

OLD MAN GILBERT.

By ELIZABETH W. BELLAMY, ("KAMBA THORPE.") Author of "Four Oaks," "Little Joanna," etc.

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CHAPTER XXIV. GLORY-ANN INTERFERES.



"Well," he said, with a sigh of impatience. Winifred Thorne was now determined, in spite of her father's opposition, to see Capt. Fletcher. The first time, therefore, that she went to town to spend the day with her cousins she begged to have the carriage wait when she and Miss Elvira alighted at Mrs. Herr's house.

"I should think you had had riding enough after nine miles," said Miss Elvira, "but you young people are never tired."

"Winifred did not explain, but as soon as she had seen her aunt comfortably settled in Cousin Myrtille's room she bravely announced to Lottie and Bess that she was going to drive to Mrs. Theodore Scott's."

"To meet that Yankee officer!" cried Lottie and Bess, indignantly. "Yes," said Miss Winifred. "Oh, Missy! Missy!" lamented Lottie. "We shouldn't have thought of it—a Southern born!"

"For my part," cried Bess, "I would rather never hear of my brother." "I haven't asked you to go with me," Winifred retorted, in an angry tone, but checked herself, and added, with a sigh, "We'd better not discuss this question, Bess."

"Did your father give you leave?" asked Lottie, excitedly. "For if he did—" "I haven't asked him. Don't say any more; I can't help it; I don't want to think whether I am right or wrong. Let me go!"

"She broke away and hastened out. At the gate she met Mom Bee. "Whichever you go, honey?" asked the old nurse, suspiciously. "De some word you wuz ter spendin' de day, en I come straws ter get a glimpse at you. I 'loves ter spon' de myself, ef Miss Myrtille ain't objectin', en I know she ain't. Lamma tell you, chile; I ain't got speech of dat Fed'ral gemman yit."

"Never mind," Missy interrupted, impatiently. "Let me go!" "Yo' ain't gwain after him, Missy, now sho'ly you ain't!" "I surely ain't," Missy declared. "Den I kin tell you hit ain't no use," said Glory-Ann, planting herself solidly in the way. "Miz Theodo' Scott is done got him later a two-hours buggy, en I kin him down ter St. Mark's. Fact."

"How do I know? Ain't de bospoke de buggy long 'o' Tom Quash, who is quit de hotel en jined de livery stables? Now, honey, jes' you go back ter yo' cousins en enjoy yo' self, en wait on circumstances. Lamma ter yo' ole mammy. I gwain manage."

Glory-Ann's eyes twinkled. "Talk lak I nussed him," she commented to herself. "The Glory-Ann, suh," she said, with a second obeisance, "what nussed Mawse Nick? Mawse Nick what you met up wid de wash," she explained anxiously, seeing that he gave no sign of comprehension. "Mawse Nicholas Thorne, tubbe sho!" "Oh!" exclaimed Capt. Fletcher, pushing away his writing materials. "Who sent you?"

"Dullaw, mawster, de ain't nobody sent me; I come o' my own motion. I nussed all de Thorne children, en Mawse Nick's stud'lin' nothin' but Mawse Nick!" "Missy?" the captain repeated, inquiringly. It was a name he had never heard.

"Dat's Miss Winifred Thorne"— "Ah, yes; I understand," said John Fletcher, biting his mustache to hide a smile. Miss Winifred Thorne was the young lady who had turned her back upon him one day, in Mrs. Lorimer's parlor, and marched out of the room. Mrs. Lorimer had told him her history afterward; and he had promised to befriend this defiant young lady's brother, if ever the opportunity should offer.

"And, strange to say, the opportunity offered," Nicholas Thorne was wounded and taken prisoner at Nashville; yet Capt. Fletcher might never have heard of him, except for an old negro, who, following after, in mortal terror of shot and shell, and by dint of sheer persistence of inquiry, had found his young master in the hospital, and had insisted upon being held prisoner with him.

All this the captain told Glory-Ann. "En Mawse Nick what you met up wid de wash," she asked, breathlessly. "I believe Gilbert was his name," the captain admitted. "De amazin' powers! Ole man Gilbert, tubbe sho! What a gret pity ole man Dublin is dead en gawn, dat he can't hear de news! Ain't Missy gwain be 'prised?"

"Hardly," said Capt. Fletcher, smiling. "She told Mrs. Lorimer that she herself sent him to her brother." Glory-Ann opened wide her eyes and drew a long breath. This was the most astounding news of all. "Dat Missy," she said, "is 'ow 'e heady de des' o' de Thorne. One o' dese days I do 'spect she gwain tek a notion ter go begint mawster; en den what? En' what? Mawse Nick what you please, suh!"

There was little more to tell. Through Capt. Fletcher's exertions Nicholas had been promptly exchanged, and the captain had never heard from him since. "Unfortunately Capt. Fletcher could not recall the name of the little place in Mississippi where Nicholas' home then was, and where his wife and child were living; he had made no memorandum of it, and the letters he wrote Mrs. Lorimer at the time had never reached her."

"I'm pow'ful bleeged ter you, mawster," said Glory-Ann, with a profound courtesy. "I dunno what yo' little Missy is gwain do 'bout hit all, but I know hit gwain give de chile some sort o' comfort."

That evening John Fletcher said to his friend Mrs. Theodore Scott: "En' you dat old nigger a room faced, grinnin' de nigger, wid big teeth, en his name was Gilbert, en he walked hippy hop?" she asked, breathlessly. "I believe Gilbert was his name," the captain admitted.

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Glory-Ann was the possessor of "a loose six bits," as she termed the small floating capital of seventy-five cents that did not form part of the hoard she cherished in the toe of a stocking; and with this sum she hired a mule, which she equipped with the side saddle borrowed from Miss Myrtille, and in the afternoon she set out alone for Thorne Hill. Being minded, however, to pay a visit to an old acquaintance on the way, she did not reach her destination until the next morning. She held a private interview with Missy, as soon as the colonel rode out to inspect his fields; and when he returned, the old woman was jogging on her way back to town. She had done her part; it remained for Missy to manage the colonel, if that were possible.

"You are very cruel," she said, hoarsely. "Winifred was in the parlor, alone, when her father came in, and it needed but a glance to show him that something had happened to move her deeply. Her face was very pale, but in her eyes was a wistful look that made him un-derstand."

signed. "I will lie down until dinner is ready." "He does not care!" thought Missy, bitterly. How was she to know that he sought the privacy of his own room to hide the storm of mingled emotions that shook his very life? He would fain have Nicholas at home again, but he could not bring himself to say so.

When he reappeared at dinner he was calm, and immediately afterward he ordered his horse and rode away. Missy supposed that he was going to see her Aunt Pauline and Flora. "It was long past 10 o'clock that night when the colonel returned, and it gave him a thrill of unaccustomed joy to find his daughter sitting up alone, to keep his supper warm. At most did he hope that she would scold him; but Winifred was not actuated by anxiety on her father's account; she had the utmost confidence in his ability to take care of himself; her object in sitting up for him was to win his favor for her brother. What unspeakable comfort it would have given her could she but have known that he had ridden to Tallahassee expressly to see Capt. Fletcher; but her father did not tell her; he only bade her go to bed. He had had his ride in vain, for Capt. Fletcher was not at home; he had been to St. Mark's, and Col. Thorne preferred to wait for an answer to the note he had left for the captain before saying anything to Winifred."

The news brought by Glory-Ann made Miss Elvira very uncomfortable. She was a creature of habit, and she had formed the habit, in the past eight years, of living without her nephew. She had practically forgotten him. Every hope that centered in the marriage with Dossia Furlow, and she could not see now that his return, granting that he lived, was to be desired. Indeed, Miss Elvira preferred to believe him dead, since never, never again could he be the Nicholas of old. She had long persuaded herself that the colonel would do his whole duty if he made some provision for Nicholas in his will; the prospect of having Dossia and her children at Thorne Hill was regarded by Miss Elvira pretty much as she might have regarded an invasion of the Barbarians.

"You don't reflect how times are changed, Winifred," she fretted. "And there's no denying that Dossia cannot be congenial; she isn't one of us." "Let us find them first," said Winifred, reddening; "all other questions can be settled afterward." "How are you going to find them?" Miss Elvira asked, with provoking meekness. "Nicholas is either dead or he has forgotten us. For my part, I'd rather believe him dead. He must be so changed!"

Winifred shuddered. "If you are very cruel," she said, hoarsely. "If my father would but have Capt. Fletcher here once, just once, we might find some clue to his whereabouts. Do you not know that if your father were to bring that man here your Aunt Pauline and your Cousin Flora never would cross this threshold again? It is you who are cruel! Think of Aleck, killed at Chickamauga!"

"The tears sprang to Winifred's eyes. "It is life that is cruel," she said, sadly. "But you would not be ungrateful, if since Mom Bee came to us with the news about Bre'r Nicholas, and I asked my father yesterday if he did not intend to see Capt. Fletcher, but he said I was never to ask him that again. And I am but a girl. What can I do but assault heaven with my prayers?"

Col. Thorne had not seen fit to acquaint his daughter with the fact that Capt. Fletcher had written to decline the invitation to visit Thorne Hill, conveyed in that note the colonel had left with Mrs. Scott a few days before. A week later Glory-Ann took up her permanent abode at Thorne Hill. She pronounced her willingness to accept the house the colonel had offered her, and she was not backward in demanding the cow and the pigs, nor did she hesitate to hint that a few chickens, by the way of a stay, would not be ungrateful. It would be hard to say just what it was that induced Mom Bee to return. She had been heard to tell Chaney, who was temporarily presiding over the Thorne Hill kitchen, that "sence mawster could tek care of ole Diecy, he mought jes' ez well look care of Glory-Ann," and, also, she had been heard to declare that she "wouldn't give a handfull o' cow peas fur dese young niggers o' freedom who had had plin' ter be ungrateful; but if her solemn assertion was to be believed, her return was prompted solely by affection for "little Missy." She carried back the side saddle, that she felt in duty bound to look after "dat chile." The colonel, she explained, being only a man, couldn't be expected to know how to look after a girl; "en' ez fur Missy-virey—well, Miss Myrtille, you know Missy-virey ain't got no succulation;—what- ever Glory-Ann might mean by that."

That settled again at Thorne Hill, this faithful nurse kept a sharp eye upon "little Missy," admonishing that young lady as she saw fit, and criticizing her visitors freely, for Missy was "sweet and twenty" now, and had admirers not a few. But the right man was slow to put in an appearance, or Glory-Ann was hard to please. This was one thing, that one who was waster another had no manner—Glory-Ann was exacting as to "manners"—and yet another had no money, an insuperable objection, in Glory-Ann's opinion.

"I shall never marry," Winifred would say, gravely. "I am not like other girls." "No, dat you ain't, my honey." "I shall spend my life for my Bre'r Nicholas." "Don't you go promiss dat too fas' now chile; yo' time ain't come," said Mom Bee, with an air of prophecy that gave Missy a vague uneasiness, remembering how many of Mom Bee's sayings had come to pass.

But something happened soon that Mom Bee had never prophesied. CHAPTER XXV. AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.



"All right, sir," said the colonel. "What as Col. Thorne was riding homeward, one day, at noon, he was startled by the sight of a powerful black horse, saddled and bridled, but riderless, galloping furiously in the direction of Tallahassee; a little farther on, as he turned the corner of the briar patch where old Gilbert used to gather sassafras roots, his own horse shied violently, and the colonel was hardly surprised to find a man lying on the edge of the road, motionless, with his head against the obtruded root of an overhanging oak. His face was hidden

by his position, but his hat had fallen off, revealing a well shined head, and fair, closely cut hair. The colonel dismounted, and lifting the unconscious head, discovered the face of a stranger, a well dressed, well made man, of two or three and thirty, perhaps, and unmistakably a gentleman. He revived, in a measure, as his head was moved to a more comfortable position, and muttered, indistinctly, "Lost my way."

"All right, sir," said the colonel. "What is your name?" "There was an effort to answer, but the voice died away in an inarticulate murmur. Col. Thorne, having made a pillow of his overcoat for the stranger's head, remounted his horse and galloped back to the field, where some negroes were at the lumber pile, upon which the injured man was borne to Thorne Hill. A messenger was dispatched to town to summon a doctor, and to leave at the hotel a statement in writing that an unknown man had been found unconscious, on the road near Thorne Hill, and carried to Col. Thorne's house.

Nothing was found on the stranger's person to give any clue to his identity, but had he come heralded by unimpeachable authority, he would not have been made more welcome. Miss Elvira bestirred herself with eager alacrity to have a room put in readiness; the colonel gave his personal attention to his unconscious guest, using such skill as he possessed for his recovery; while Missy, watching at one of the front windows for the doctor, who she thought would never come, sighed to think that there was so little she could do.

As the shades of night fell the fast gathering gloom of the wintry evening, her thoughts wandered away to her long absent brother, who himself had been a sufferer among strangers. Alas! where was he now? When should she see him again? "Missy, is dat you?" it was Glory-Ann's voice that penetrated the shadows, and presently Glory-Ann's weathered hand was laid on Missy's arm. "De doctor done come, honey," she said, in an awe-some whisper.

"When?" exclaimed Winifred, starting up in alarm. "Bless yo' soul, 'bout a half hour ago. He come de short cut, en is gone strait upstairs, by de back do'. Tell you, Miss Winifred, honey, he tuk one look at dat man, en he shuk his head, en 'Missy-virey' what you speak wid him, en up wid de headache. De grit o' de Thorne was 'left' outen her makeup, you better believe; dat hukkom I ain't tellin' Missy-virey what I gwain tell you, Missy, chile, don't you know who dat upstairs?"

"No," said Winifred, seized with a violent trembling. "I did not see; I could not bear to look at him; how should I know?" "He's de Fed'ral gemman," Mom Bee announced, in the tone of fate. "Oh, Mom Bee!" broke from Winifred's white lips, a cry of mingled dismay, reproach and disappointment; for one wild moment the baseless hope that the stranger might prove to be Nicholas had completely mastered her; it left her faint and ill. She sank back in her chair, clasping her head in her hands.

"Dullaw, Missy," said Glory-Ann, impatiently; "thought you wuz gwain be dat glad ter hear 'bout dat long 'ole o' Mawse Nick? Pears lak you hates him mo' fur a Yankee den you kin thank him fur a frien'. Use 's prised at yo'; I is dat." "Don't let him die," said Winifred, rallying with a sudden sense of satisfaction that it had fallen to her father's lot to cancel the obligation to Capt. Fletcher on Nicholas' behalf.

"Don't you be no ways oneasy," said Glory-Ann. "Doctors got way o' shakin' dey heads; hit moks 'em 'pear lak de know mo' de do. He gwain git over it, honey; but it gwain be a tough pull, I'm skeered." Dr. Lane now came in, rubbing his hands, and Glory-Ann precipitately retired, to give her attention to the supper table, seeing that Miss Elvira was incapacitated.

"Well," said the doctor, brusquely, "there's a queer state of things. Suppose you've no idea who your guest is? No body less than that Yankee, Fletcher, when your father declined to receive. Old, isn't it, that the colonel had never even seen him? Good joke, eh, Miss Winifred?"

But Winifred did not even smile. "Is he badly hurt?" she asked, gravely. "Pretty serious case, and Dr. Lane went into a meeting with his brother's affection for her had seemed to him to have faded into a calm and ordinary memory. But he could not tell her this; neither could he tell her that Nicholas' heart was hardened against his father. "My father is growing old," Winifred said, sadly, when he had ended. "The war has made many people old in this part of the world. And I—if I do not find Bre'r Nicholas, I too, shall be old."

The captain was conscious of two distinct sentiments on hearing her express herself in this way—an irresistible irritation that she should use the negro term "Bre'r" for "Brother," and an equally irresistible irritation that so much feeling should be lavished upon Nicholas Thorne. "But he will come back some blessed day!" she exclaimed, with a sudden change of tone. "He will come back, and Daddy Gilbert with him! Poor old Daddy Gilbert! He ain't never had no grievance here; but he did it at my bidding. I did not know that it would be for so long. I was but a child, and it seemed an easy thing for me to have my own way. But I must not tire you," she interrupted herself. "I will go now."

Fletcher was glad she had spared him thanks. "If her hatred is proportioned to her love," he said to himself, gazing after her, "it will but intensify the most hated a Yankee!" And he laughed aloud. In the dusk, that evening, Winifred went out to Glory-Ann's house and entrusted the old woman to make the waffles for supper; and Mom Bee grumbled: "Hukkom Chaney can't cook ter suit you here lately, Missy? Pears ter me you mighty notiate all of a sudden!" "Waffles can't, she never could make waffles equal to yours, Mom Bee," coaxed Missy. "And Capt. Fletcher is down stairs to-day for the first time; don't you know he will be tired and hungry?" "Yo' is done put yo' wafels inter yo' pocket, is you?" said Glory-Ann. Glory-Ann was keeping her vigilant eyes very wide open at this time. Indeed, Miss Winifred Thorne's probable attitude toward the Yankee captain proved to be freely discussed by Mrs. Leonard Thorne, who, of course, avoided Thorne Hill, but who was therefore the officer at Mrs. Herr's.

was poor, and it was through her kindness and liberality that I enjoyed advantages I could not otherwise have had. She is dead now, but don't forget all she did for me." "No," said Winifred, "you could not forget that." She rose and moved restlessly about the room, and at last came and stood beside Mrs. Scott's chair; she felt a strong, incompressible impulse to stoop and kiss that lady, but she resisted it.

"If it had not been for the war?" Mrs. Scott exclaimed, with a bitter sigh. "As my husband says, Capt. Fletcher has come too late for the old times, and too soon for the new. Mr. Scott, you know, dear Miss Elvira, is such a sufferer from that wound he received at Shiloh—hardly ever leaves the house, and the captain is so kind about playing chess with him. Of course we avoid all discussions of the war, and so I would advise you to do, Miss Winifred."

"I have no wish to discuss any subject with him, except my brother Nicholas," Winifred replied coldly. CHAPTER XXVII. WINIFRED'S THANKS.



After many weary days John Fletcher at last was able to make his appearance down stairs. Very pale and weak, the ghost of his former self, he looked, as he sat in the sunshine on the broad piazza, and Winifred's heart was in her throat at sight of him. He was alone, and she saw that now was her opportunity to speak to him of Nicholas; and yet she approached him not without embarrassment, for she could not forget that she had refused to speak to him under Mrs. Lorimer's roof.

Neither could John Fletcher forget the occasion when this young lady had turned her back upon him and marched out of the room, emphasizing every step with her small clutch as though she desired to crush him, as possibly she did; and now she ignored that proceeding! He bowed his acknowledgments somewhat stiffly when she said, with an effort to overcome a certain shyness: "I am so glad that you are able to be out; but when, on a sudden impulse and with a deepening color, she stretched out her hand, he smiled as he took it and the rudeness of the past was forgotten. He had been interested in Winifred's story, but little was lacking to interest him in Winifred after the war and John Fletcher, who had vainly hoped to leave before this date, declined to make his appearance at breakfast.

"The day was not marked by the old time hilarity; that was over forever. There was no supply of egg-nog and ginger bread, no popping of fire crackers, and the shout of 'Christmas Gif!' was feeble and infrequent. Missy dispensed a few presents privately to such of the old family negroes as remained in her father's service, as well as to some few deserters, who had taken advantage of that day's holiday to visit Thorne Hill. The colonel shut himself up in his office all the morning, and Miss Elvira and Winifred went alone to church. John Fletcher remained in his own room; it was his purpose to remain there all day, but in the afternoon Glory-Ann brought him a little note from Missy.

"I know why you stayed away from breakfast," she wrote; "it was kindly meant, but you are our guest, and you must dine with us. It will not be gay, but you will know how to pardon the absence of gaiety." John Fletcher was three and thirty; he thought he had outgrown all sentimental foolishness, but he had not. He had not carefully away; it was his only Christmas present! And of course he accepted the invitation.

The dinner was not gay; an inevitable sense of constraint brooded over the company and made the meal a penance, and each one was secretly glad to quit the table. When the sun had gone down Winifred left Miss Elvira making up her account with Bisham's men, and went out for a walk. The air was chill and light clouds obscured the sky, but Winifred feared neither the night air nor the fast gathering gloom. John Fletcher saw her as she went across the yard, under the leafless China trees, and an impulse for which he did not seek to account urged him to follow. Wherefore he followed, because of a war that was over, he forever an diner; rather would he have fasted; but because she had asked it he did violence to his feelings; it was too much to expect him to do violence to his feelings a second time in one day, and he followed her. With swift strides he overtook her just as she reached the gate that led into the lane.

"Allow me," he said, as he stepped forward to open it. "She turned and looked at him; a sudden blush swept over his face as she thanked him. "May I go with you?" he asked, holding. "It is too late for you to be out alone," he urged, seeing her hesitate; "it is growing dark, and—" "I am not afraid," she said. "I am going no farther than Daddy Gilbert's old cabin. It is not a place that can interest you."

"But I may go with you?" he reiterated. Winifred smiled, and they walked on in silence. He had never yet been able to conquer the constraint that oppressed

him in her presence, and she had never learned the art of "making talk." She did not speak until they reached the fence, including old Gilbert's deserted dwelling. "This is the place," she said, and pushed open the sagging gate before the captain could offer to assist her. "You will never see all that I see in this poor spot," she added; but she held the gate open, and the captain smiled and stopped inside.

A dense thicket of plum bushes had grown up at the back of the house, and the dry stalks of the self-sown Palms Christi bean occupied all the little space in front; the path to the broken door step was overgrown with rank knot grass that had lost its greenness, and all about the half fallen and abandoned little dwelling there brooded a melancholy calm, intensified by the fast gathering shadows.

"The negroes say this place is haunted," Missy said, "but I am not only ghost that flits by. I like to come here when I am sad." "And are you sad now?" John Fletcher asked, impulsively, with a deeper sympathy than he dared to show. "A moment's pause followed; then Missy said, in a light tone, as if she would dismiss the subject: "There is no reason why I should be very gay—just now."

Her long endurance, her proud reserve, touched John Fletcher more deeply than any complaining. An infinite tenderness took possession of him, as he contemplated this child—he was more than ten years her senior—so ethereal, so young to be thus overshadowed by sorrow and infirmity. "Just now?" he repeated, with a passionate wish to comfort her. "But this will pass, Missy. You are so young; life is only beginning. There is happiness in store for you; I am sure of it!"

Even while he spoke he perceived, with a thrill of glad wonder, that Winifred made a slight involuntary movement, as if she would draw nearer to him, and on the instant he was by her side. "But she had not heard a word he said. She was gazing intently into the depths of the plum thicket, with panting breath and quick beating heart. "What is that?" she gasped, in a terrified whisper, and clutched the captain's arm. "Do not be frightened," he said, as he laid his hand on hers, which was cold and trembling. "There is nothing here to harm you."

"There! Do you not see?" she whispered fearfully, "or am I going mad?" And with a stifled scream Winifred Thorne hid her eyes against the Yankee captain's breast. "It is only an old negro," he answered, as what had seemed a shadow emerged from the thicket and assumed definite form. "An old negro," Missy repeated, and shivered from head to foot. "Are there, indeed, such things as ghosts?" But she did not look up until she heard the old, familiar greeting: "Why, Missy! Missy! huh you do?"

The voice, the words, the attitude, the her. She abandoned her fear, she sprang forward, seemed to fly to meet the apparition coming along the grass grown path, and stretching out her hands, she clasped them over old Gilbert's toil hardened fingers, while her crutch fell forgotten on the ground. "At last! Oh, at last!" Her voice rang out upon the twilight stillness, full of an infinite pathos of thanksgiving. Somehow, John Fletcher was not as pleased as the should have been; he felt himself deserted. He picked up the crutch and stood irresolute, loth to leave, yet uncertain whether it became him to stay.

"Tubbe sho!" old Gilbert responded, with a chuckle of supreme satisfaction. "Hit's me! En' you is dat grieved, Missy, en' prutty ez a pink! Lawd! wuz de chile!" "Bre'r Nicholas? Where is Bre'r Nicholas?" "Missy, ain't Mawse Nicholas here at home?" asked old Gilbert, anxiously. "No!" cried Missy, sharply. "Oh, why do you ask that?" "Den, Missy, chile, I dunno whey is Mawse Nicholas," said the old man, slowly and sorrowfully.

Missy's head drooped; her slight form swayed like a reed. Capt. Fletcher sprang forward and saved her from falling. "Why, I loved you wuz mawster," said old Gilbert, bewildered; "en' prairie be ter glory—I do believe—you sho'ly is—Mawse Gin'ral Fletcher, in de Fed'ral army!" "That's my name, but not my rank," the captain replied, as he placed Winifred on the doorstep. "The night is wuzn't going to fall," said she, with averted head. "John Fletcher felt snubbed decidedly; yet he did not like to leave Winifred, though she ignored his presence—rather she was oblivious of him. "It was on this very step," she said to old Gilbert, reproachfully, "that you promised to keep track of Bre'r Nicholas, and now you do not know where he is."

"Honey," returned old Gilbert, mildly, "what kin yo' ole no 'count nigger go in de stir o' de nations? I don't my po' bes' ter keep Mawse Nick outen de wab, but he wuz jes' dat heady, go he would!" "Of course," said Missy, proudly. "I tol' him he wuz gwain git hisse' shot ter pieces, follin' 'long o' dat wab, but he ain't pay no 'tention; en' I waded him, en' I catch up wid him when he was ridin' de wuz tooken prisoners, en' I wuz Mawse Nick to Melton, in de Winny Valley, ez de call hit, whey we wuz livin' endurin' de wah; en' mo' en' Miss Dossia, en' Miss Roxy White wuz nussed him well again; en' den I wuz tuk dat wid de roomatiz, so ez hit wuz un-possible ter look after Mawse Nick, en' I dunno wher way he went sence dat."

"He done left Miss Dossia en' de chile, en' Miss Roxy, en' tuk up his march ter him, en' he done left his quality, sho', Bitten ter be one o' de Thorne generation. Is you knowin' how he wuz pow'ful frienly ter Mawse Nick?" "Never mind him," Missy interrupted, sharply. "How did you happen to lose Bre'r Nicholas?" "Missy, hit wuz disshay way: I dudno hukkom Mawse Gin'ral Fletcher had bruk hit ter pass; but me en' Mawse Nick, wuz wuz turned free outen Nashville, whey we wuz tooken prisoners, en' I wuz Mawse Nick to Melton, in de Winny Valley, ez de call hit, whey we wuz livin' endurin' de wah; en' mo' en' Miss Dossia, en' Miss Roxy White wuz nussed him well again; en' den I wuz tuk dat wid de roomatiz, so ez hit wuz un-possible ter look after Mawse Nick, en' I dunno wher way he went sence dat."

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