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BLIEABETH W. BELLANY. ("EAMPA THORPE.") of "Four Oaks," "Little Joanng." EYa

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CHAPTER IV. DUTT BOUND. 3143 1 CAN T

old Gilbert was almost be traped into ejaculating aloud. When the young man had gore in, the of appointed detective arose and crept and the rail fence that surrounded the eed grown yard; but the windows of his house view lung with curtains. "Drat 'em!" he grumbled. "Ev'y yuth-

house has riled me wid de sight o' lies, en' dis one hides me fum seein' ther Mawse Nick. 'Spect hit's dat Mar-White crowd, playin' ovards, en' bet-high. Doan b'lieve he's gone ter ris. En' Mawse Nick-he means right, int de temptation is too strong. I gwan intly tell mawster ter tek de boy outen

Not finding another stump convenient Albert crouched down at the foot of a bina tree, and resting his back against he trunk, waited and watched, how long and did not know. But at last his vigi ras rewarded: the door opened, an ins stood forth in the moonlight. Te was talking to some one within, but mly his voice, not his words, could be

Old Gilbert's devotion to the "fambly" made cavesdropping a duty. Creeping in his knees in the shadow of the fence mear the gate as he dared, he crouch one of the angles formed by the rails, ad bent his best car, aided by his curved and, to catch what Nicholas was saying. and this was what he heard:

"It is too glorious a night to lose; let have one little stroll in the moon

"Hit's a gal!" old Gilbert was almost orter be sayin' dat same ter Miss

It was a girl. She came out into the comlight that flooded the porch, a tall, mder, dark haired girl, with a saintly be and a voice like a flute. She said mething the old negro could not hear, it he heard his young master's reply: Sof course the colonel will make a row tourse the colorada, I hide nothing you. But when they know all been to me—how you have re-ind me from my wild life, oh, dear

re he said old Gilbert did not he had heard enough. He drop he rose-up Nicholas and the girl ed down the street, arm in arm. "Gret King!" he gasped. "Is I come dis hyer way ter see mawster's son-

multicred, as he trudged along. "Maw multicred, as he trudged along. "Maw ter would a' said good evenin', dough is a po' ole no 'count nigger. En' s'pos in' mawster do settle Mawse Nick onte Sunrise plantation, is Mr. Job Furniva gwan boss de niggers? De mo'l argy-fies, 'pears ter me lak de troubles o' die

ilence, he walked away w

worl' is accumerlatin'. I gwan trave 'long back ter Thorne Hill, jes' ez quick ez I kin git my pass." He could not get his pass until Nicho-las had breakfasted, and then it was so long past the dawn that old Gilbert, in

the out negros garrunty; and as this

order to make a sufficiently early start, was obliged to delay yet another day. "Reckon it's time you were at home," said Nicholas. "The hounds will be into your hen nests, and the worms in your bacco patch, and the grass in your garden

"Yes, Mawse Nick; I been here five days a'ready," old Gilbert sighed, think ing of Dan Furnival's wandering sow and the hollow in the wood. "En' I'se had trouble in plenty; I'se los' my rum berilla. "Aha!" said Nicholas. "Then you may

take mine." "No, Mawse Nick, no suh!" said old Gilbert, putting up his hands beseeching-ly, while his face turned that ashen hue

peculiar to the negro. "I ain't gwan tek yo' rumberilla, nohow." "Dat I couldn' do," he said to himself as he turned away. "I'so 'bleedged te go home en' tell mawster-what I is foun' out. But I ain' gwan tote his rum berilla, en' tote tales too.'

He sat him down under the work shed chiding the lingering hours. "'Pear lak Jashuay been meddlin' wid dat sun," he grumbled.

But the sun went down at last, and when it rose again the old man was well on his way to Thorne Hill. It was dark when he alighted at his

cabin, which stood **spart** from the other negro quarters, and near the head of the lane that led from the back premises along the garden. The cabin, built o with a chimney of clay, occupied logs, one side of a small enclosure, surrounded by a wattled fence. Here old Gilbert had his garden, his tobacco patch and his poultry yard.

"Plum' glad I is ter git home!" he ejacu lated. "Befo' I goes up ter de gret house I gwan hunt me aigg outen my own hen-nesses; 'pears lak I ain' taste naire aigg ter my notion sence I been gone."

Now, while old Gilbert was absent a Sunrise plantation, several things had happened to increase the colonel's impatience at Nicholas' contentment in exile. In the first place, a sudden and violen storm had unroofed Mrs. Leonard Thorne's house, so that Miss Flora and her mamma had been forced to take refuge at Thorne Hill. This was very pleasing to the colonel; for though he did not like his brother's widow, he was very

fond of his brother's young daughter. Flora Thorne, besides being fair to see had the screne manners that he admired she danced with grace, she sang the simple songs he loved, she was very do mestic, and not in the least "learned."

It was the strongest desire of his heart that Nicholas should marry this pretty cousin, settle on the Ferndale place, three miles distant, and fulfill the dignified destiny of a gentleman planter. But since Miss Flora had taken up her abode at Thorne Hill, the colonel had made a discovery that caused him much uneasiness. That so pretty and charming a girl should have adorers was in the natural order of things, and the colonel did not object to the frequent visits of Miss Flora's ada mirers; but that Miss Flora should favor any one of them all more than another

Nicholas being absent-was more than

Nicholas' father could endure with equa-

nimity. Mr. Aleck Gage was the one

among Miss Flora's visitors whose com-

ane coionei called Tom Quash, and gave him orders to take the double buggy and two horses, and start for Sunrise plantation early the next morning, carry-ing a letter to Nicholas, and another to Job Furnival. The two days that intervened before

this messenger's return were hard to be endured in patience; it was more than could be borne that Tom Quash returned alone. "Mis Furnival, sub, is a-lyin' at de

pint o' death," Tom explained. "En' dat occumt Mr. Furnival he couldn't come jes' yit." "And Nicholas?" asked the colonel

impatiently. "Mawae Nicholas is wrotened a note,"

said Tom Quash, fumbling in the crown of his hat. "He sont his ree-spec's, en he can't come at sich short notice; is got some matters ter sorter straighten, but'll be along after a day or so." The colonel snatched his son's note and

read it eagerly. It was expressed in terms calculated to mollify an angry parent, but there was Alex Gage in the parlor turning over the music while Flora sang, and the colonel found it hard to be patient. Tom Quash did not tell how Nicholas

stamped and swore when he read his father's letter and declared that Sunrise plantation was good enough for him; Tom Quash kept all this to himself, and pondered it in his obtuse brain. When Miss Elvira learned that Nicho

las was coming home she locked herself within her room, took from a secret drawer the note she had received from Roxanna White and read it for the last time. Then she burned it, and having accomplished some extra pages of 'Bishop Ken," went down to tea, looking at least five years younger.

CHAPTER V. FRIENDS.

Three days later Nicholas arrived at Thorne Hill in his usual bright spirits, apparently, and apparently very happy to be at home. He brought the informa tion that Mrs. Furnival had died the night before, and that Job Furnival would report for work as soon after the funeral

as possible. The colonel was quite willing that Furnival should take his time; the main point was gained in having Nicholas at nome to turn Flora's music. But when Aleck Gage came an hour later, Nicholas was off with an ancient umbrella under his arm, to pay a visit to old man Gilbert. Gilbert was seated upon the sweet gum block that occupied one corner of his hearth, singing a vigorous hymn, while so worked at one of his round bottomed baskets. He felt in good heart: his pot of money was safe, and there had been no sign of the hungry sow about the

woods; his "Dominicker" had hatched every one of her fifteen eggs, and his tobacco was thriving; moreover, Mawse Nicholas was summoned home, out of harm's way, and he had not been obliged to betray the young man's secret, "Well tabbe sho," he commented, in a pause of his singing, "put off yo' lef' shoe when

the squeech owl hollers, en' you'll ward off dezaster." Something darkened the daylight, and he looked up, and behold! Nicholas was, standing in the doorway. Supreme de light in this sudden, unexpected vision blinded his eyes, at first, to the faded umbrella.



"De Lawa sen us heip outen de sank-tuiry," sighed old Gilbert. "Tse pow'ful 'sturbed in my min' bout dat boy. Chil-luns is wuss 'en money. You kin hide dat away, ur you kin tote it in yo' pock-et; but yo' chillans you is gotter tote in yo' heart, en' sometimes do is a heavy weicht a heavy weicht "

weight, a heavy weight." Nicholas did not return to the parlor until an hour or so later, when Aleck Gage was leaving-leaving under the colonel's auspices, one might say, for never since he possessed a house of his own had Col. Thorne been so gracious in speeding the parting guest. But if Col. Thorne flattered himself

that the young gentleman's visits must now become less frequent he was doomed to disappointment. Aleck Gage did not return the next day, indeed, nor yet the next, as the colonel noted with secret satisfaction; but after these two days of absence Miss Flora's persistent lover re appeared, and soon it was manifest that Nicholas' presence made not the slight-est difference to Aleck Gage. For Nicholas had ordered his horse and ridden forth with his cousin's lover upon the first opportunity that offered after his arrival, solely to have it understood that he himself was not in love with Flora.

The young men talked of indifferent things until they had passed out at the great gate that opened upon the road; then Aleck said, with a swelling heart:

"It was very clever"-he used this word in the southern acceptation-"very clever of you, Nick, to leave the field clear to me this evening. He was a little jeal-ous, naturally, of Nicholas, but he wished to do his rival justice. "Monstrous clever!" cried Nicholas:

and with a boyish love of teasing, he add-ed, "I am what may be called a fixture, you know."

Aleck Gage frowned slightly. "But that needn't keep you awake o' nights," Nicholas amended, the next moment, in a tone of sobriety so aged that Aleck looked at him inquiringly. "My cousin Flora is not for me," Nicho-

las said; "I shan't stand in your way." Aleck thought Nicholas tremendously magnanimous; he looked at him with an admiration and sympathy not to be expressed in words. To give up all hope of

Flora Thorne seemed to Flora's lover a mighty sacrifice. He made an effort to be magnanimous likewise. "Tell you what, old fellow!" he exclaimed, impulsively, "You stand just as good a chance as your humble servant, if-you mustn't mind my saying it-if you'd only turn a new leaf. Let us start fair and let him laugh who wins, eh. Nick?"

"My thanks to you; I've turned the leaf," said Nicholas, dryly; "and it makes no difference. Or, rather," he corrected, in an undersone, and looking far ever the fields toward Sunrise plantation, "it makes all the difference in the world. He rose in his stirrups and kissed his hand toward the distant prospect.

Aleck stared. "I-I don't understand you?" he stammered. "Well, this is no riddle, Aleck. Mind

you, I'm not in Flo's confidence; but you keep trying; don't you back out for my coming.' "You mean-there is-some one else?"

Nicholas laid his band on his heart. There is-some one else," he said. His voice was tremulous with emotion; his whole aspect changed. "I hope she is worthy of you, Nick, Aleck burst forth. He had a great ad-

miration for Nicholas, in spite of his faults. "Good heaven!" exclaimed Nicholas, impatiently. "She is a million times too good for me! But that won't prevent my clinging to her till death us do part. He uttered these last words reverently. taking off his hat and bowing his head. "He couldn't be worse gone if it were Flora herself," was the impression he made upon Flora's lover. "It's not mag-nanimity, after all." Then he asked, impulsively, and half in a fright:

gtri. Incy're in the catechism," she ad-ded, by way of recommendation, "or the baptism, I forget which." "Missy, Missy, I'm afraid you're a sad

picklef

"I'm goin' to be very good now, since I've got you home. I'll do just every-thing to please you. I'm all the sister you've got.

"Yes! you're all the sister I've got! Oh Missy, how I wish you were older!"

"H'm!" said Missy, not at all compli mented. "Then I'd be a young lady at the planner, like my cousin Flora, always afraid of apoiling my clothes. Bound you wouldn't get her to ride double, this er way."

"I shouldn't think of asking her," laughed Nicholas.

"No," Missy asserted, comfortably, "I'm nicer than her." She was bitterly jealous of Flora.

The family were at tea when the brother and elster came in, Missy clinging to

Nicholas' arm. "How you do spoil that child," said Mrs. Leonard Thorne. She disapproved of Missy's "ways" with Nicholas; in fact, disapproved of Missy altogether.

"No," said Missy, with a motherly air, "it's me what spails him."

The colonel frowned. "Flora," he said, "I wish you would undertake to smooth my little daughter."

"Is she a flat iron?" said Missy, pertly stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth Nicholas and Flora exchanged glances and frankly smiled.

"Winifred!" expost-dated Miss Elvira; but Missy had seen her brother smile and

she cared naught for her Aunt Elvira. In the privacy of her own room that night Mrs. Leonard Thorne expressed the opinion that Winifred Thorne was born to be a mortification to her family. "She makes herself a perfect nuisance to Nich-olas."

"Oh, ma!" Flora remonstrated; and, seeing that her mother was bent upon talking about Nicholas, she began to comb her beautiful, luxuriant hair over her eyes.

'Not but that it's very admirable in Nicholas to be so indulgent toward her. I always did justice to Nicholas' good qualities. He may have been a little wild, but what of that? All young men of spirit are restive under restraint. My brother-in-law, the colonel, demands perfection in his son and heir-as if he were anywhere near perfection himself."

"Oh, ma!" said Flora again. You know Uncle Jasper never was-like Nicholas. "No, he never was," repeated Mrs.

Thorne, with emphasis. "Catch Col. Thorne confessing his follies and short-comings, as Nicholas has to me. That is what I call honorable in the highest degree. It's what most young men wouldn't lo-under the circumstances. I always knew he would come out right in time And what a property he will have, Flora! Three fine plantations, besides the Ferndale place to be divided between him and that little monkey of a Missy. Then your Aunt Elvira will probably leave all she has to Nicholas; he always was her favorite. And Nick is so pleasant; he hasn't ost any of his bright spirits."

"I don't know about that, ma," said the more observant Flora, behind her brown tresses "My Cousin Nicholas hasn't such bright spirits as he'd like to have a body believe. They are too bright; and he is moody enough when he thinks nobody is noticing. And then"-

"And then?" repeated Mrs. Thorne, all attention.

"He is in another scrape, I fancy," said Flora, slowly. "There is certainly something weighing on his mind." "Or his heart?" suggested Mrs. Thorne. It afforded Miss Flora's mamma ex-

quisite enjoyment to watch the progress of affairs between Nicholas and her daughter. It was like a vivified novel. and upon no account would she have been willing to see this romance hurried to a precipitate conclusion with the music of marriage bells. It was quite the prope

wished he could speak, that they might come to an understanding; and yet she dreaded to have him speak, knowing what wrath and bitterness would follow upon her answer. Every member of the family, she was well aware, would take blas' part; everybody would blame her except Aleck Gage. If Nicholas would only be content to be a brother! And all that Nicholas desired was that

Flora should be to him as a sister. CHAPTER VIL CONFESSION.



"Your wifer" Flora gasped. The days went by; the moon that had lighted old Gilbert while he played the spy in Eden had waned and vanished, and the crescent that succeeded had expanded to the full orbed glory of the nights of June; the warm air was heavy with perfume and vocal with the mock

ing bird's rapturous song. These were nights no lover could afford to lose, and Aleck Gage did not fail to take advantage of them; time and again was he a visitor at Thorne Hill when the colonel little suspected his presence. Nicholas and Flora would stroll out after tea, and after tea would Aleck arrive and join them in some remote alley of the

extensive shrubbery. His appearance was the signal for Nicholas to retire and meditate in solitude, a solitude that Missy did not now intrude upon. For Missy had invented a new amusement for these nights of June. With Amity as audience, and the wide scuppernong arbor on the confines of the vegetable garden to serve as stage, she had given herself up to the fascination of private theatricals. The dusty volumes in the recesses of the dormer windows supplied her quick fancy with material, and now she was Puck now Ariel, sometimes the Queen of Faerie, or again the Ghost in "Hamlet, a favorite character that froze the blood in Amity's veins; and not infrequently she was her genuine self, raging against her handmaiden's stupidity. All this was in preparation for a long promised visit from Lottie and Bess Herry, with whose assistance Missy hoped to accom-

plish something very delightful in the way of histrionic art. No one inquired what the child was doing with herself during these moonlit hours; Glory-Ann, satisfied that her troublesome charge was somewhere with Amity, held her little court in the kitchen; the colonel and Miss Elvira and

Flora's mamma talked on the back piazza, content to leave the young people the freedom of the front premises. "Flora, my daughter, take your shawl," Mrs. Leonard always said, and it was

Nicholas' privilege to wrap it around his cousin's shoulder, after which he drew her pretty hand within his arm, and surely there was abundant opportunity for him to speak in the long walk half way around the grounds.

But Nicholas talked only of indifferent things in a half hearted fashion, and when they reached the gate where usually they met Aleck Gage just dismounting he would laugh and whisper, "See the conquering hero comes," and leave Flora blushing. It had seemed to Nicholas that the wisest thing he could do would be to take his cousin Flora into his confidence; but whenever the occasion offered his courage forsook him, his tongue refused its office. He had let slip his opportunity many times before he realized that de lays are dangerous; but when once he began to feel this it was not possible for him to hesitate longer. He was sure that he could count upon Flora's sympathy. at least, even if she could do nothing to aid him, and it seemed like an omen of good fortune that, at the very moment when he began to feel so impatient to tell his cousin all, Aleck Gage should make his visit so very much shorter than usual, the cause for which was that Aleck and Flora had indulged in the luxury of a quarrel.

oras, with an uncontrolation entropy - no of you." He took both her hands in his and looked in her face-and smiled "But with you to take my part, you who can understand how love comes unbid

"Yes, dear Nick," said Flore, softly, "I can understand. I will always be on your side, whatever my uncle may my." Flora was far from exulting thought that her cousin loved her hope-lessly, but she found it exquisitely inter-esting to feel herself thus beloved.

"I do not know how it is-I canno tell how it began," said Nicholas, with almost a sob in his voice, "but-I love one who is so dear and beautiful and good." He dropped Flora's hands and clasped his own with intensity of feel-"Love her! But she can never ng. please my father. There is my bitter trouble."

It seemed to Flora as if she heard these words in a dream; and yet she fully and instantly understood him as she never hitherto had understood him. Instinctively she recoiled from him; it was not in the nature of the case that she show not feel resentment at this unexpected discovery that, after all, Nicholas had never been in love with herself; that his sighs and his sadness were, after all, not

"I hope, Nicholas," said she, with a little air of virtuous superiority, "I do hope you have not fixed your affections

upon some one beneath you?" "No," said Nicholas, lifting his head proudly; "I have set my affections upon one infinitely above me-in all that is lovely and of good report," he added with a bitter laugh. "And I love he "And I love her with all the strength that Aleck Gage loves you, if that is any criterion," he continued, fast losing his self control.

'And, thank God, Dosia loves me." "Dosia-Furnival?" cried Flora, clasp ing her hands and drawing away from him by a sudden, almost violent move-ment. "Cousin Myrtilla's protege? And you expect us to countenance her? Oh, Nicholas! Nicholas! you cannot be in earnest? You must break away, and at

once, from all this." "I am in earnest," Nicholas answered. His face was pale; his voice shook; he was very angry. "And as to breaking away-Dosia is my wife, Flora; respect her.

"Your wife?" Flora gasped, and sank upon the bench. "Oh, my uncle! It will break his heart!"

"It ought not to break his heart," said Nicholas, coldly. "She has saved his

"How will you ever tell him? How will he ever be able to bear it?" Flora asked, bitterly. "Oh, Flora!" cried Nicholas, "it is

my study by night and day how to break it to him. I love my father in spite of all; but Dosia is my very life! I dread so his visiting his wrath upon her in any way. I could not bear to have her wounded-I-I-could hate-but oh! I do so wish to have my father and my Aunt Elvira-all of you, welcome her.

"They never will; we never can," said Flora, bursting into miserable tears of distress and fright. Nicholas sat down beside her, and put

his hand on hers. "But you, dear Flo-ra," he said beseechingly, "you who know what it is to be tenderly beloved"----Flora was touched. "What can I do,

Nicholas?" she faltered. "Oh, it is dread-

ful!" she sobbed. "How could you"----

you would try to make them understand

they might listen to you. She has been

the saving of me. I was going on in my

bad courses, reckless and defiant in my

lonely exile; I fell into bad company,

over there at Sunrise; and there was a

quarrel, in which I got a bad cut. My

father knows nothing of it; but I should

have died had it not been for the Furni-

vals-and Dosia, Ah, if you really

"Oh, Fiora!" Nicholas broke in, "if

Furnivala' Sholy, sholy, Mawse wan git tangled up wid dis po trash, I pray! Lawd! what I gawn

I ain' gwan say nothin' ter Mawse lok, ser go mek him rampin' mad; I'd sight yuther mawster'd git mad with sight yuther mawster'd git unawster den rile Mawso Nick. Hit's mawster lame, keepin de boy in dishyer lone-place. Wish I wuz home now. v's all my money-en' dat ole sow, ther! En' my Dominicker hen 'most dy to come offen her nes'-whey't rumberilla? Lemme study whey is Seffum? I so sot on Mawse Nick I dis-member whey I leffum." Sore disturbed, the old negro hastened

it to the stump where he had sat own; the umbrella was not there. He ed his steps to the store, but the erished badge of respectability was not be found for any search.

"Well, well," he sighed, "ill luck doan aver come single handed. Maybe hit's sign dat ole Furnival sow is rooted up r mobey. Dey is might'ly in de way, Furnivals, 'en de bes' what I kin do Thus communice with in prah." amuning with himself and carag a dejected head, old Gilbert came. wares, upon one of the citizens of

a, who was acting as a patrol. the said the man of the authority.

pocket for his pass. "I'se Kernel orne's Gilbert, sub, fum over ter Leon, me ter de Sunrise plantation. Mawse lick wrotened me permission ter come p ter de sto' en buy terbacker.'

The man held the pass up to the moonight, and while be read old Gilbert scan-

"Ain't you Mr. Job Furnival, suh?" he ed, with far more deference than he red the Furnivals entitled to; but r. Job Furnival's daughter was honred by Mawse Nicholas' attentions, and hat made a difference: it was the part et wisdom, apparently, to keep on the good side of Mr. Job Furnival, and get I the information possible. "I 'memers de favor of yo' pusson 'bout Talla e streets."

"Ya-as, that's my name," said Mr. Furnival, with a hesitating drawl. Old Gilbert grinned affably. "Is you

well, my wife's health war broke," id Furnival, "an' I got a job down this ray, an' I bought a house an' lot cheap." ter a pause he continued: "It was an lucky for Col. Thorne's son thet y wife tuk care on him when he got at stab o' Marcus White's knife. Marwar the one ter blame, so he bein kin we war boun' ter look after Nick horne, sorter. It war a close shave wixt him an' Kingdom Come, an' I a't adzackly got my furgiveness yit at I ain't told the colonel nothin' 'bout But Nick'lis, I reckin, is skeerder the colonel than ever he war of the ril, an' he wouldn' let no letter be ote, an' the doctor said doan fret him,

o-an' so"-"Yes, mawster," said old Gilbert. "It's larnt Nick Thorne one wholesome

m, I reckin." "Yee, mawster," said old Gilbert again; beart was very heavy. "An' I reckin, maybe, he'll walk a

er track, ef so be the colonel war inded ter settle him permanent onter Sunrise plantation. It's a good piece

"I dunno; I dunno nothin'," said old "Ef Nick'lis-war minded-ter mar-

- Furnival resumed hesitatingly. Old Gilbert waited respectfully for the sience to be finished, but Job Furniwas only attempting a suggestion to

ng vexed the colonel, and increa But how to recall his banished son

without sacrificing his own dignity-a point upon which he was superlatively sensitive-was still the problem that engaged the colonel's thoughts. He felt that Nicholas under sentence of banishment ought to plead to return home; he was sure that Sunrise plantation must have proved unendurable long ago; but Nicholas was giving proof of a more obstinate endurance than his father had supposed him capable of. "Confound him for being so much like me!" the colonel muttered, as he sat staring at the thorny popinac, where the accustomed mocking bird, rejoicing in the moonlight. poured its unstinted song. In the parlor Flora was singing to Aleck Gage something about moonlight and music, love

and flowers, and the colonel raged like the heathen. Old Gilbert's familiar greeting fell upor his ear with a soothing sound. Leaning forward in his chair, the colonel descried

a dark visage just above the level of the piazza floor. "Hello! So your back at last, you old runaway!" he said jocosely "And how is Nicholas?" "Mawse Nicholos is peart ez a cricket,

suh," Gilbert answered cheerfully, but added immediately, and with strong emphasis, "Hit's a mighty lonesome place, tubbe sho!" "Ha! Nicholas finds it lonesome!" the

colonel asked eagerly. "He ain't complained none," old Gil-bert sighed. "En' de crape is mighty promussin'," he supplemented, adroitly,

though well he knew that the crops owed none of their promise to Nicholas. Suddenly he changed the subject. Although he still had it in mind to tell all he knew, he found it very hard to make his report; he could not come at it through the medium of the crops, and he was fain to try another course. "Whoa' dis de tell me, mawster, down

ter de quarter, 'bout de storm done unroofed Miss Pauline's house?" "Yes," the colonel answered; "didn't

you have a blow at Sunrise plantation? "Tubbe sho, suh, what you mought call a high win', the day atter I got dere; but de ain' no damidge done. Miss Flora en her maw, Miss Pauline, de is all safe?"

"Oh, yes, only out of house and home; out of their own house and home, that is. They've a home here, of course, as long as they'll stay. I don't know how long it may be about rebuilding. The house is pretty badly shattered and Furnival is not to be found in Tallahassee. He has a job somewhere, it seems." "Mawse Job Furnival you is meanin',

mawster?" cried old Gilbert, excitedly. 'Bless yo' soul, mawster, he is over ter Eden; seed him myse'f; had speech wid

him. "What is he doing there?"

"I ain't 'zactly made out ez he is doin' anythin' in 'tickler, suh," old Gilbert answered, uneasily. "But I'm a-thinkin' it mought be a-savin' you a sight o' trouble, mawster, if Mawse Nick wuz here ter go back en' fo'th en' look atter rebuildin' Miss Pauline's house."

"Exactly!" exclaimed the colonel, with a feeling akin to gratitude. "I'll send forthwith for Furnival, and I'll have Nicholas at home. Go round to the kitchen and tell Dicey to give you a tip top supper. Reckon you're pretty tired? "Middlin', mawster; thankee, suh," old Gilbert responded, with a sigh of infinite relief.

"I didn't want ter go tell on Mawse Nick," he said to himself, on the way to the kitchen; "not ef hit wuz ter be holp. En' thankful I am de Lawd is pinted deway der git him fotch home 'dout me go tellin', praise be ter glory!"

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"You mean-there is-some one else?" "Why, howdye, Mawse Nick! Huh you do? Huh you do?" he exclaimed, grinning as he rose) and rubbing his hand on his osnaburg breeches, before he held it out

in hearty welcome. "I'se plum glad ter Nicholas shook hands, and sat down in the splint bottomed chair, in the corner opposite the sweet gum block. Then old Gilbert's eyes fell upon the umbrella, and grew big and round.

"You is found him, Mawse Nick? Dat rumberilla?" And he stretched forth his hands with a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Hands off! I've something to say first," cried Nicholas, with a countenance and voice so unwontedly stern that old Gilbert felt his heart knock at his ribs. Where do-you suppose this umbrella was found?

"I ain't nuver been able ter recomember, suh, whey I leffum," stammered old Gilbert, abashed; but rallying his courage, he added, "'ceptin' det I had him in Eden."

"In Eden it was found," said Nicholas, still stern; "beside the horseblock that stands not far from the gate in front of a house on the east of the cornfield." Nicholas paused.

"Tubbe sho'!" ejaculated old Gilbert, faintly. He did not know what else to say, Nicholas so "held him with his glittering eye."

"What were you doing there?" demanded Nicholas, sternly. Old Gilbert looksd at him and was

silent. "You were watching me!" cried Nicholas, with growing anger. "And now I want to know what tale you carried to

my father?" "I wuz awatchin' you," said old Gilbert, stoutly; "'cause my min' misgive me what you needed lookin' atter; but de Lawd he knows what I ain't toted no tales ter mawster. I jes' tol' him what hit wuz pow'ful lonesome ter Sunrise, en he'd better fotch you home."

Nicholas smiled. "There's your umbrella," he said, yielding the treasure to the owner's waiting hands. "You've the soul of a gentleman, as I've remarked once before." "I wuz fotch up 'long wid yo' gran'-

paw, Mawse Nick," old Gilbert reminded him, with visible pride. "All de Thornes wuz gemmen." 'White and black!" said Nicholas, and

burst out laughing. "Confound your old umbrella! If I had found that you had carried tales to my father, I should have felt tempted to break it over your meddling old head. You leave me to manage my own affairs hereafter, do you mind?

"Tubbe sho, Mawse Nick, 'ceptin' jes' dis-young folks think ole folks is fools, specially a po' no 'count ole nigger; but I gwan say dis ter you. I'se toted you onter my back when you wuz little, I'se roden you in de fox cyart, en' l'se trained you ter swim wid de holp o' gourds; I'se carried you a-fishin' en' a-possum huntin', en' l'se larnt you yo' fust manners. All dis," said the old man, with solemn, uplifted forefinger, "all dis mek hit hukkom I gwan give you instruction now. Doan you go mix yo'se'f wid folks what ain't yo' kind, Mawse Nick. I ain't say-in' nothin' beginst dem Furnivals, Mawse

Nick; but de ain't yo' kind." "You shut up!" said Nicholas hotly, and strode away.

"What will the colonel say?" "He'll swear," returned Nicholas, brief-

ly, and with a dark frown. Aleck had no doubt of it, but he didn't

"The fact is," continued Nicholas gloomily, "I'm in a ticklish position. My father always expects to have his own way. He demands of me to marry my cousin Flora-this was the drift of what he wrote me when he summoned me from Sunrise. And Flo' and I don't care a button for each other-not in that way. You'll really do me a service, Aleck, if you'll go on as you've begun; I'll help you

checked his horse and stretched forth his hand. "Count on me!" exclaimed Aleck, with fervor, as he clasped the proffered hand.

"Tain't magnanimity, after all," he mused, with a certain satifaction, as he rode his separate way. "By George, it's the gen-u-ine, mighty God Cupid, and

CHAPTER VL. FAINT HEART. "Oh, Brer Nicholas, I do love you so." Nicholas rode back with a gloomy brow,

but as he drew near the house he began

to sing, with forced gayety, the popular

refrain, "Tallahassee Girls," for he had

caught a glimpse of his little sister,

sitting alone on the horse block, in the

divined her brother's purpose. He was

going to stop! He was going to take her

on the saddle in front of him! Glorious

She climbed up nimbly as a squirrel.

"There ain't no moon risen yet," she

said, with a childish giggle of supreme

Brer Nicholas, I do love you so!" It was,

perhaps, the twentieth time she had said

"How much do you love me?" Nicholas

"Mo'n anybody else in all the world,"

"Oh, monstrous!" cried Nicholas, so

much moved that he was constrained to

speak lightly, "I suppose you could

"Dragons?" contemptuously. "I could

'What in the world?'- exclaimed

"Well," said Missy, discreetly, "them's

the strongest words I could use, bein' a

undertake to fight dragons for me?"

fight-the devil and all his works.

Nicholas, with a burst of laughter.

Missy answered, with emphatic decision.

asked, with a great craving for love's

this since his return, three days before.

"But we ain't afraid!

Oh,

thing that the young lady should be coy and disdainful, denying her true feelings and flirting with a rival, while the young gentleman distrusted his own desert counterfeited gavety, and was a prev to gloom; all this was too delicious to be marred by inconsiderate haste.

Never had Mrs. Thorne seen devotion so delicate as that displayed by Nicholas. Every morning, immediately after breakfast, he hastened away to see about the work on his aunt's house; every noon he returned with suggestions for improvements and conveniences that he detailed to Mrs. Thorne, with an interest and enout. One of these days, maybe, I'll have thusiasm that took her vanity captive. to ask you to help me out." Nicholas Devotion to Flora's mamma was sure to se appreciated by Mrs. Thorne; it was the dream of her heart that her son-inlaw should be in love with herself. Furnival was now at work upon the house, and it pleased Mrs. Thorne to fancy that the impetuous Nicholas must worry the life out of that dilatory mechanic.

"Not that I am in haste to have you leave us, aunt, you understand," said Nicholas, blushing, when rallied upon his energy in pushing on the work.

Mrs. Thorne thought she did understand perfectly. It was out of the question that Flora should be married in any other house than her mother's. Furnival had been heard to say to Nicholas: "When a boy lak you takes a marryin' notion he stands fair to make a durned fool of himself." That Furnival, the carpenter, should presume to make such a speech to Col. Thorne's son was immensely amusing to Mrs. Leonard Thorne. She tried to persuade Nicholas to tell her what had provoked it, but Nicholas only turned scarlet and quickly changed the subject.

When he was not with Furnival Nicholas devoted himself to Flora, doing all that a young man may to win a maiden's favor; for he did ardently desire to win his cousin's favor that he might count

upon her womanly sympathy. Missy raged over this state of things. "Brer Nicholas ain't no mo' use to me than a settin' hen," she declared. It required Glory-Ann's strictest vigilance to keep the child from dogging the steps of the two young people.

As for Flora, she was sorely perplexed. Nicholas had never been so attractive to her as now. Alone with his pretty cousin, he abandoned all pretence to gayety, and gave himself up to a sadness that was not without its fascination for a young girl's heart; and there were moments when Flora hardly knew whether she preferred her cousin or Aleck Gage.

And there was Aleck Gage coming every few days. "Wonder what makes him such a fool?" was the colonel's unspoken comment. "But it's Flora's privilege to keep him dangling."

Nicholas did not quit the parlor or the piazza when Aleck came now, and he always made one of the party when a walk was proposed; but when once they were out in the shrubbery, Nicholas disappeared.

This was Missy's hour of triumph, when she pounced upon her brother, and bore him off to inspect a bird's nest, to carve her name in the bark of a tree, to make etchings with a thorn upon the leaves of the century plant.

And this was also young Aleck's hour. when he waxed eloquent and confidential; though never a lant would his sense of honor permit him to breathe of the glimpse that had been given him of Nicholas Thorne's heart.

In this state of things Flora was sorry for Nicholas, and angry with him, too, Often she funcied that he was upon the point of speaking but lacked the courage, which was indeed the case. She

Nicholas saw the angry lover striding down the walk and did not hail him for a parting word. "Let him go!" he said. "For this once the sooner the better." And he rose up quickly from the bench under the mimosa tree and almost ran to seek his cousin.

Flora was in the old fashioned summer house, screened at the back by many mingling vines; the moonlight streaming through the wide archway in front revealed her, seated, with her head bowed down, her face hidden in her hands "Flora! Flora! My cousin!" cried Nich

olas. "What is the matter?" A terrible fear seized upon him. Could it be that Flora did not care for Aleck Gage? Or was she so dominated by her uncle's will that she dared not allow ner heart fair play? But no-Flora had a will of her own. What if her uncle's wish were her wish, too? All this rushed through Nicholas' brain as Flora sprang up and demanded haughtily:

"How dare you come spying upon me?" "I am not spying upon you, Flora," said Nicholas, as he staggered back against the wall of the summer house. "I wish to be your friend," he added, rallying himself by a supreme effort. He determined to assume that his cousin's

preference was for Aleck Gage. "Do you mean to say," cried Flora, with sudden illumination, as she went to him and laid her hand on his arm, "do you mean to say, Nick, that you-won't

ask me to marry you?" "I won't ask you to marry me," Nicholas answered and smiled-anything but a heartbroken smile, and yet it was so sad a smile that Flora was overwhelmingly sorry for him.

Oh, Nick!" she cried, and clasped her hands around his arm and laid her head against it. "You are a dear, good fellow and I love you dearly, dearly; but you know-if you were to ask me I'd just have to say 'no,' and then there would be a dreadful time. But if only you would take my part"-

"My dearest cousin! Of course I will take your part. But then-will you go halves and take my part?" Nicholas asked tremulously and with an uneasy laugh.

"You know I will," said Flora, who was far from suspecting her cousin's meaning. "Why, I should be the basest ingrate not to stand up for you as if I were your sister."

Nicholas put his arm around her, and just then the mocking bird in the thicket behind them suddenly ceased its song and fluttered through the foliage with a quick, short, unmelodious chirp. trust it is not an omen of ill, Flora," said he, glancing over his shoulder, "that the bird should so abruptly cease its song."

"I don't believe in omens," returned Flora, impatiently. "I believe in my own determination."

knew her. She is far superior to these other Furnivals; she is educated, and she is so good. And, poor girl, her mother has just died."

"How could you marry in secret?" said Flora, with a touch of indignation she could not curb. Her sympathies were entirely with her uncle.

"I will tell you why," said Nicholas. nettled, "it was done in haste"-

"To be repented at leisure," said Flora, with a fresh burst of tears. "Oh, Nicho-Ins!"

"No such thing!" cried Nicholas, hot-"You shall know the truth, Flora. Until three days before I came up from Sunrise I had no thought of marrying Dosia without speaking to my father; but my father wrote to me and laid down the law-you know what he has always wished. He insisted"-

But Nicholas, angry though he was, had it not in him to tell his cousin that he had been commanded to ask her in marriage, and that he had married suddenly the girl he loved, to escape obeying that command; nevertheless, Flora understood.

"It would have been useless," she said stiffly.

"Her mother was dying," Nicholas continued, sadly, "and I did not know when I could go back to Dosia; so we were married beside her mother's death bed. Of course it was intended to be kept a secret for the present. Nobody knows except her father and the preacher who married us; her mother died, as you know."

"It is a miserable business," said Flora with fresh tears. Nicholas sighed; his anger was exhausted. "And I do not know what is to be done, Nicholas. Oh, it will make everything so unhappy for all of us. Is there no possible way to undo it?"

"Just heaven, Flora!" exclaimed Nicholas, recoiling. "What manner of woman are you? Undo it? Never, while I live! My father must bear it, all of you must bear it, as such things may be borne. I am neither sorry nor ashamed that Dosia is my wife: understand that, once for all. And I shall tell my father now, as soon as I can."

"Oh, Nicholas, you might wait until ma and I are at home again," Flora en-"We could do no good-and it treated. would be so-so-uncomfortable for us. You might show some consideration for

Nicholas did not reply for some moments; when at last he spoke, it was to say coldiy:

"I will wait; you shall not be called upon to take my part."

Flora felt the reproach, but she felt it as a wrong. "You cannot expect ma and me to be willing to be subjected to unpleasant scenes," she said; "and what ould I do? Married to Dosia Furnival! Oh, Nicholas! it is as if you were dead!" "I dare say it will result in my being

as good as dead to all my kindred," returned Nicholas, gloomily; "but that cannot make me regret that Dosia is my wife; nothing can make me sorry for that." And he rose; he had said his last word.

Flora rose, too; she felt that there was nothing more to be shid.

With one consent the cousins went into the house, each conscious of carrying a tell tale face, and each shrinking instinctively from the scrutiny that they knew awaited them upon their entrance.

But just as they came in a scene was enacting upon the back gallery that diverted attention from Flora and Nicholas.

Continued next Saturday

"I was thinking of myself," said Nich-



dim twilight, waiting for his return. "Dear little sister," he sighed, even in the midst of his singing; "if she were but nearer my own age!" Then he varied the words of his song, the better to suit the case: "Oh, my Tallahassee girl, won't you mount up with more, And ride by the light of the moon?" Up jumped Missy, and stood on the horse block, clapping her hands as she

Brer Nicholas!

content.

support.