you know your own flesh and better than that?" exclaimed Mrs. Herry, impatiently. "Nick is a Thorne, every inch of him. He'll make no overand he is insanely happy, poor fool; but—he is desperately ill." tered no sound. peated. "He rode all night in the rain; and exposure, fatigue and excitement have told on him. Nicholas is very ill."

Missy burst out crying. "I want to go home with Cousin Myrtilla!" she wailed. ness a ruse. "That man, or that wo-man," said he, after a long pause, "who harbors him is no friend of mine." me Hill. Tom Quash no longer pickbanjo in his moments of idleness; Jim rattled the bones no more work was done; Amity ceased her and the talk in the kitchen was take away his name, nor his blood. And ns for me-I can get on without you, Col. d; it was as if Mawse Nicholas had Mrs. Leonard and Miss Elvira in-ctively shunned cheh other; Flora Thorne. My house is my own, and I'll entertain whom I see fit." She was thoroughly angry now. "If your brother did but know it," turning to Miss Elvira, recek the plane, and Missy sulked in

ther than ever, hiding his mortifica-

nder a cloak of pride and silence forbade sympathy. th her heart clamored for her broth found her tongue refuse its office in presence of her stern father. The child indenstood intuitively something of the tumult that raged in the colonel's A great awe, not of her father what he suffered, took possession r, ard compelled her to silence; but sole object in life now was to follow brotzer. To Missy this seemed an easy taking if she could only get away Thorne Hill; but she was afraid enture alone any farther than the gazing wistfully through the bars, ing herself for cowardice, on the oraing of the day that old Gilbert was mening from his bootless errand; here d she been ever since breakfast, and it now nearly eleven o'clock; but she ad not yet made up her mind to venture when she espied a carriage comg along the road. This sight created moden diversion in Missy's bitter

"It's Cousin Myrtilla!" she exclaimed "She's brought Lottie and Bess!" A vision of wild frolic down by the rioted in Missy's brain, as up she mped to open the gate; but when the rriage passed through only Cousin

You didn't bring Lottle and Bess! ed Missy, in deep reproach.
"Well, no, I didn't," said Mrs. Herry.

ae off in such a swivet. Never mind, 'em next time. Open the door, in," she commanded the driver, and let me take this child in."

disty made no objection. She was her Cousin Myrtilla, and she add that lady's showy dress. Such sutiful pink hyacinths within the bonn that framed the faded old face. sth lovely yellow roses outside; such a ddering lilac organdie, with its tuus puffs and frills; and those purshoes! How Missy wished for a pair est like them! But these pomps and werted to her trouble, "Brer Nicholas gone away!" she said abruptly. "He's arried to Dosia Furnival, and he can't ever come home no mo'." And Missy an to cry.

This was no news to Mrs. Herry; she and learned all about it. "Tut! tut!" she sid. "Who says he'll never come home gain? Don't cry; I am going to see what n be done about it."

This consoled Missy, and by the time carriage arrived at the house she was dte cheerful again. "Cousin Myrtilla me! Cousin Myrtilla is here!" she unced, joyfully rushing into her cont's presence; and Miss Elvira, in the fond belief that Cousin Myrtilla would be parlor.
"Oh, cousin!" she said with tears,

"Now, Elvira," remonstrated Mrs. Herry, "why should you talk as if Nich-

"It is worse than death!" sighed Miss Elvira. "My poor brother!"

"Well, yes," said Mrs. Herry, with an hild-had not been a credit to the family; neither had he married acceptably; but Cousin Myrtilla had overlived all that, and today was fat and rosy and happy. "And I suppose Jasper Thorne is doing all he can to make things worse with his stiffneckedness, and thinking himself a philosopher when he is only a

"Oh!" Miss Elvira said reproachfully. "I've known him, my dear," conned Mrs. Herry, "man and boy; I've known Jasper more than forty years. He never was wrong in his life." Miss Elvira looked bewildered.

But I came here to talk to him, not about him. I've a message for my cousin, the colonel."

"Oh," starrmered Miss Elvira; "if it's ut Nicholas, I'm afraid"-"It is about Nicholas, and I am not a di afraid," Mrs. Herry declared, stoutly.

Old Gilbert shook his head. "Hit mought be a ketchin' complaint, chile." You miserable coward, Elvira; just be-"I hate hard hearted people!" Missy e Jasper Thorne has heavy eyebrows declared, bringing her little fist down on and a high and mighty air, you don't her knee with violence. "And everyhold an independent opinion. Go, body on this old hill has got hearts like all your brother; I have that to say to ifm it is best he should hear." mile stones-'ceptin' me. You mean old nigger! I sha'n't give you any Christ-Miss Elvira obeyed; that is, she sent

limy to tell Glory-Ann to tell Griffin im to tell Tom Quash to hunt up the el, and bear him the information that Mrs. Herry wished to see him.

The colonel made no delay in answerng the summons, but he was very cereus in his greeting; he overdid verything now in his desire to appear

Mrs. Herry, however, had not known m so many years to be easily deceived. "Is will kill him," she said to herself, Inless he can be persuaded to recon-Then she spoke out:

**Cousin Jasper, there's no need for ion between you and me. I'm der than you are, and I've seen trouble with a son of my own. It is best to cok things squarely in the face. Nichas has made an unfortunate marriage,

'Madam!" said t'ie colonel, in a deep angry voice, with a hand uplifted in His face had turned a ghastly that made his black brows look or than ever, underneath which his gleamed like lightning.

sy, who had refused to be sent , sat gazing at him, fascinated; and Evira shrank visibly; but Mrs.

Voice; he thought ly be inspired. she, in a matter of fact this ceremony was over, "I'm onck to the house and bring you onck to the house and bring your ome supper. I've got to take care of you, 'cause you've got to look after Brer

enting after

The old negro stood watching her as she went along the lane. "Dat chile ain't gwan live out half her days," he muttered, with a sorrowful shaking of When Missy returned presently with

the promised supper, he declared that he could not eat.

of, and I've yet

terias is at my house.

He has married the girl he loves,

Miss Elvira clasped her hands, but ut-

"He is desperately ill," Mrs. Herry re-

Except for this there was a dead si-

"As you please," said Mrs. Herry, ris-

the only thing to do now is to forgive

Nick's marriage. Let him try the other

way, that's all! But he ought to remem-

ber that he is not blameless himself. He

has always worked wrong with poor

Nick, keeping him at a frowning distance,

when he ought to have grappled him close; banishing him to that Sunrise

Plantation, when he ought to have had

him here at home. It isn't Nicholas that

But the colonel did not hear all this;

he had left the room in great wrath, and

Mrs. Herry, overcome by indignant sor-row, and vexed at her defeat, declared

that she would not remain a moment

"I am going back to that poor boy," he said. "You may call it a weakness,

if you like, but thankful am I that I for-

gave my son. I've gotten more good out

of that, Elvira, than ever you'll get out

Missy, at least, had derived some com-

fort from this visit; to know that her

brother was at Cousin Myrtilla's was to

feel him near-within reach. Though he

was ill, he need not die, and some day

she could go to see Lottie and Bess-and,

once there, what could hinder her stay-

But, alas for this cheering hope! the

colonel returned to the parlor when Mrs.

Herry's earriage had disappeared, and

from this time forth to hold any com

munication whatever with Mrs. Herry

and any of her family. For myself never will I cross her threshold again, save in

"And that means I am not to play with

Lottie and Bess any more!" wailed Missy.
The colonel sighed bitterly. He felt
himself a deeply injured man. He was

himself a deeply injured man. He was remotely sorry for Missy's childish dis-

but what was that complied his po-anguish? Yet nobody realized his pobut what was that compared

CHAPTER XIV.

OLD GILBERT'S VOW.

Missy dictated.

When Gilbert returned, some time af-

"Brer Nicholas is in Tallahassee," she

"De Laud! Wha' dat you tell me,

Missy? Nobody ter Eden, nur ter Sun-

rise kin tell whicherway is Mawse Nick

gone. Is hit fur a fac' he is in Tallahas-

Missy nodded, with a comfortable sense

of superiority in the possession of knowl-

edge that this old man had missed,

though he had made a journey of thirty

"And he is ill; dreadfully ill," whim-

"Lawd! Lawd!" ejaculated old Gil-

"You got to carry me up to town to-

"You mus tak' patience, honey," coun-

"And it might be a thousand years!"

'Chillen mus' obey," Gilbert reminded

Missy was silent a long time; then she

"Dadds Gilbert, you've got religion,

"Bress de Lawd!" ejaculated the old

man, piously.
"If," proceeded the child, with great

seriousness, "if you was to make, right

here, a solemn vow to the Lord, like the

Bible says, you'd keep it, wouldn't you,

"Tubbe sho!" the old man answered,

little dazed between the fatigue of his

journey and the look of strange resolve

At this assent she stood up, on the step

above him, her hair tossing in the even-

ing wind, her eyes burning, her siender

hands clasped against her breast; she

looked, in the dim twilight, like a spirit,

"Kneel down," she said imperiously.

Old Gilbert obeyed as though the com-

seled old Gilbert. "Hit ain't mo'n three

days sence Mawse Nicholas lef' us; things

gwan mend-maybs."

sighed Missy

ain't you?"

if it killed you?"

on Missy's face.

and old Gilbert felt awed.

morrow," said Missy authoritatively.

"You got nothin' else to do."

pered Missy. "And I know he wants to

"At Cousin Myrtilla's," she ex-

ter sundown, he found Missy seated at

his cabin door.

miles.

see me.

bert.

plained further.

"You doan tell!"

announced in triumph.

sition, nobody considered his wound

"Elvira, you will oblige me by ceasing

And Mrs. Herry departed.

ing forever with Brer Nicholas?

said, sternly:

dignity.

case of some calamity."

"He is your only son; you cannot

The colonel thought his son's ill-

"Well, but you better," Missy insisted You got to go up to town to-morrow. I know Aunt Elvira is goin' to send you.' "Dat cawfee do smell pow'ful encour-agin', tubbe sho," he admitted, with a

slow smile, and soon found his appetite. He had just ended his meal, who Elvira stood in the cabin door, and the old man rose stiffly to make his awkward

"Sit down, Gilbert, you must be tired," said Miss Elvira, graciously. "Winifred, my dear, run on back to the house; it is too late for you to be out,"

"What's the use?" said Missy, with an impatient shrug. "I know all about it. Daddy Gilbert had been to look for Brer Nicholas and Brer Nicholas ain't there. "Nicholas is at Mrs. Herry's," said

Miss Elvira, wearily.
"So Missy been tellin me. Hukkom you know, Missle-virey?"

"Mrs. Herry was here today," she answered, flushing. "You must go up to town to-morrow, Gilbert. You need not start so very early, and I'll see you again But the next morning old Gilbert was

ailing, and for several days thereafter he was unable to leave his bed. Tom Quash, who went "up to town" three times a week for the mail, reported to Glory-Ann that Mawse Nick was "mighty sick," then that he was a little better, and finally that he was pronounced out of danger. A fortnight later Miss Elvira added another hundred to the sum she had already given old Gilbert, and dispatched him on an embassy to her nephew. "I's s'prised at Missle-virey," mused

old Gilbert, as he jogged on his way, with Nicholas' trunk in the ox cart. "Hit ain't no mo' use 'n nothin' 't all ter sen' dishyer money. Mawse Nick ain't gwan tek hit. But I ain't gwan say nothin'; when Mawse Nick done refuse hit, I gwan put hit way; come o' use

It came to pass as Gilbert had fore seen; Nicholas would none of his aunt's gift, and indeed the faithful old slave had some difficulty in persuading him to receive the trunk. Miss Elvira, however, made no inquiry about the money she had not expected thanks, nor any kind of acknowledgment, and she preferred to say nothing about it. "En' hit ain't fur me ter go ter her

'dout I is axed," old Gilbert decided; and very early the next morning he buried Miss Elvira's gold where his own savings were hidden. Some days later came the news that

Nicholas had left Tallahassee, or rather, it was understood that Job Furnival had taken his daughter and his son-in-law away. It was old Gilbert who brought this news: he had learned it through the negroes belonging to the improvident and despised Furnivals down the road, whose society he now cultivated, as one means of "keeping track of Mawse "Hit's a for way, a very for way fum

here, Missle-virey," said he, sorrowfully. "Hit's clean ter Tampa, yuther side o Madison, de tells me."

It seemed quite as far to Miss Elvira as it did to old Gilbert, and she went abundantly when she heard of her nephew's departure; but Missy took the news very soberly. Old Gilbert, remembering the vow she had extorted from him, expected her to insist upon his setting out for Tampa forthwith; but the child was reasonable. She recognized the fact that Tampa was, as old Gilbert said, "a very far country," and she did not remind the old man of his vow. Apparently, she had resigned herself to the inevitable and was learning to live without Nicholas; but in truth she was only biding her time; one of these days, when she should know more about geography, she would go herself to Tampa, and Daddy Gilbert, having nothing particular to do at Thorne Hill, should go with her.

Such was Missy's present programme. She had found starving impracticable, but she still maintained an unrelenting bitterness towards her father, nevespeaking to him except when impossible to avoid it.

This, however, made little or no impression upon the colonel. Children had few attractions for him at any time, and he was too much a prey to his own bitterness of heart to be conscious as yet of his little daughter's estrangement.

Mrs. Leonard Thorne and her pretty daughter, finding such a state of affairs too irksome to be borne, made all haste to their own home, as soon as two or three rooms could be put in habitable

The colonel did not oppose this plan. He did all that he could, in fact, to expedite the work on the house by way of making amends for Furnival's summary dismissal; but after Flora was gone his health seemed to fail suddenly, though he would not acknowledge that he was

Miss Elvira in alarm contrived to have the doctor pay him a visit, as if by chance, and the doctor urged a change of scene.

The colonel for a long time resisted, but at last he allowed himself to be persuaded to visit an old aunt of his who for many years had resided in New York. He set off alone one sail September day, when the land lay aweary in the sunshine, and the cicada kept up a din, and the cotton fields were white for the harvest.

CHAPTER XV.



It was the end of October when Col. Thorne returned. Miss Elvira welcomed him with a gentle and dignified self re-

on of perfect ladybood, and nonstrative sister; but there was a perfunctoriness in Missy's greeting that made him at last aware of her estrangement, and struck a chill to his heart. He had brought the child some extravagant pieces of jewelry, but she evinced no pleasure in his gifts, and her father noted, without comment, that she left

them lying on the table. The next morning he rode over to his sister-in-law's place. He hoped to receive from Flora a welcome that should make amends for what he missed in his own home, nor was he disappointed. His pretty niece met him with an affectionate effusiveness that almost did away with the effect of his little daughter's coldness; but it did not escape his observation later that Aleck Gage was in the back-ground, deporting himself with a confident air.

Mrs. Leonard talked garrulously of various things; of the improvements she wished to make, of the sale of her cotton, the investment of her surplus funds, the purchase of mules, even of her poultry;

but never a word of Aleck Gage.

The colonel deemed this reticence sig nificant, and he rode bome vexed. He had thought to order his small world according to his own will and pleasure, and now he found it fast slipping from his grasp—his son an alien, the niece whom e had hoped to make his daughter ready to marry one whom he had not chosen and his own little daughter indifferent to

But when Flora came, two days later, to say that she had promised to marry Aleck Gage in December, the colonel, perforce, resigned himself to her choice with dignified philosophy.

"I had allowed myself to expect a different marriage for you, Flora, as you know," he could not resist saying, nor could he say it without a sigh; but he did not say it harshly.

It was the first expression he had ever given to his disappointed hopes, and Flora, eager to console him, exclaimed with the indiscreet enthusiasm of youth 'Aleck hasn't a fault in the world, Uncle Jasper; he will be the best of sons

to you, if you will only let him!" The colonel did not say that he had no desire to claim Aleck Gage for a son. He broke away from her abruptly and stood looking out of the window some little time, struggling for command of himself. He was still pale when he re-turned; but he spoke with a courtly dig-

I claim the privilege of giving the bride away." "That is just what I wanted!" cried

Flora, and with a sudden impulse of gratitude, affection and sympathy she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him and cried a little. The news of Flora's engagement threw

Miss Elvira into a great flutter. She de-

clared that it was just what she had al-ways expected, and that she was never more surprised in her life, and then she looked helplessly at her brother. "Flora will be married in her mother's house, of course," said the colonel; "but

Thorne Hill must honor the occasion with merry making, and all our friends must be invited." "Yes, oh, yes!" Miss Elvira responded, with a sigh of relief. Her brother's disapproval of the match would have been sore embarrassment; the entertainment the colonel wished to give was a trifle in comparison, though it meant three weeks of incessant work at seeding rais-

ins, washing currents, blanching almonds and frosting cakes; but those burdens were to be borne by Glory-Ann and Chaney and Dicey, Tom Quash and Griffin Jim. "And since Flora is such a favorite," said Mrs. Herry, when she heard of these great preparations, "why doesn't she put in a good word for Nicholas?

The arrant little coward, she knows very well that it was to save her from embarrassment, while she was the colonel's guest, that the boy delayed his confession, and so made matters worse. The colonel is pining for a reconciliation with his son, though he won't own it, and Flora might do something to bring it about. As for me, I've only meddled to mar, so there's an end of my efforts." Mrs. Thorne was very angry with Cousin Myrtilla for this speech.

I don't see how you can talk of a reconciliation with Nicholas!" said she. "I am surprised at you! As if we Thornes ever could consort with a Furnival!" To which Mrs. Herry made the exas-

perating retort that Nick's wife was every bit as much a Thorne as Mrs. Leonard herself.

For all this, however, Mrs. Herry was not omitted in the list of invitations, either to the wedding or to the merry making at Thorne Hill; for the colonel had announced that every connection of the family, far and near, should be invited to the entertainment he meant to

give in honor of his niece's marriage. "And ain't Brer Nicholas and his wife kinfolks?" asked Missy, with bold significance. She did not fear her father, and yether poor little heart fluttered wildly when she put this daring question.

The colonel's only answer was a dark, forbidding frown, and Missy betook herself to a corner. "Don't you fret 'bout dat, honey,

whispered Mom Bee, "now don't you; fur de is gwan be de fiddlers en' de dancin', en' plum cake a-plenty." "Don't want none!" said Missy, who

had given herself an indigestion by the surreptitious gormandizing of raisins and "En' besides all dat," proceeded Glory-

Ann to her overwhelming chimax, "you gwan be dressed so spruce en' gay; yo cousins, Miss Lotty en' Miss Bess, in pink, en' you in a hebenly blue." Poor little Missy, who was fond of

dress, dried her tears and reconsidered her determination to abstain from the wedding festivities for her absent brother's sake.

But not even the companionship of Lottie and Bess, not even the dress of "hebenly blue," nor the sound of the music, nor the sight of the mazy dance, could shut out the memory of Nicholas. "Oh, Lottie, ain't them fiddles just dreadful?" she lamented. "They're always sayin', 'Nicholas, Nicholas, whey's Brer Nicholas? no matter what the chune they play."

"Why, Missy, what a funny child you are!" said Lottie, with a giggle; presently Bess declared that the fiddles did say just what Missy thought; and if the truth were confessed, they said very nearly the same thing to the colonel and Miss Elvira; the name that no guest dared mention rang in their ears, ne matter what tune the fiddles played.

CHAPTER XVI.

A tew Gays after these wedding festivities Miss Elvira sent old Gilbert to carry a basket of cake to some friends four or five miles distant. Gilbert could easily have ridden a mule and carried the bas ket, but the ox cart crabled him to con vey a load of birch brooms and shuck mats, for which he hoped to find a market by the way. The most of the day was consumed in this jaunt, and it was late in the wintry afternoon when he journeyed homeward.

As he turned the corner of the brief

ing along in the narrow, sandy road was towards him, but there was some in the determined manner of her gait that had a strangely familiar look to old took this salitary wayfarer, who turned her head as she stepped aside, and old

behooved him to do his best manners Why, howdye, mistis?" he said, with a broad grin, as he snatched off his hat,

White, who was not above displaying proper manners herself when occasion "You're Colonel Thorne's man, Gilbert, onleast I'm mighty mistaken." Old Gilbert grinned with gratified vani-"Tubbe sho!" he answered, slipping

with alacrity from his seat on the oxcart. 'Ef you mought lak a lift, mistis, en wouldn' mind ridin' in de yoxcyart, I kin walk."

never one o' the kind to spite occasion."

active, so the "hysting" was not difficult of accomplishment. She sat flat down in the bottom of the cart, and immediately took upon herself the burden of con-

nounced. "I'm fair set to tackle the colonel 'bout his son Nick, what married out of hand my cousin 'Mandy's daugh

The start with which Gilpert heard this gave a jerk to the reins that brought old Brandy to a dead halt. The ox stood still, while the old man gaped with amazement at the woman who would dare name the colonel's son in the colonel's presence; and yet he felt that if anyone could venture successfully upon such mention it might be this masterful woman: but he casped out the words: Ye ain't-sho'lv?'--

"Ain't I, though?" retorted MissWhite. 'Tell you what, thar ain't that son o' Adam stalkin' this yeth what I'm too pecked to look stret in the face an set 'em squar. The Lord give me a tongue, an' it kin wag. Come, drive up, ole man! It won't be the fust time a woman's tongue has wagged at a stiff necked sinner.

"Gee! Brandy!" shouted old Gilbert, and staggered on, drunk, so to say, with

the colonel's house, an' feastin,' an' the whyn't the colonel do somethin' fur his own flesh an' blood, befo' the boy kills hisself tryin' to mek a livin'?"

"Well, he ain't never goin' to be extry strong, I don't reckon," said Miss White composedly. "Leastwise, he ain't the kind to git a livin' thouten niggers an' lan', Nick Thorne ain't.

in by nobody's back do'." But Miss Roxanna White was saved

with mingled satisfaction and uneasiness. He had a burning curiosity to know what the colonel would say to this bold interin prospect of the storm that was likely live, en' Missle-virey. De been over ter de sister-in-law's place."

Roxanna White called a halt, and scrambled out of the cart to take her position by the road side, like an army drawn up for battle. She raised her hand as the buggy drew near, a signal for it to stop, and the colonel reined in his horses.

occasion, and he was inclined to be vexed with himself that he could not re-

"I'll tell you who I am," Miss White proceeded sturdily. "My name's Roxanna White, second cousin to Amandy Jarvis, what married Job Furnival, as you got cause to mind."

The blood rushed to the colonel's face. and the next instant left it pale. Miss Elvira gave a frightened gasp, and said

But the colonel sat rigid. He deemed it inconsistent with his dignity to manifest any sensitiveness at the name of Furnival; and Miss White, ignoring Miss Elvira's suggestion, proceeded:

Nick Thorne what I come to talk about. He's yo' own flesh an' blood, an' it's a natchul question: What you goin' to do to set him up?" Miss White made a barely perceptible

pause, but seeing the colonel so slow to "I ain't sayin' nothin' 'bout Dosia-

sumedthough I mought. It's all along of Nicholas Thorne, I'm a-liftin' up of my The colonel interrupted her: "Who

sent you on this errand?' heasked, coldly,

"who sent mer" she cried, shrilly "Why, the Lord A'mighty, I reckin! Sent me to warn you beginst jedgment day. Nick Thorne warn't raised to git a livin' offten anythin' but land and niggers; au' sence you've made him what he is, all mankind an' the Lord in heaven 'll hold you bounden to set him up-

This was too much for the cold scant patience; if he relented towards his son, it certainly would not be at the his son, it certainly would not be at the dictation of this virago, whom he strongly suspected of being instigated to this demand for property by Job Furnival and his daughter.

"You transcend your province, madam," he said, haughtily. "I have nothing to say to you regarding the misguided young man who married your relative; and I bid you good evening."

The next thing Roxanna White knew the colonel had driven away, and she was left, defeated. And defeat was very

was left, defeated. And defeat was very bitter to Roxanna White; it was an experience she had never heretofore known; her strength of purpose and her vehem-ence of tongue had invariably served to win her the victory of every encounter, and never had she felt herself so deserving of victory as in this instance. It had en a grievance that Nicholas and Dosia did not confide in her, but none the less did she sympathize with them, and desire, unselfishly, to serve them. This woman, who had missed the great blessing of love in her own youth, had still a oft spot in her heart for foolish young lovers, when once their folly had become an accepted fact. There was something exalting in the sufficiency those two young people found in each other, rendering them so gayly indifferent to pov-erty and hardship, and there was something appalling as well. Roxanna, who knew the storms and struggles of life, trembled at the prospect before them. She had followed them to Tampa, when she heard of Job Furnival's accident, and she had returned to Leon county of her own accord, and without consulting any one, for the express purpose of softening Colonel Thorne's heart. She had expect-ed to find this an undertaking demanding all her powers of persuasion, but she had not counted upon failure, and she sat down on the roadside and cried like a child, with rage against the colonel, and with pity for Nicholas and Dosia.

sympathy. 'Lemme 'lone!" cried Roxanna, vi-

"No you don't nuther!" Miss White dethankful. Do you s'posen I'm goin' to be ridin' in Col. Thorne's ox cart, driven by his ole nigger, which both on 'em is sleek an' fat, an' his son, Dosia's husband, awaitin' fur starvation, mebbe? I'm got ter look after Nick Thorne an' his wife. an' I'm goin' back to Tampa.'

"Well, tubbe sho," old Gilbert sighed, "Mawse Nick ain't gwan lack help intirely, of she gwan look atter him. De



Well, old man, what foolishness are you

up to now? Long did old Gilbert sit that evening in deep despondency over Miss White's report of Nicholas' condition; but remembering, at last, the money he had received for his mats and brooms, he drew from his pocket an old leathern purse, clinking the coins and chuckling at the sound. "Dis po' old no 'count nigger kin mek money yit," he said, exultingly. Slowly he counted over the sum, and tied the money in a rag. This performance having restored his appetite in some measure, he raked from the ashes a roasted potato that had been covered up there to keep warm, and with a bit of fried bacon, set away in the broken skillet, he made a satisfying supper.

With the glimmer of the dawn next morning he rose, threw a blanket over his shoulders, took his staff in his hand and went out before any one else was stirring; for Gilbert had now to visit the hollow in the wood, in order to deposit the money he had recently gained by the sale of his wares.

The more his treasure grew the greater grew old Gilbert's dread of discovery, the sharper his lookout for any sign of intrusion upon his hiding place. Even now, in the dim light that struggled through the trees, the old fellow's practiced vision perceived indications that made him uneasy. "Somebody been a-huntin' in ow woods," he muttered. 'Drat dat Jesse Furnival en' his valler dog! Laws a massy, jes' ter tink dem is Mawse Nick's kin!

A more careful scrutiny, however, soon satisfied him that the spot where his money was buried remained intact.

"But de ain't no tellin' how long dis gwan stay safe," he moralized. "De mo' I studies, 'pears lak de mo' I doan know what de bes' ter do. Money what you ain't a-spendin' is a power o' trouble, tubbe sho!" Col. Thorne had offered to take care of

his money for him, but Gilbert distrusted, not his master, but his master's practice of depositing in banks, for banks had a way of "bustin'-en' den whey yo'

"Gwan ketch roomatiz, wuss sort," he grumbled, "out-cher fo' sun up. I'se got ter put some o' dat money out ter intrust in a muel, dat's what."

He covered over the iron pot with a studied carelessness in the disposition of the rubbish, and rose stiffly to take his homeward way.

"Ef Mawse Nick wuz jes' home-Laws-a-massy! I been studyin' 'bout Mawse Nick cawntinual. 'Spect I gwan spen' mos' o' my time study in' 'bout him.' The immediate effect of all his "study-

in'" was that old Gilbert found it impossible to settle to any work. He strolled about his little domain, investigating his peach trees, his bean arbor, his pig sty and his hen house, moralizing as he went: "Us po' worldly critturs o' dust en

ashes do git might'ly welded ter yethly possessions, tubbe sho; when any day hit mought be pleasin' ter de Lawd ter call us away. En' I doan know but de bebenly mawster is a callin' me now, I doan know. 'Pears lak somethin' been a-ca''in' me ever sence Missy made me promuss dat wow. En' yit I ain't so ole, nuther. 'Pears lak I mought live a ong time yit. I'm gwan ter do gret e. talk wid mawster 'bout de nu'chase

o' dat ole white muci Zip; he's a fat

muel, en' wuth money—some."— Col. Thorne was in the office, as separate small building was called which he transacted all matters of bu ness; but apparently he was unoccupies when old Gilbert entered, for he sat in his leather covered arm chair, at his beard and staring at the fire. His thoughts were busy about Miss Roxanna White's appeal—not that it moved him in the least; it had served but to empha-size his conviction that he was a deeply injured man; his pride, his affection, dignity had been wounded, not merely by his son's folly, but by his duplicity in concealing his marriage, leaving the momentous secret to be discovered through child's inability to keep silence. And yet, after this lapse of time, Nicholas was not willing to make overtures. The colonel, forgetting that he had refused to allow Nicholas to say a word in his own defense, was resolved that he would not take the initiative toward reconciliation; yet his thoughts turned incessantly to his son. But he thrust his painful musings aside when he heard old Gilbert's familiar salutation, and said, with an effort at gayety:

"Well, old man, what foolishness ar you up to now?"
"Hit's business, mawster, ef you made please, suh, dis time," old Gilbert made answer, twirling his hat by way of relief to his embarrassment. "I'se been study in' on a trade, ef you'd git yo' cawnsent,

"Well?"

"Dat ole white muel, Zip, sah. I wuz studyin' det you mought be minded ter tek sixty dollars fur him; he is a ole

"What? You've saved up sixty dollars!" exclaimed the colonel. "And you want to buy old Zip to feed him on my corn and fodder, eh?"

"You wouldn't miss what he'd eat, suh, nur nairy 'nuther muel," old Gilbert said deprecatingly, unconscious of the comparison he made, but which the colonel perceived and smiled at grimly. "I don't see what you want with the mule," he said. "Old Brandy and the ox cart about belong to you now."

"Ole Brandy en' de yox cyart ain't so survisable for ploughin'," Gilbert explained. "I don't want your money," said the

colonel, shortly.

There followed a pause, during which old Gilbert stood stock still, as if suddenly paralyzed. Not a fiber of him stirred. except his eyes, that roved from one

again and again to rest upon the colone "You can take the mule at any time you may need him," the colonel said at last, and he repeated, "I don't want your

part of the room to another, returning

"Thankee, mawster, thankee suh," old Gilbert responded, but there was disappointment in his tone. He lingered an instant, as if he meant to say more, then turned and went his shambling way cut of the office. When he had gone down the steps, he looked back to say, "Ain't I heard you tell de oberseer what Zin is wuth 'bout sixty dollars, suh?" "I suppose he may be worth about

that," the colonel answered, absently. It wanted now but a few days of Christmas, which the colonel desired to celebrate just as usual. The turkeys had long been fattening, the beef was killed, the bonfires were piled ready for lighting. If Nicholas' absence was felt, no one alluded to it, and jest and jollity went on without him.

On Christmas morning the Hill resounded with the popping of fire crackers, the shooting of guns and the repeated shout, in every variety of tone, of "Chris'mas gif', mawster!" "Chris'mas gif', Missle-virey!" "Chris'mas gif', Missy!" Even some few ventured to "catch" Glory-Ann "Chris'mas gif'l" for which impertinence they were prompt rewarded with a cuff on the ear. Missy stood on the back gallery and presented china mugs, gay handkerchiefs, strings of beads and pipes and tobacco; while Miss Elvira, aided by Glory-Ann and Dapline, ladled out egg nog from a huge punch bowl, and distributed gingerbread from an inexhaustible basket.

And that Christmas morning, far away in Tampa, Nicholas was saying gayly, though the tears stood in his eyes, "Only a kiss, my Dosia, only a kiss for a Christmas gift!"

A large party dined at Thorne Hill that day, and there was feasting with decorous merriment, in which the colonel bore

Missy disappeared after dinner, but at dark she rushed in, and calling her aunt Elvira aside, she demanded the necklace and bracelets her father had brought her from New York. "I ain't never showed 'em to Mom Bee, nor nobody," she said. "But, Winifred, you might break

them," Miss Elvira demurred. Nevertheless, Missy, as usual, carried her point, and Miss Elvira returned to the parlor to forget all about the jewelry until next day. Missy, when inquired of, responded that she was old enough now to be trusted with her own things; and by dint of forbearing to press the question, Miss Elvira came soon to forcet the chain and bracelets altogether.

In the afternoon of the second day after Christmas Glory-Ann took occasion to ask: "Missle-virey, is you sont old man Gilbert off anywhey?" Of course Glory-Ann knew all about

those secret expeditions with the ox cart, first to Eden and then to Tallahasse "Where should I be sending him?" said Miss Elvira, coloring guiltily. "Dunnome," Glory-Ann answered, with mystery. "Maybe hit's mawster is sont him?" She was consumed by curi-

since the morning after Christmas. His cabin was locked, and there was no smoke in the chimney. It was soon manifest, however, that the colonel was not responsible for old Gilbert's disappearance, as he was heard to ask if the old man had made himself ill on Christmas cheer. When the matter was further inquired into, it was found

osity; for old Gilbert had been missing

that the old white mule Zip was missing likewise. The colonel received this information with a stare at first, and then burst out laughing; though why he laughed nobody knew, for he had told no one of old Gitbert's proffered trade. But this laugh gave the impression that Gilbert had taken advantage of some jest of his master's to treat himself to a prolonged holiday, and his absence ceased to be wondered at, even when nearly two weeks

had gone by. About this time the colonel, on going into the office, one morning, was surprised to find on his table an uncouth package wrapped in a piece of cloth, and tied with a length of twine multitudinously knotted. When this was opened, there lay revealed a quantity of coin to the amount of sixty dollars! The colonel's stern features, as he counted it over, relaxed in a pathetic smile. This was the price of the old white mule, but how it came there, upon his table, was a problem he made no attempt to solve. Carefully he tied up the money again, and locked it away in a drawer of his big mahogany secretary, against a day of reckoning, a day more distant than he

dreamed Continued next Saturday

They Compromise. Germany and England have come to an agreement over Africa. Germany eedes Somaliland and Vitu to England, and Eng-land cedes Hellgoland to Germany.

field, where the innumerable denuded stalks of many growths were making a mournful rustling in the evening wind, he was surprised to see a woman trude-

skirted the wood. She was going in the same direction as himself, and her back thing in her tall, gaunt figure, cold in russet brown, and wrapped in a scanty shawl of red and green plaid, something Gilbert's eyes. He urged the black oz to an unwilling trot, and presently over-

Gilbert recognized Roxanna White.
"Why, tubbe sho!" he muttered to

"Whoa, Brandyf" Gilbert had long ago decided that this woman was no common "po' bukra." She commanded his involuntary respect by the subtle magnetism of character, and moreover she had the advantage, in his eyes, of belonging, in a way, to Mawse Nick; wherefore he felt that is

"I'm middlin' well, thankee," said Miss

"I'm obleeged ter yer," said Miss White, promptly. "Don't keer if I do hyst myself for a bit o' the way. I ain't The cart was low and Roxanna was

versation, while old Gilbert trudged along beside the ox. "I'm bound fur Col. Thorne," she an-

speak my mind toe. I ain't never wronged nobody, an' I ain't goin' to see nobody wronged, of speech o' mine kin

"the wine of astonishment." "Pretty doin's," continued Miss White. "Big pot in the little pot, an' all Leon county dancin' to the tune o' fiddles ir colonel's son scufflin' for bread vonder to Tampa. Not but what he does the best he kin. But Job Furnival ain't no mo' in condition to work with the fallin of a sill onto his backbone; laid up helpless he is fur the rest o' his days. An

"Is Mawse Nick ailin' agin?" old Gilbert faltered, with a sudden appalling memory of the vow Missy had exacted. concerning which he had not felt called upon to take action as yet.

"Now mind you set me down to the corner, old man, so's I kin git in roun' by the front. I ain't a speck ashamed o' my errand, an' I ain't the kind to go creepin'

the trouble of "goin' in round by the front;" for just as they came to the corner where she had wished to be "set down' a buggy was seen approaching along the private road that led from Mrs. Leonard Thorne's place.
"Deh mawster, now," said old Gilbert,

ceder for Mawse Nick, and yet he quaked to follow. "Hit's mawster, sho's you

'Good evenin' to you, Col. Thorne," said she, in the high key of excitement. The colonel lifted his hat with stately politeness and bowed, but did not speak. "You don't 'pear to know me, but I know you," said Miss White, the unterrified. "How do, Miss Thorne?" she nodded familiarly, even a little conde-

scendingly, for she regarded Miss Elvira as "ruther a po' weakly minded crittur." Mis Elvira bowed very slightly in return; it was not in her power to adapt herself to such people as Roxanna White; but the colonel made amends by a second bow, more gracious than the first; for Col. Thorne knew well enough how to obscure the odi profanum vulgus upon

member having ever met this woman.

nervously: "Perhaps we'd better drive on?"

"I ain't minded to waste time multiolvin' of words, colonel. It's vo' son

take advantage of it she promptly re-

No one could have divined, from voice or look or manner, the hope that struggled in the depth of his heart-the hope that Nicholas, even through this uncouth woman, this relative of the girl he had married, might be making overtures for parden and reconciliation; far, indeed, was Roxanna White from suspecting the true state of the case. She was c fended

'Dullaw, mistis! Dullaw, mistis!" said old Gilbert, with plaintive, impotent

clously. "Ef you'll git back inter de yox cyart, mistis," old Gilbert nevertheless ventured to suggest, "de beas' ain't dat ti'ed but I mought mek out ter drive ye ez fur"--bouncing up. "I kin walk, I'm

And Miss White strode away and was lost in the shadow of the woods.

