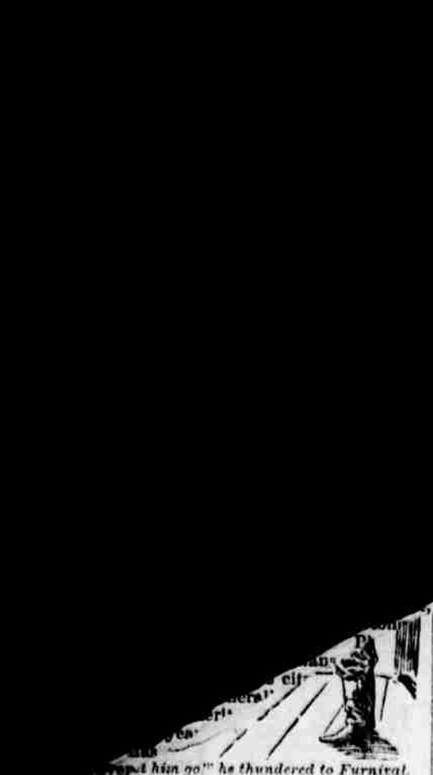

"Let him go!" he thundered to Furnival.

As the colonel put his key in his pocket he looked up and saw Missy furtively peeping in at the door, which stood wide open, for the weather was mild.

"What do you want, Winifred?" he asked, not unkindly; but his voice had that hard, cold tone which reminds children that they should be seen and not heard.

"Mr. Dan Furnival is out yonder," said Missy, eying her father from under her lowering brows with a suspicious curiosity. "He wants to see you."

Now the colonel had always lived on comfortable terms with these humble neighbors. They were in the habit of consulting him in any emergency, and he had always been ready to bestow substantial aid in time of need, but since Nicholas' obnoxious marriage there had been no communication between Thorne Hill and Dan Furnival's family, and at Christmas the colonel had overlooked them entirely.

Dan Furnival had been predicting this without half believing that the colonel could be "so pesky cawntrairy;" but when the Christmas-tide brought with it no quarter of beef, no barrel of sugar, no pudding with raisins, and no fat turkey, the only consolation he had was that which human nature is prone to find in the fulfillment of individual prophecy.

"Dawg-gone hit, Samanthy," Daniel said to his wife, "ain't I been tellin' ye the colonel ain't nuver goin' ter claim us, nohow? Drat my brother Job an' his daughter, I say! Me'n the colonel have been livin' neighbors, no tellin' how long, an' we ain't had no diffunce ontel now, all 'long of Job livin' in town, an' mekin' Dosia what they call edicated. Sont her plum off ter Macon, Georgey, one whole year, what has holped, I s'pose, ter git her married ter Nick Thorne, an' us-en ousted quten Christmas fixins."

"The Lawd—he knows what I ain't had nothin' ter do with hit," Mrs. Samantha declared. "An' the Lawd—he knows what I ain't hankerin' ter claim kin with the colonel."

"An' I ain't Job, an' I ain't Dosia," pursued Daniel; "an' I ain't goin' ter tote they conskinses."

"I don't see the jestice of blamin' hit onto us," said his wife, who felt herself cruelly defrauded. "Hit warn't no ways ow fault what Roxy White come here an' tuk her fling at the colonel; she ain't none o' ow kin."

"Drat Roxy White!" said Dan Furnival, with fervor.

"Hit doan do no good, ez I kin see, ter drat Roxy," drawled Mrs. Furnival. "You sight better hunt some way ter set yo'se'f up in the colonel's favyior."

"You talk lak the fool ye air," retorted Daniel. "Whar'll I fin' the means, with sicher rip snortin' ole tukeycock ez Thorne?"

Daniel felt himself favored of fortune when the rumor reached him that Col. Thorne's old man Gilbert had disappeared with one of the colonel's mules. "Ef I kin he'p him recover his property," Daniel argued, in confidence with his wife—though he called her a fool—"stands ter reason he'll be under obligation ter the man what kin do that; an' then he'll be boun' ter see what thar ain't no ground fur gredge beginst me, 'long of Job an' his edicated daughter."

So Dan Furnival began to make inquiries in all directions, but without success; the only information he received that threw any glimmer of light on old Gilbert's flight was furnished by his son Jesse; but this seemed to Daniel of so vital importance that he hastened forthwith to carry it to the colonel.

Unlike Roxanna White, Daniel preferred to approach Thorne Hill by the back entrance, and at the stable he demanded of Dublin to see the colonel.

There was not a negro on the place who would willingly name a Furnival in the colonel's presence; but Dublin did not refuse the errand, he simply transferred it to Griffin Jim, who passed it on to Tom Quash, who appealed to his grandmother, Glory-Ann, who found in Missy a ready ambassador; for Missy, connecting this visit with her brother Nicholas, felt a burning desire to know what Dan Furnival could have to say to her father.

The colonel flushed darkly when he heard Missy's announcement; like her, he thought this visit might refer to his son, but he did not refuse to receive Furnival. "Let him come in here," he said, with a coldness that gave no hint of the fire at his heart; and Missy ran back across the yard to conduct the visitor to the office. When he entered she sat herself down in the doorway.

"Mornin', colonel," said Furnival, with a would be easy air. "How's yer health?"

The colonel returned his salutation with involuntary stiffness, and, as a matter of course, asked after Furnival's family.

"They're middlin', I'm 'bleedged ter ye," Furnival replied, in a tone that reflected the memory of a stinted Christmas. "I hearn tell, about a week past, colonel, what ole man Gilbert is missin', along o' one o' yo' mules. Pledgee my word, I nuver was mo' tuk a-back in my life; an' I ain't credited hit none, ontel las' night my son Jesse up an' tole me what was knowin' ter him; an' I thought hit mought throw a sorter light on the nigger's disappearance, an' I come straight ter give you the benefit. Fur, colonel, you an' me has been neighbors, an' frien'ly neighbors," Daniel proceeded, waxing effusive, as he perceived the colonel's growing interest; "an' I ain't minded ter let no recent happenins interfere betwixt us. Me an' Samantha ain't takin' Job's part"——

But an impatient gesture from the colonel warned him that he was venturing on dangerous ground, and he checked himself.

"Hit's ole man Gilbert what I come ter report on," he said, after clearing his throat loudly. "As I was a-sayin', colonel, I nuver mo' s'prised in my life; for ole Gilbert was ez nigh free ez a shame, colonel, ez I do declar', a cussed shame that sich a deceitful ole nigger should plot an' plan, an' steal, mo'n likly, layin' up of money jes' ter rob his owners of property; an' so, fur ole sake's sake, an' bein' neighbors an' all, an' nuver no gredge betwixt us, ef you'd a mind ter commission me I'd undertake ter track that ole hypocritter from here ter Jericho."

Missy, who had risen from the doorstep, pale with anger at the first suggestion of hunting old Gilbert, now threw herself flat on the floor, interrupting Furnival with a scream of rage. "We don't have runaways!" she cried. "And I ain't goin' to let nobody track my old Daddy Gilbert! He shall go if he wants to!"

The angry flush in the colonel's face faded; a softer light came into his eyes; he went to Missy, sobbing on the floor, and put his hand on her head. "Get up, Winifred," he said, with an unwonted gentleness; it touched him to find that his little daughter felt as he did in regard to old Gilbert's disappearance.

"Let him go!" he thundered to Furnival, with a sweep of his arm that seemed to emancipate old Gilbert and the mule together.

"Good Lawd, colonel! Property?" gasped Furnival.

"I'll have none of your interference, sir," said the colonel, and turned his back and looked out of the window, but saw nothing for the mist in his eyes. He knew old Gilbert must have followed Nicholas.

"Jest ez you're a mind," said Furnival, sulkily. 'I wish you good day an' better jedgment."

He went home and grumbled to Samantha: "Ef Col. Thorne doan beat mo plum' outen all onerstandin', you kin shoot me. You may live neighbors with him year in an' year out, an' think you know every crack an' cranny of him, an' thar'll come a day you'll but yo' head beginst a corner of his darned, crank sided natur, ez would 'stonish Zebedee. I'm cussed ef he ain't sot that ole nigger an' mule free with a wave of his han'."

"Well, he's got plenty mo'," said Samantha, dolefully.

"Whyn't he give some on 'em ter Nick, ef niggers an' mules is so plenty? I tell ye that red headed, freckle faced little savigerous wasp of a gal o' hisn has got her finger in both his eyes, an' she gees an' haws him, you better b'lieve."

"Thar ain't nobody don't gee an' haw the colonel, you better b'lieve," said Samantha.

CHAPTER XIX.

MASQUERADING.

When Furnival had left the office Missy crept to her father's side. He was still staring out of the window, and the first intimation of her approach was the touch of her fingers upon his hand. Unhappily, Col. Thorne was not demonstrative of affection, especially toward children, and just now, while he was struggling for the mastery of his feelings, he wished to be alone, and he shrank from her touch saying coldly:

"Go play, Winifred; you interrupt me."

Yet, even as he spoke, he was conscious of a craving for the sympathy expressed in the clasp of those small fingers, and instantly he put out the hand he had so brusquely withdrawn, put it out in dumb entreaty for the caress he had repulsed. But it is the fate of reticent natures to be misunderstood. His inveterate shyness had led him to slight his opportunity, and Missy's nascent tenderness, once rebuffed, was not easily to be won anew. She saw in her father's outstretched hand only a signal for her to retire, and her indignant spirit uttered its protest as she turned and left him.

Severed her tangled, red brown locks from her head.

"I don't see as you're so mighty busy; just lookin' out of the window." And across the yard went she, muttering to herself: "I ain't goin' to try no mo' to love father, and one of these days I mean to find Brer Nicholas and stay with him always. Brer Nicholas is glad when I hold his hand."

Angry and sore, Missy sat her down upon the knife block under the magnolia tree, glowing green in the wintry sunshine, and wept for the brother who was blessed with the genial gift of expression.

Col. Thorne sighed, and locked the door, and thus secured against unwarned intrusion, he sat before the fire with his head in his hands, and gave himself up to vain regrets. His little world seemed slipping from his grasp. In the sum of his joys and sorrows, his submissive, inane sister had never counted for much; his son by that hateful marriage was lost to him; he would remember Nicholas no more, and now that Flora was the wife of Alex Gage she could never again be the same Flora: there remained only Missy, and her he had driven away! The colonel's desire to have her with him at that moment was just not strong enough to make him willing to risk a refusal by calling her back, so he consoled himself by making plans for her future. His little daughter's education was a problem that had vexed his soul not infrequently of late, and knowing well Miss Elvira's incompetency he resolved to turn tutor himself.

And now began an era miserable alike for Missy and for her father. It lasted five months. At the end of that time the colonel abdicated in favor of vacation, thoroughly convinced that for a little girl 12 years old a vigilant governess was an imperative necessity, to be sought for diligently and secured at any cost. Meantime Missy and the colonel enjoyed a rest.

June had come again, but Nicholas had not been heard from, nor had old Gilbert cut off [illegible] things to her [illegible] of sight—and [illegible] the quince bushes, [illegible] an instant, striving to [illegible] plan by which to elude the [illegible]; for here in Tallahassee, Missy [illegible] herself nine miles on the road to Tampa, and her fear of the great, unknown world that lay outside the familiar limits of her life was proportionately abated.

Fortune favored her; the children gave up the pursuit, and Missy, having climbed over the fence, ran down a back street, as laughable a little figure as ever appeared in unaccustomed clothes four sizes too large for her; but in the gathering dusk she passed unseen. Her aim was to overtake the stage in which Paul Herry was expected and by some means to hide herself therein. Once away from Tallahassee, Missy felt sure of her route, for with her all roads led to Tampa.

By dint of wandering she came at last to the postoffice, in front of which the stage had just stopped. The sight of it thrilled her with exultation. She felt herself at last on the way to rejoin her brother. There could be no hindrance now, she felt sure, to her journey. She dashed across the street and reached the stage coach unobserved, for all the bystanders were gathered around the postoffice, expectant of the mail. A quartet of young lads were dragging another lad from the coach with hilarious greeting as Missy climbed up by the hind wheel on the opposite side and established herself on top.

There a terrible sense of isolation possessed her. She stretched herself out, face downward, and to keep from wailing aloud, stuffed the skirt of her nankeen blouse in her mouth, loathing her cowardice. But her purpose gave way at last. After all, she was only pretending to be a boy; how could she, a poor, quaking little girl, ever hope to find Brer Nicholas unaided and alone?

In despair and self contempt she began to climb down with perilous haste; the driver cracked his whip, the coach gave a lurch, Missy lost her hold and fell, with a wild scream, between the wheels.

The horses were checked instantly, and there was a rush to the spot whence that frantic cry proceeded. Paul Herry, who had started to walk home accompanied by his young friends, turned back to join the little crowd assembled around Missy, lying unconscious in the sand.

No one recognized the child, and a looker on had just hazarded the conjecture that the outlandish little creature must have arrived on the stage, unknown to the driver, when Larkin came upon the scene.

"Lemme see!" he shrieked. "Fur de love o' heben, mawsters, dat chile is Mawse Jasper Thorne's darter, little Miss Winifred Thorne."

There was a murmur of incredulity, but Larkin insisted, apologetically. "Tubbe sho, hit doan look lak hit, but hit's so. Hukkom she's in sich a rig; she been playin' succuss. Lawd! Lawd! Is she killed, mawsters?"

They lifted Missy from the ground and carried her into a neighboring drug store, where she recovered consciousness. "I'm Winifred Thorne," she said, and essayed to move, but fainted again.

"Any bones bruk?" Larkin asked anxiously of the doctor bending over her.

The doctor thought not; but there was probably serious injury somewhere; and Larkin was ordered to return and inform Mrs. Herry.

Paul Herry had hardly told his grandmother what he knew of the accident when Missy was brought in on a litter, where she lay, deadly pale, with her eyes closed, and moaning piteously.

Miss Elvira came and looked at her. "Oh, Winifred," she lamented, "what will your father say?"

"Hush!" Mrs. Herry warned her; but Missy heard and opened her eyes.

"I was—tryin' to find—Brer Nicholas," she panted.

"Poor child!" Mrs. Herry sighed, with tears falling over her cheeks like rain.

Miss Elvira staggered back to the sofa in the parlor and wept and wrung her hands.

"Some one must go for the colonel," Mrs. Herry said.

One of Paul's young friends, who had helped to bear the litter, offered to ride to Thorne Hill, and some time past midnight Col. Thorne alighted at Mrs. Herry's gate.

He had ridden hard and he had ridden alone, for he would not allow the breathless messenger who brought the tidings of Missy's fall to return with him; nor was it so much the instinct of hospitality that made him insist upon the young fellow remaining the night at Thorne as the desire to escape all witness of the anguish he could not hide. He had ordered Griffen Jim to make ready the double buggy and follow immediately with Glory-Ann, but he himself rode out in the night as furiously as his son had ridden away just one year before. The colonel remembered this and groaned aloud; he remembered, too, with a shudder his declaration that he would never again cross Mrs. Herry's threshold save in case of some calamity; and the calamity had come, but not to Mrs. Herry.

The lights were still burning in the parlor and in the hall, and there was a light also in one of the rooms upstairs. The colonel, as he dismounted, scanned the windows of that room with a fevered effort to read there some sign of his child's condition, before he strode up the path.

His violent ride had not subdued his excitement, though to the physician who met him at the door he presented the impenetrable, distant demeanor that had always characterized him; the only sign of feeling he showed was his utter inability to frame in words the questions that burned in his eyes.

"I am of the opinion that the injuries will not necessarily prove fatal," the doctor said, and paused.

The colonel bowed.

"But lameness may be the result."

An angry flush darkened the colonel's face, but he heard all the doctor said in silence, and then, turning abruptly away, went upstairs.

At the door of the room where Missy lay Mrs. Herry met him.

"What is the matter?" he demanded.

"Has not Dr. Lane told you?" Mrs. Herry said, glancing at the child on the bed.

"One doctor!" exclaimed the colonel, wrathfully. "I will have all the doctors in the state! I don't believe the injury will result in lameness; I won't believe anything of the kind."

"My dear cousin," said Mrs. Herry, "we must hope for the best. Let me give you some coffee after your long night ride? Or a glass of wine?"

The colonel refused; he wanted nothing, he said; but he would see the child now.

He stood by the bedside and looked long at Missy. The doctor had given an anodyne, and she lay asleep, with her hands crossed on her breast; and her father, overpowered by the sight, turned away and left the room.

In the morning he came again. Missy had not stirred. "When will she wake again?" he asked, despairingly. But when Missy awoke his distress increased. She had been so little caressed by him, so seldom noticed except to be reprimanded for some childish fault, that he was the last person she wished now to see.

CHAPTER XX.

WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

The impulse that directed Missy's flight was but the culmination, under a favoring suggestion, of that agony of longing and regret which had possessed her soul for a year past. The mention of Paul Herry's return had been like a match to a train of powder; Missy's resolve was fired instantly; time, opportunity, her [illegible] an interest in the child that bore her [illegible] me, she earnestly entreated her nephew to let her have charge of Winifred in New York, where she could have the benefit of treatment by specialists and at the same time receive the best instruction.

The colonel acknowledged the wisdom of this plan, but he was loath to send Winifred away from him just yet; and while he was still pondering this necessary step Christmas came round again.

To Missy this Christmas was a grievous disappointment. She had cherished the hope that Nicholas would return at this season, and when the day came and passed without him she was in a state of almost frenzied distress.

"Father! Father! Where is Brer Nicholas?" she cried, pushing away the gifts that had been lavished upon her.

It was a question the colonel could not answer.

"Don't you ever think of him?" pleaded the little sister, with her slender hands pressed against her aching heart. "I think of him all the time. I don't ever forget him. Oh, father, suppose he is hungry this Christmas day!"

Her father turned upon her a face stony in its despair. "We must forget him," he said, hoarsely. "He is not to be found for any search of mine. To forget is all that is left us."

"Oh, what does this mean?" cried Missy, wringing her hands.

"It means that he has hidden himself out of our reach," answered the colonel, gloomily.

"If I were a man," cried Missy, clinching her small fists fiercely, "I'd search the big world over."

The colonel was hurt that Missy should doubt he had done his best, but his pride disdained to explain what unavailing efforts he had made to discover, for her sake, his son's retreat; and Missy, ignorant of this, felt her heart waxing ever more and more bitter against her father. She did not know that she was miserable because of this bitterness; she thought she was miserable only because she missed her brother.

Missy, however, had by no means abandoned the hope of her brother's return. Some day he would surely come home, and in this confident expectation her energies took the form of a feverish ambition to improve her mind. Brer Nicholas must not find her the ignorant child he had left crying to him in the rain; she must strive for the commendation of the beloved absent brother; for him she studied—as her strength permitted; for him she labored at the detested piano, in a pathetic anxiety that her mind should atone for the defects of the poor little body, lamed in the futile effort to reach him.

And now a great dread possessed Col. Thorne, a dread lest Missy should become morbid through the indulgence of this insistent desire to recover her brother, and he suddenly determined to take her at once to New York and put her under the care of a physician, as his aunt had repeatedly urged him to do.

This was in the summer of 1860. Col. Thorne was one of those who felt sure there would be no war; therefore, when he found, after a few weeks in New York, that Winifred was in a fair way to improve, and that she could be content to remain with her aunt, he did not hesitate to leave her when he returned home in October. His child, he thought, could travel homeward with friends at any time, or he could go to her.

When the fighting began the colonel, like many others, declared that it would all be over in less than sixty days; but as the war went on—an ever deepening horror—he rejoiced, even while his heart ached for the sight of her, that his little lame daughter had been left in New York.

He did not see Missy again until the fall of 1865.

CHAPTER XXII.

NEWS OF NICHOLAS.

Five years had added some inches to Winifred Thorne's stature, but she was a tiny creature still, and she still went lame, leaning on a quaint little crutch with a handle of carved ivory, by help of which she moved with a grace and facility that mocked at pity. The hue of health was on her cheek, whence the obnoxious freckles had vanished; her mouth no longer looked too large for her face; her great gray eyes had taken a deeper coloring, a warmer light; the sunburned streaks in her brown hair had disappeared; Winifred Thorne had bloomed into a piquant, unusual beauty, and her very lameness gave her a romantic charm. Her father's heart, even in the midst of the misfortunes following the war, throbbed with a proud joy when he looked at her. She surpassed his utmost hopes—this dainty creature, all spirit, and fire, and grace.

"Why didn't you follow him?"

Col. Thorne had grown to love this little lame daughter of his with a jealous and exacting devotion, but Missy's regard for her father did not exceed the limit of a dutiful respect, and yet the marked changes that she found in him appealed strongly to her tenderness. He had been gray ever since she could remember him, but his hair was white now, and there were deep lines in his face and he had contracted a stoop that gave him an air of feebleness, but he retained the same stern reticence, and his daughter, albeit she was no more afraid of him now than of old, shrank from him still with a feeling that was half regret and half impatience. It was impossible for the colonel not to see this, but it was his way to suffer in silence.

And not only were the colonel and his daughter estranged in the momentous years that had gone by since Winifred was last at home, but Thorne Hill itself was no longer the same. Missy found, indeed, the same house, the same grounds, but half the broad acres lay untilled and many of the familiar faces of the negroes were missing.

"What has become of them 'all?" she asked her aunt.

"Freedom," Miss Elvira responded, with plaintive brevity, glancing up from the pages of Bishop Ken.

Miss Elvira was much less changed than Col. Thorne. She still wore the same gentle, helpless look that had tempted the childish tyranny of her niece, and she still read Bishop Ken to the neglect of other duties. However, she did now lay aside the cherished volume long enough to give Missy some account of the Thorne Hill slaves.

"They didn't all go," she said; "the old ones who can't do much stayed, and some of the most sensible signed contracts to work on shares. But we are better off than many others. I'm sure I don't know how your Aunt Pauline, with Flora and two little children, is to manage. Aleck was killed at Chickamauga, you know." And Miss Elvira wiped her eyes.

Missy, who had seen only the pomp of war, was just beginning to realize its misery. "We must live for one another," she cried, with generous sympathy.

"I don't know as to that," Miss Elvira objected, with a prudent hesitation. "You know your Aunt Pauline likes her own way, and we wouldn't wish to give up Thorne Hill to her sway. Then those children with no regular nurse—it wouldn't be comfortable, Winifred. I suppose they'll get on somehow, with your father to advise. Cousin Myrtilla manages very well with one of the twins to look after what is left of her plantation. Paul has a situation in a law office in Savannah and Judge Chadwick has taken the other one of the twins in his office. It's lucky that Lottie is engaged to be married to the judge's son. I hope Bess may make as good a match, for it's little enough Cousin Myrtilla can do for them now."

Winifred listened to all this in sad silence; she felt as if she had come, not to the old home she used to know, but to a strange new world of sorrow.

"Why they all wanted to quit, I'm sure I don't know—the negroes, I mean," Miss Elvira continued plaintively. "Your father offered them every inducement, but they'd rather starve on freedom, I suppose. Daphne was one of the first to go. She is in town taking in washing, and working harder than ever she did in her life. I saw her last week, and she looks as if she hadn't enough to eat. Tom Quash—he married Amity, you know—is a waiter at the hotel, and Griffin Jim is a barber. I believe he earns a good deal by odd jobs; yet he declines to take old Dicey, his mother, to live with him. Dicey is helpless now; she can't walk, and she can't even feed herself; so Griffin Jim thinks she is better off with us. I'm sure we don't want Griffin Jim to take her away; we've been used to her so long." And Miss Elvira began to weep afresh.

"And Mom Bee?" Missy queried, anxiously. Missy had been at home some hours when this conversation took place, and her heart was burning to know why Mom Bee did not come to welcome her.

Miss Elvira wiped her eyes and stiffened herself. "Glory-Ann is with her family in town," she said, with strong indignation. "Your father tried his best to have her stay here. He built her a house and he offered her a cow and some pigs; but Cinthy, that daughter of hers, wouldn't agree to it. She made Glory-Ann believe that we had designs upon her."

Missy burst into tears. "Mom Bee might have waited for me," she sobbed.

"Oh, Winifred, don't cry!" Miss Elvira entreated, weeping herself. "It doesn't do one bit of good. I do believe old Gilbert himself would have left us if he hadn't gone long ago."

"I don't!" cried Missy. "And one of these days he is coming back; he is sure to come back; he promised me."

"Winifred? What do you mean?" exclaimed Miss Elvira, startled into an energy of emphasis most unusual.

"It was me sent him away," Winifred declared exultingly, reckless of grammar. "It was me wrote him a pass. And I gave him my gold chain and bracelets for Brer Nicholas to turn into money. What did I care for trikets, and my brother, my dear, dear brother, in need?"

"Winifred, you surely never did do that?" cried Miss Elvira, aghast. "Your father's gifts!"

"I did more than that," Winifred returned, with a proud, sad smile. "I tried to go to him myself."

"I trust you have grown wiser, child," said Miss Elvira, primly. "One rarely meets any return for such sacrifices."

"Oh, aunt Elvira? Don't you know that love pays itself in loving? If I did wrong to try to run away, I bear my punishment—a life long punishment; but I can't, I can't be sorry for the effort I made to find my brother."

"This is rebellious," said Miss Elvira, reaching out her slim hand for Bishop Ken, as for a talisman. "You ought to resign yourself to his loss."

"If he were dead, yes," said Winifred; "but until I know that he is dead"—she faltered, with blanching lips—"Oh, aunt Elvira, did you never know the might of a love that is stronger than life, stronger than death? It seems to me that my brother must live until I see him again, or he must send us a message, even from the grave."

"Winifred, you shock me!" said Miss Elvira; and immediately she took refuge in Bishop Ken, holding the little worn book close to her eyes as was her habit, and pretending to read, while she glanced furtively over its top at her irrepressible niece. "Winifred," sighed she to herself, "is going to be no easier to manage now than when she was a child."

A few days later Glory-Ann visited Thorne Hill in great state. She arrived in a hack, the recently acquired property of Griffin Jim, who expected to make a fortune out of the traveling public.

Mom Bee had grown older, and she looked more stately than ever in her Sunday attire of black alpaca; but she forgot her age and her dignity, and took her nursling on her lap, and shed tears over her.

"My po' little honey been gone all dese years, en' I ain't seed her no mo' ontel she wuz plum growed up? You ain' furgot yo' ole mammy, is you, honey?"

"No; I've forgotten nothing," Winifred declared, between tears and laughter. "You know how you used to tell me that I should 'hone' after this old plantation; and it all came true. I dreamed about the blackberry patch, and the spring, and the scuppernong arbor; and nothing ever tasted half so good as your corn dodgers and buttermilk."

"Dullaw chile, don't talk!"

"And you said once that I should never dance," the girl reminded her, with a sad little smile.

"Don't lay that up beginst me, Miss Winifred, now don't," Glory-Ann entreated. "Fac' is, honey, dese ain' no times ter be dancin', wid your paw agittin' gray in trouble, en' Mawse Aleck Gage done got hisse'f killed in de wah, en' Mawse Nick ain' nuver heerd fum"—

"What has become of the Furnivals, Mom Bee?" Missy interrupted, suddenly.

"Gawn, honey, all on 'em!" said Glory-Ann, with solemnity. "De Lawd is done wiped 'em clean offen de face o' de yeth. Miz Furnival, she done dade, natchul lak, but de res' on 'em wuz men folks, en' de perished in de wah."

"Don't tell me any more about the war!" cried Missy, turning pale. "I had hoped—they might know something of Brer Nicholas. Oh, Mom Bee! Mom Bee! what has become of my brother?"

"Honey, don't you tote sorrer 'long o' what is pas' en' gawn," counseled Mom Bee.

"Oh, it isn't that!" cried Missy, passionately. "It is the rage of helplessness. When I was a child I used to think all knowledge and power came with grown up years; but now I am a child no longer, and I do not know what to do to have my wish. I can't forget him! I must hear from him! I must! I must! God is good, and surely some day God will give my brother back to his home!"

"Hush now, honey, en' I gwan tell you somethin'," said Glory-Ann, lower.