind her, with fingers loosely laced. The lamp-glow encompassed her as in a subdued flame. It fell upon her burnished hair—dull gold and copper blent, and sank trembling into the depths of her eyes. Each feature was perfect, or so nearly perfect that the chastening light made it appear such. She was smiling.

Thus they faced each other again.

There was stark silence in the room. The man

could not speak, and the woman was not yet ready to. He stood, scarcely breathing, arms at his sides, motionless. One straight lock of hair had fallen, and drew a sharp black line across his forehead. He was looking at her, steadily, desperately. His face was a mask of marble, but the woman knew too well that the volcano was there beneath all that icy calm; surging, seething, leaping and wrestling for a vent.

"Aren't you glad to see me?"

The voice was low and pleading, and full of melody. It smote upon the man's sensibilities with the force and effect of an electric current. His muscles became convulsed; his hands turned into clenched fists; his jaws knotted.

"No!" he said, at last, in a hollow monosyllable.

"Yes, you are! Tell the truth. * * * How are you, John?"

She was coming towards him, still smiling, one half bare arm outheld, the embodiment and the perfect type of female loveliness. He avoided her, and moved to another part of the room. It was all back again, intensified an hundred fold. He knew it was of the devil; he knew that the one great trial of his life was upon him. He did not love her in the least—he swore in his soul that moment that he bore no particle of affection for her. It was something else—something unearthly and horrible, which sought to draw him on. The other nights of dalliance which he had known returned, limned upon his conscience in lines of burning fire. And he had thought himself safe! He moved back a pace, where he could not see the angel-faced

devils in her eyes. Look at her he must. She saw his fear, and laughed low in her full, white throat.

"Won't you shake hands with me, and tell me that you are glad to see me?"

There was no resentment in her voice or attitude that he had shunned her. She stood easily, the train to her dress sweeping over the soft carpet to one side as she had turned. The laces on her breast were creamy and feathery, and her girdle was a zone of gold.

Again he waited till his voice was steady, and again he answered, "No!"

"Won't you but touch my hand if I ask you to?—for the sake of Jericho!"

Her supplicating words brought madness, but the man withstood. He knew, through all the blinding wrack of emotions which tossed in his brain, that in distance alone was safety. Should he feel but her finger tips, he was damned. With that six or eight feet of floor space between them he was master of himself. For the third time he answered "No!"

She had been unprepared for this reserve, this fearful coldness. The last time they were together—the last time!—and he had left without a word of farewell to her, without telling her that he was going away. But she knew why he had gone. She was older than he, and had seen more of life. But the element of mercy in her soul was wofully deficient in magnitude. She made no further attempt at once after his third refusal, but stood with head slightly bent, and eyes downcast.

"You were not very just to me."

Her words came in silken soft purrs from her warm lips—and Glenning prayed!

"You treated me badly to go, with never a word, never a written message. I should not have done the same with you * * * John! I have missed you sorely, but my pride has held me back from trying to communicate with you in any way. I have come for the first two days of the fair; I cannot stay longer. The people in this house are distant relatives. I did not know that I would see you, except, possibly, upon the street, and then I knew that you would not recognize me. I was present when they sent a message for you tonight, and I planned this meeting. I wanted to see you again, for a little while. I think you might sit down and talk with me for a moment. It can't be for long, for the hour is late, you know."

The quality of her voice was as of one who had been mistreated. There were short breaks in it; suppressions of emotion, and her head had bent towards the light, while the burnished disc of her coiled hair was as a spider's woven mesh.

"I came away because it was better for us both that I should come, and you know a farewell was out of the question. I do not see that I have used you badly. You know to what we were drifting. Why bandy words? You know that had I stayed in Jericho my soul would have been lost today, and I would have been an outcast, or dead! It is better so. It is best that we never meet again if we can help it."

He spoke tensely and rapidly and moved towards

the door as he concluded. But she was nearer it. The game was not played out. She silently glided in front of him and put her back against the door, stretching her arms out to form a barricade, and again she laughed—a sound which made the man recoil and nervously draw his hand across his forehead and eyes.

He had heard it before! It awoke old memories which he had believed dead, but the tomb of the heart will open again to a remembered word, laugh, expression, or perfume. And the attar! It was hers. He had never smelled anything like it. It was Oriental in its mysterious sweetness and effect. Barely discernible to the nostrils, it crept to the brain and wrought shadow-pictures upon the tapestry of the mind which it were better for mortal eyes not to behold. He was feeling the force of this strange perfume, which, coupled with her fascinating, if baneful personality, was beginning to beset him mercilessly. She knew her power, so well! But he was fortified with a hidden strength of which she did not know—brown eyes of trust, and a face as sweet and innocent as a flower. She barred his way. He could not pass until she gave him leave. He might have swept her aside with two fingers, but he was afraid to try. He knew what it was to be near her.

"Let me pass!" he exclaimed, resting the knuckle of his forefinger upon the corner of the table.

"You look very handsome tonight!" she told him, ignoring his demand. "Can you not find a like compliment in your heart for me?"

He did not reply, but his face was flushed and his breath was coming faster.

"You seem to have aged considerably," she resumed, "although it has been only a few weeks since you went away. But it has helped you. * * * I'm going to give you a last chance now. Won't you come and speak to me as you used to do? If you won't, I am coming to you!"

Her arms fell to her sides.

The man knew she meant it, and a rage which was his salvation began to mount slowly within him.

"If I do as you ask, will you stand aside, and allow me to go?"

"Yes, if you will want to go—then!"

He came straight towards her, his whole nature set and hard as adamant. Her head was bent as he approached. Only when he stopped within arm's length and held out his hand did she flash the wonder of her topaz eyes full into his, and giving him her hand, bent towards him in a last mighty effort to conquer. He felt the blood rush to his brain so that her face was blurred before him; he was conscious of white arms gliding above his shoulders, then with a low, strangled curse of anger he had pushed her from him, and was in the hall. Another moment the outer door closed behind him, and he was creeping through the deserted streets, shivering as with palsy, an inarticulate blending of prayer, blasphemy, and an absent woman's name upon his lips.

## CHAPTER XVII.

Glenning did not attend the fair the first two days. He had good and sufficient reasons for finding his practice so urgent that he could not leave it, but the afternoon of the third day he drove out. The sights and sounds which greeted him as he passed through the gates were all familiar. To one side some half grown boys were throwing at rag babies. Further on was the merry-go-round, piping its crazy tune, and carrying its precious freight of happy children. Yonder was the booth where beer was dispensed, and it had a liberal patronage, for the day was hot. Tents were scattered here and there, with gaudy, distorted pictures, representing something impossible in nature or art, reared before them to tempt the unsophisticated. There, too, was the fakir, crying his swindling schemes in a strident voice. Nestled to the track, and crowded with restless humanity, was the grandstand. At one end of this was the betting shed. John secured his horse, and went around to the track stables. The races that afternoon had small interest for him. His thoughts were of The Prince, and his chances on the morrow. He found the door to the colt's stall securely locked on the inside, and a stable hand laughingly told him that no one was allowed to enter. John rapped on the door and called Peter.

The old fellow recognized his voice and let him in, locking the door behind him. The stall was well lighted and John could see the colt plainly. He appeared in the best condition, and his bay coat was glistening from the constant rubbing his attendant gave him.

"Does any one ever come in here but you, Uncle Peter?"

"No, *suh!* Dey ain' nobody stuck he haid in heah 'cep' me!"

"That's right. No one else has any business in here. There's lots of trickery about horse-racing, Uncle Peter, so don't let a soul get within arm's length of The Prince!"

"Yo' neen' pester yo' haid 'bout dat, suh!"

"Miss Dudley has not yet returned, but the Major will be here tomorrow afternoon, and so will I. You ride The Prince, Uncle Peter?"

A pair of indignant white eyeballs rolled towards the questioner.

"Yo' 'low I gwi' let any udder nigguh git straddle dis hoss! Yes, suh, I ride 'im, 'n' I ride 'im at de head ob de whole bunch!"

"He is looking splendid," John replied, and then he inspected the box stall carefully, seeing that there were no holes in which a horse might catch his foot and go lame. Then, with a few parting injunctions to Peter, he left the grounds. He remembered that the afternoon train from the East arrived at half past three, and there might be a letter. Fifteen minutes later he was turning in the driveway in front of

the Dudley mansion. There were people on the portico, and at first glance he saw that one was Julia, still in her traveling dress. And there was the Major —but the third was an old man he had never seen before. Probably some resident of Macon, who, learning of the Major's recent indisposition, had come out for a friendly chat.

Glenning hitched his horse to a post at one side and turned eagerly to the house. Julia met him at the steps with eyes swimming in tears, and a face suffused with happiness.

"There's been some awful mistake!" she whispered, squeezing his hand unconsciously. "Uncle Arthur is not dead at all; he is here with us!"

It would be useless to attempt a description of the many feelings which assailed the young man when he heard this news. But his surprise and confusion were covered by the Major, who advanced joyfully on the instant, and took his hand.

"My brother—Doctor Glenning! Lost for over half a lifetime and home again by the grace o' God in time to see a Dudley hoss walk away from the pick o' Marston's stables! Sit down, all o' you! Bless me, such a day! Daughter and brother on the same train, and neither knew each other till they met here on this portico! * * * Arthur, my boy, this is better than a julep with the thuhmometuh at ninety-nine in the shade—'pon my soul! And all this mess about you bein' dead and the money comin' in the nick o' time to keep us out o' the po'-house—"

"Father!"

"Sit down, all o' you! I'm a bit excited, I fear! * * * Peter! *Peter!*"

"You'll have to call louder than that, Major. Peter's in a stall at the race track stables this minute, mothering The Prince."

While the Major was speaking John had been standing by Julia's side, looking at the returned wanderer. He saw a man much like Major Dudley in height and build, with long white hair and a silvery beard which swept his chest. His face was tanned, his eyes keen, and his voice pleasant, though a trifle loud.

"So he is, doctor—and tomorrow's the day! There's so much to tell and so much to listen to. * * * Arthur, we'll spend the remainder of our days talking and listening. * * * But the juleps! Here, Julia, you're even better than Peter at this decoction. Make us three, child. I know your uncle's tired. Take a chair, doctor—"

But Glenning was already in the hall following swiftly in the train of the young lady commissioned to mix the drinks. He overtook her at the door between the library and dining-room. She heard him in pursuit, and turned there to smile at him.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad you've come!" he exclaimed, taking her two hands and looking down into her eyes. "You have been away ages!"

"So long?" she laughed archly; "did you miss me?"

She wrested herself free and ran to the old sideboard, where the decanters and sugar sat. He was by her side on the instant.

"Can it not be tonight?" he pleaded. "Will—your uncle's coming interfere?"

She turned a sober face towards him.

"It would not be right for me to absent myself from him the first evening after his arrival. You understand, don't you?"

"Certainly I do. I knew it was useless and silly for me to ask—but I want so much to have you to myself for one hour!"

"You shall—tomorrow night! * * * What can it mean, Doctor Glenning?—that story of his death, and the money?"

"Somebody has made a mistake," he answered, and his face was very solemn.

"Evidently they have, but that doesn't cast any light on the mystery."

"It will be cleared up in time—let me carry that tray for you. It's silver, and heavy as lead."

She consented, and they repaired to the porch, where the juleps were quaffed eagerly. Then John made his excuses, feeling somewhat out of place in the flush of this reunion, but first securing Julia's promise to accompany him to the races the following afternoon.

* * * * * * *

That day was one which the people of Macon and the country round about never forgot. A light rain fell in the forenoon, sufficient to do away with the dust without making mud. In consequence the track was perfect, the atmosphere tempered, and in the afternoon not a cloud showed in the sky. The Dud-

leys went early and found seats just in front of the wire, which was the most desirable location. The news of Arthur Dudley's return had spread quickly, and people thronged about the two old men, for though he had always lived an isolated existence, Major Dudley enjoyed the respect and esteem of every one. The big race in which The Prince was expected to win his laurels was the last on the program, so there was plenty of time for receiving friends, and listening to the opinions of well-wishers. These were legion, for Marston had not a backer in all that vast throng. He was a pariah, by choice. He did not like people, and he did not want them to like him. He was on hand this afternoon. John saw his thick-set figure often in the crowd at the betting shed during the first races. He bet on his own horses, some of which were in every race, and he nearly always won, for his thoroughbreds belonged to a strain which was hard to beat.

A little after four the bell in the judges' stand clanged for the last race. John turned to Julia, who sat by his side.

"That summons The Prince!" he remarked, smiling.

He had never seen her more beautiful. Her cheeks were flushed from excitement, and her eyes were starry. She sighed, and looked at him anxiously.

"Be of good courage!" he said. "They cannot beat him!"

The horses were beginning to appear, and a brave showing they made; a sight to make any Kentuckian's

heart swell with enthusiasm. Devil Marston's two racers came up first, and Glenning saw that they were built in becoming manner. Then as the bay colt walked proudly down the stretch with Uncle Peter on his back, a thunderous wave of acclaim rent the air. John turned once more to Julia, and he saw that her eyes were moist. The weighing of the jockeys and the drawing for place went forward speedily. There were five entries, and Peter came in the middle, the third from the pole. Then the jockeys were in the saddle again, and had started up the stretch to score. Again the eyes of the man went to the girl beside him. Her gloved hands were over her face, and he could see that she was making a mighty effort for control. He heard the piercing voice of the starter ordering some one to hold back.

"Look!" he exclaimed; "don't miss the getaway!"

Her hands dropped and her face came up bravely. She was pale now.

Leaning forward, John saw the line of horses coming nicely and well, and Peter trying with all his puny strength to hold The Prince in his place. His efforts were only partly successful, for the colt had come into his own at last, but as the group dashed under the wire that thrilling word "Go!" was hurled at them. There was a rustle and stir from end to end of the grandstand, as the immense crowd arose to its feet, the man and the girl with the rest. Their eyes were set on those flying forms skimming over the earth like birds. To the first quarter there was scarcely any change, for there was no mongrel blood

racing in Kentucky on that great day. Neck and neck the brave brutes ran; panting side to panting side. So they whirled into the home stretch for the first time. Almost in front of his mistress the noble colt sprang out at the half, and took the pole! It was beyond belief! It was marvelous—unequalled in the annals of the turf! For it was not done in a quarter of a mile; it was done at once, in half a dozen leaps. Julia's heart sang with joy, and a choking feeling of elation hurt her throat. A smile of wonderment crept to her lips and stayed there, while The Prince led the next half mile and came under the wire two lengths ahead of Daystar, his closest antagonist.

The wooden structure upon which they stood shook, so fierce and long was the applause, and hands were thrust at Major Dudley and Julia so fast that they could not take them all, while a confused chorus of congratulations was poured upon them. But this was only the beginning. There might be many more heats. John went on the track to have a closer look at The Prince. The colt was breathing deeply and regularly; not a hair was turned from sweat and he showed no signs of distress. Some of the others were full of lather and were blowing heavily. The pace had been fast. Presently all withdrew to rest, and be rubbed down. Uncle Peter was exalted to the seventh heaven of delight as he rode away, prouder than Solomon in his palmiest days.

The next heat, however, was a shock, a surprise and a revelation. Imperial Don, Devil Marston's other entry, pushed his nose under the wire about six

inches ahead of the colt's. People were dumfounded, for the horse had run fourth in the first heat, and not one had supposed him to be a possible winner.

Julia retained her self-possession, and spoke with a firm voice.

"Please go and ask Uncle Peter the reason."

John obediently made his way to The Prince's side.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

Peter kicked his feet free of the stirrups, and slid to the ground. He was trembling all over, and his face had assumed a grayish hue.

"I'll tell yo' suh, 'n' yo' tell Marse Dudley 'n' de young Missus jes' whut I tell yo', foh dat am de fac'! Dis ol' nigguh ain' lib dese long yeahs foh nuffin. Now I gwi' tell yo' how 'twuz, 'n' yo' wanter pay 'tention. Dat fus' time dis Don-hoss wahn't nowhahs, 'n' t'other'n o' Deb'l Marston's come a measly secon'. Dis time de Don-hoss he win by a gnat's heel. Yo' know why? Jis' 'kase dey hil' 'im up de fus' time, a-savin' 'im foh de secon'. Now I wants yo' to look at dis heah hoss!" He placed a trembling hand upon The Prince's arching neck. "Am he blowed? Am he tahed? Am he standin' on t'ree feet? Am he haid down 'tween he laigs? Now look at de res', 'n' please yo'. Yondah's dat Don-hoss, whut t'inks he's done so much, scearcely able to git he breff; ready to drap! Yondah's dat Daystah, whut didn't do nuffin 'tall, 'n' he's dat wet wid sweat 'n' weak dat he c'n hahdly stan' on fo' feet, let 'lone t'ree. Now, suh, yo' pay 'tention to me. Dem hosses hab done dey do. Dey's tahed to deff, bofe ob 'em. Dey's took tuhn 'bout runnin'

dis heah thuhuhbred, 'n' one of 'em manage to creep 'head o' 'im, but dey's done. Dey'll try de same t'ing, time 'bout, dis nex' race, but 'twon't do. Dis hoss am jus' de same as if he'd nebber run a step. We's gwi' win, 'n' yo' c'n jis' res' on de wud o' dis ol' nigguh!"

Uncle Peter's explanation of the condition of affairs was, in truth, feasible, and it was equally true that Marston's horses were feeling keenly the terrible strain they had just undergone. Of their pluck, mettle and speed there could be no doubt, but they did not have the bottom of the bay colt, whose sires were famed for their endurance. John took the old man by the hand.

"Peter Dudley, don't let a Marston win over you today! I hope and believe you are right in all you've told me. I shall tell it over to Miss Dudley for her encouragement. You know what's in this piece of horse-flesh—*then get it out.* And listen, Uncle Peter! I've known horses intimately all my life. Let me suggest something to you. Trail the leading horse for the first half mile, then go to the front and stay there!"

A moment later Glenning was back with Julia, telling her and the Major of Peter's explanation of the last heat. Julia was hopeful, but her father was in doubt. Glenning had his fears, too, but he kept them to himself.

When the third heat was called it was found that two of the horses had been withdrawn, their owners seeing that victory was hopeless. This left The

Prince, and Devil Marston's Daystar and Imperial Don. Excitement was intense as the horses appeared for the final bout. An experienced eye could have seen that two of them were a little fagged, but the third was apparently as fresh and strong as he was the moment he left his stall for the first heat.

As the horses scored for a start Imperial Don had the pole, The Prince was second, with Daystar on the outside. They came down fast, for their blood was up, and there was to be no dallying. They got off easily, and everyone in that vast assemblage drew a long breath, then became silent. Imperial Don held his place gallantly, but The Prince's hot breath spouted upon his flank at every leap. The other horse was half a length behind. Thus they went, scarcely shifting their relative positions the first time around. Down the stretch and past the grandstand like winged things they flew, and then Imperial Don began to weaken. Again and again his rider applied the whip, but it was no use. The pace was simply killing, and the horse had done his best. At the quarter post The Prince took the pole, and Daystar, who had been held in reserve, came after him. He came like the wind, too—a long, white, phantom shape which seemed possessed of the devil. Before another quarter was run he was neck and neck with the bay colt, but there he stuck. It was a race good to behold. Thumping the springy earth in measured rhythm the fleet hoofs sped towards the goal. Into the home stretch they dashed. Three thousand pairs of eyes were watching them, and they seemed to know it. Like

a span in harness they plunged forward; like two engines of the rail. The Prince's slim breast was flecked with white. His neck was outstretched; his pointed ears lay flat on his head. His long mane beat in the contorted face of the monkey-like figure on his back. Every strong muscle in all his lithe body was strained to the last limit. The racing blood of countless winners was aflame, and with almost human intelligence he strove bravely for the mastery. Inch by inch he began to lead away! On towards the wire, his red-rimmed eyes bulging, his veined nostrils inflamed and quivering. The watching people saw, and instantly such a shout arose that it pierced the blue above. Another moment, and the noble animal shot past the goal a neck ahead, and the race was won!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Glenning's engagement was for eight o'clock the following evening, but he did not come till nine. Julia met him at the door, garbed in some dainty white stuff with lace about it, and wearing one rose in her hair, which waved from her forehead and was dressed low upon her neck.

"I must apologize for my tardiness," he said, gravely, as they walked into the library, which was softly lighted by a shaded lamp. "But as I was starting out I had an urgent call from a very poor family on the edge of town. A little child had fallen and broken its leg. It was a "charity call," but I hope you will pardon me. I could not let it suffer."

She felt a warm glow steal to her cheeks as she listened.

"You did right," she told him; "I was sure you had a good reason for being late."

He tried to speak of the race, but could not. She was also mute. The hour was too tense for conventionalities. A silence fell between them. Then suddenly the man gathered together all his moral strength and arose to his feet. She looked up quickly. He did not meet her eyes till he had walked to the mantel. Then, facing about, he leaned his elbow upon it, and returned her gaze.

"The time is ripe for an understanding between

us," he said, the awful strain under which he was labouring making his voice unnatural.

The girl could see that the old haunting gloom had come to his eyes. He was very white, and the crescent scar upon his forehead was outlined sharply, even in the dim light.

"It is a tale I had rather suffer death than tell, but I owe it to you before I can speak of other things which are in my heart."

She caught her breath at this, a quick, sibilant intaking, and because her hands had at that moment begun to tremble, she clasped them in her lap. Her large, sympathetic eyes were watching him closely.

"It is hard to begin," he resumed, "but I must do it alone; you cannot help me. The fault has been mine; let the shame and anguish be mine, too. Would you object if I told you of something else first?—it seems I am doomed to ask you to forgive much to-night!"

The pathos and sorrow in his words were almost more than she could bear, but she signed her permission dumbly, and waited.

"I think it all began that first night I saw you, in such distress. At any rate, my interest in you and your life was deep and genuine from that hour. I learned of your reverses—of your father's investment in the bank stock. Then the time came when Marston withheld the dividend, and I knew that you were without resources. Tom Dillard and I got together to see what we could do. We seemed pretty helpless, for Marston had everything his own way. Then

something happened to me which gave me an idea. I had an uncle, too, whom I had not seen for years. He died a short time ago, and part of his estate came to me. It was in the shape of a life insurance policy which he had taken out in my favour without ever letting me know. When the check from the company came to me, through my uncle's attorneys, the temptation was more than I could resist." He left the mantel and took one step towards her, then stood firm-footed as he resumed, desperately. "I did it. I did it all. I fabricated the story of your uncle's death, and the lawyer who sent Major Dudley that check from St. Louis was my good friend, to whom I wrote. He simply had to buy eastern exchange in place of the insurance company's check. It was simple enough. Forgive me. I place my trust in your feeling heart and seeing soul, for without a clear vision and complete understanding in an affair like this there can be no forgiveness. Soon I will tell you why I did it all."

Her head had gently sunk as he was speaking. She did not look up when he stopped. She did understand. She knew in a flash the reason for his course. But his revelation numbed her. She tingled from head to foot, and knew that should he command her eyes at this moment, swift surrender would follow. She waited for his voice, but it did not come.

"Go on!" she said, so low that he guessed, rather than heard the words.

He cast a glance around the room such as a drowning man might give when he felt the water closing

over him. She had not encouraged him by so much as a flash from her eyes, and heaven knew he needed courage, if ever man did. She was so white and still! So dainty and spotless! Her folded hands were waxen, and her forehead and the one check which he could see were like some statue's. Her breathing was so soft that it did not stir the bosom of her dress.

"I have given you a suggestion of what befell me in Jericho; since then you have heard distorted truths, or more probably vicious falsehoods, from another source. Now listen to what I say. It shall be the whole truth, with nothing added, and nothing taken from.

"Jericho was my home. I was born and reared there, and I came back there after I had graduated in medicine, and began to practice. A number of families had moved into the place during the years I was away, and among them were a Mr. and Mrs. Lamberton. He was a traveling man, and was at home very little. The trouble began when I was called in one day, the occasion being some slight difficulty in hearing. When I entered the room I was stricken still with amazement. I had never seen such a perfectly beautiful creature in all my life. She was young, not tall, and possessed of a wonderful wealth of colouring. The apartment was permeated by some essence entirely new to me, some rare and delightful perfume. She was reclining upon a couch, alone. She, of course, knew who I was, and she did not rise, but bade me come to her. I did as she asked, and took a vacant chair near her. At that day I knew

practically nothing of women, good or bad. My path had been a pretty rough one, and I had all I could do to go forward, although there was always the wish within me to know and associate with women, the natural complement of man. She stated her trouble briefly and clearly, in a most pleasing tone, and when I endeavoured to put some necessary questions I found to my dismay that my mind was muddled, and wouldn't work well. She smiled when she noticed my embarrassment. Whenever she turned her eyes upon me I felt dizzy. They were wine brown, and in them dwelt twin devils which beguiled. I had to touch her with my hands; to put back the hair from the affected ear. I was young—I was far more innocent than she—so help me God! I maintained my professional reserve with difficulty, and escaped from the room with my brain whizzing and my breast on fire. But the mischief was done. I could not forget her. I thought of her constantly during my waking hours. I did not stop to analyze the trend or character of my thoughts. At the time I do not think they had any definite shape. I simply could not withdraw my mind from that incident—that half hour in her presence. Nothing was said and nothing was done which a third person might not have heard and seen, but it was the awful *suggestion* back and beneath it all. Her attitude towards me, while not in the least familiar, was charged with an undefinable under current of what our future relations might become. I knew that I wished to see her again, but when the summons came on the second day from the one when I first called, I

hung back. I was afraid, who had never known fear before. I had no excuse for refusing to go. I was a servant of the public, and my presence was demanded. To trump up a subterfuge would be to acknowledge to myself that I was a coward. I went.

"She received me in the same room. This time she was snugly settled in a large, easy chair, and the unbound glory of her hair swept down over the rich-hued house dress which she wore. This visit was considerably longer than the first. You know that a family physician very often shares the most intimate confidences of his patients. This day she told me something of her life; enough to lead me to believe that she was unhappily married, and that she and her husband were not congenial. A ready resentment sprang up in me towards the man who could call this superb being his, and then neglect her. So the wiles of Delilah were employed again, though at the time I did not suspect her.

"Then there grew in my heart a strange passion for this woman. Love strove to mount, but it quickly discovered that that which it was called upon to meet was not love. Then the devils of the flesh tore at me and strove to drive me on—to utter and complete damnation! They had arisen insiduously, arming themselves as they advanced, and I soon found myself in the throes of a struggle as old as the world of creation, and more difficult to overcome than any foe which might appear from without. These devils haunted, harassed, goaded and tortured me. They drove me to her again and again, and again and again

I withstood them, holding fast to the sense of right within me, and striking back with all the moral strength of my nature. Then one day it was borne in upon me that I must yield—or retreat. No mere mortal could continue to face this most powerful of all earthly temptations, and keep himself unspotted. The last night we were together in Jericho she confessed her love for me, and offered me the bitter-sweet joy of her arms. Then a living God of mercy gave me the victory. Long ago I knew I did not love her. I knew that my feeling for her was born in hell—in the blackest and foulest corner thereof! She stood before me arrayed in voluptuous robes, the splendour of her perfect physical beauty dazzling me cruelly, and told me unabashed that she was mine, body and soul! I swear to you that I had never said one word of love to her. I looked upon her, and the devils surged to the attack with thong and goad. But I did not raise my hands from my sides. I fought them back and after a while found my voice and told her this could not be. With the spoken words my strength returned, and I left her thus, without farewell. The next night I came to Macon."

The deep, resonant tones ceased. The silence in the room was acute. Not even the sound of breathing was audible.

"I found you, whom God sent to be my salvation. The battle was not ended, though I had put the visible cause of it away. But memory will not die, and the eyes of the mind constantly behold the visions of yesterday. Now came the fight to stay away, and I

found it just as hard to win as the other. Had it not been for you, and the hope which I allowed to find root in my soul, I would surely have succumbed. But this hope grew, a pure, white flower, and it banished the noisome weeds of grosser birth. Then a day came when I knew the old influence and the wild longing no more, for love had found me and had reclaimed me from the morass into which I had strayed. * * * I need not tell you that I have gone through perditions of living fire! You, sweet girl, know nothing of this. But what I said to you upon the lawn not many days ago I say to you again tonight—*I have come through clean!* It is not a debauched body and a rotten soul I am bringing as my offering to you tonight. High heaven bear me witness that all I say is true! I do not claim any especial worthiness, but I do disclaim and declare false the libelous stories which Devil Marston brought from Jericho! You have heard the truth, and I am glad that at last you know."

An inflection almost of despair quivered through his last words. The girl before him was motionless, but now a rigour shook her from head to foot, then passed, and she was still looking down, apparently unmoved, and lifeless.

"There is yet another incident."

He spoke in a dead voice, without ring or timbre. He was hopeless, yet nerved to go to the last bitter dreg of confession.

"I saw her once while you were in the East with your sick friend—a few days before the fair. It was

quite accidental. I had a call from the Maddoxes one evening. She was there—had come as a visitor for the races—some sort of relative. As I was leaving the house a servant told me a friend wished to see me in the parlour. I did not remain long. The old charm was there, and I should have been lost without the protection of your spirit, which armed me as I had never been armed before. When I started to leave the room she attempted to detain me, but I thrust her aside, and went out. That is the whole story, and horrible enough it seems to me! I dare not think what it must seem to you—you sweet, sheltered flower! * * * Now that this miserable tale is told, I come tonight and offer you my love. It is a most tender feeling I harbour for you, Julia; a possessive, protective, jealous love, which would forever hold you safe and blameless; which would forever cradle you in the house of my heart, deep-walled and warm. Nothing that would hurt, or harm, or blight, or frighten, or pain you should reach you in that sheltered fold within my breast. Won't you say that you will come—you poor, little storm-beaten lamb, and give me the deep, dear joy of loving you and ministering unto you always?"

He did not approach her. He had no right. His confession stood like a wall between them until she should speak. Her face was burning now. He could see her flushed cheeks and tinted temples. That she still refrained from meeting his eyes kindled a faint flame of hope.

"This is a strange story for a girl to hear," she

said, speaking each word low, but distinctly. "I forgive you for the deception about the money. Uncle Arthur has returned wealthy, and we can refund that to you soon. "But—" she raised her head and looked at him—"can I forgive the rest?"

"Can you forgive it?" he repeated, pillowing his elbow on his palm, and resting his chin on his finger and thumb. "Can you forgive it? Your heart must answer. If you love me—if you love me—"

She could not endure the appeal in his eyes, and her own dropped, with a sigh.

The moments raced past.

"Julia, have you no word for me?"

Silence unbroken. He waited for a while longer, then moved slowly towards the door. She heard his footsteps pass and recede, and it seemed that the hope of her life was going too. He reached the door leading into the hall.

"John!"

The low call was weighted with despair and love.

In a moment he was standing before her, with both her hands in his.

"You called me!" he whispered, reading the message in her swimming eyes. "You called me!"

"Back to happiness, John, if I can give it to you! You have borne so much, poor boy!"