CHAPTER XXX. TIME TO KEEP SILENCE.

Pushed back his chair and rose. was the middle of January wher n Fletcher came down stairs again. o find the house wearing a strangely siat and deserted aspect.

The colonel, with profuse apologies, had asked his guest's permission the rening before to be absent for several Bays, on account of the wedding of Miss erry "and the festivities thereto per taining," as the colonel choicely phrased is window Miss Elvira and the colonel lepart immediately after breakfast in the rusty, rattling carriage, did not ex-pect to meet either of them. It was Winifred's absence that he felt, though had persuaded himself that be was ad he need not see her again. But it eas by no means a painful surprise then, sauntering simlessly into the paror, he found Winifred there alone.

She was standing near one of the front ndows, her face partly turned away, and John Fletcher might easily have re tired unseen; but he had no thought of etiring. Miss Winifred Thorne, in a rich blue silk, with a train, and a cloud filmy lace around her throat and at er wrists, produced upon him an imion so novel and so complex that he ost sight of his resolution to avoid her, nd he hesitated but a moment before he crossed the room. It was of herself, never of her dress, he had thought here-tofore; but he now recalled that so long as he had been at Thorne Hill be had never seen Miss Winifred Thorne in any other costume than a very plain, dark rown walking dress. It was not an ugly dress, but also it was not a dress that could in any way attract more ition than the wearer; yet John Pletcher was not sure that he did of like it better than the blue silk; at least he felt quite sure that, in a cerp sense, she had worn that plain brown pose of a gene had adorned herself, she ministeredemely pretty, and the cap-

an the paity to bid good-by to his s young daughter. Winifred was very pale, but when she ed and saw him the color came mickly to her face and deepened as he ed her.

clear and himself unwilling to slight

"I beg pardon," he stammered. "I did not expect this pleasure; I had the imdon that you had gone away some

'No," said Winifred; "I did not wish to go. This is my home, and I have been 10," she added, hastily, in evident em-"Dl?" repeated Fletcher.

"Oh, not very ill." Then seeing that he was taking note of her dress, she said, with deepening confusion, "I am dressed to please my father."

Jest and badinage were not possible between these two; but John Fletcher sould not resist replying, with intent to

be provoking:
"I should never have suspected you of dressing to please me; though perhaps I might not have thought that it was to

please your father."

She gave him a look of cold reproof, and sat down in an arm chair beside the marble topped table that stood stiffly in the precise center of the room, "The fire is too warm," she murmured, pressing her hands against her burning cheeks. The captain, who did not intend to be rebuffed, followed her. "May I sit down,

too?" he asked. Winifred did not immediately reply; she was looking past him toward the window she had left. "We are going to dine at Judge Chadwick's," she nounced, as though she had not heard him. "My father and my aunt are gone to see Mrs. Leonard Thorne before we start for town, and I am waiting for them." She removed her hands from her dushed cheeks and looked at Capt. Fletcher, who was still standing on the other side of the table. "Yes, you may sit

down," she said, not without constraint. He thought the permission rather grudgingly given; nevertheless, he sat down, and looked at her in silence for some moments, fearing to offend her by

anything that he might say. "Surely," he exclaimed at last, ap-pealingly, "there are some reasons why

we might be friends?" Winifred did not answer, but she gave

him one swift, inexplicable glance, and turned her eyes away; all the color had died out of her face. "The war is over," he said, and hesi-

tatingly stretched out his hand. Once, once only, she had clasped hands with him, and once she had clung to his arm; if she would but put her hand in his

But Winifred, trembling visibly, would ot see the proffered hand; she even drew little away, as if to rest against her

"The war is not over," she answered. in a low, constrained voice. "There are

no armies in the field, but"-She raised her eyes and looked at John Fletcher, who had withdrawn his hand.

He expected to hear her utter some prophecy of future uprising; he was not at all prepared for what she had to say. "Capt. Fletcher!" she exclaimed, tremulously, "since you have been with us,

who of all our friends have entered this house? Mrs. Theodore Scott, who is your friend, and Dr. Lane." The captain's face flushed darkly. "My father, on Christmas Day, would

not go to church," Winifred continued, because he would not leave his guest, and he could not invite that guest into his pew."
"Could not?" repeated the captain

with a smile that exasperated Winifred. "How would you feel," she exclaimed with suppressed anger, "were you at home, to have a 'rebel,' as you call us, sit in the same pew with you?"
"I could stand it, if the rebel could,"

replied Capt. Fletcher, still smiling. "Especially if I might choose my rebel." Winifred, with furious color. "And if

it should prove that my brother has died of his wounds," she faltered, as the color ebbed away—"the war willinever have been over for me." She covered her face with her hands,

and John Fletcher pushed back his chair, "Oh, forgive me!" she cried, with still averted face. "I do not mean to forget -forget"----

"Thanks," he answered, coldly. "It is not worth the effort of your remembrance. I was glad to serve a friend of my friend-Mrs. Lorrimer. You must believe that I most sincerely regret the chance that has compelled me to be so long a trespasser upon Col. Thorne's hos-pitality. I shall never forget his kindnose his uniform courtesy toward an undesired guest. Neither shall I forget"-

He paused abruptly, and paused so long that Winifred, under the spell of a will stronger than her own, turned toward him to find his eyes fixed upon her with a look unfathomable, of mingled sadness, reproach, appeal, from which she shrank abashed and frightened.

"-his daughter," the captain said, when he had compelled her eyes to meet his own. "His uncompromising daugh ter!" he repeated, and smiled.

But Winifred had turned away; she did not see the smile, and at the word 'uncompromising," she impulsively lifted her head, with a forbidding gestureor so John Fletcher construed it. For a moment he stood irresolute, a moment during which he underwent a fierce with himself; then he turned struggle away and left her, and went up stairs to his room.

."Not another day! Not another day!" he repeated to himself aloud. He felt weak and ill; his voice was hoarse, and he was trembling so violently that he was forced to throw himself upon the

But not long did he remain there. He rose and began gathering his belongings together with feverish haste. "I will depart to-morrow!" he declared, fierce-"It shall not befall me to see her again!"

And as he said this he looked out of the window and saw the carriage waiting, and Winifred Thorne going down the steps of the piazza, attended by a handsome young fellow, who looked at her with admiring eyes. Winifred was radiant with delight. John Fletcher could hardly realize that this was the same girl he had left down stairs not half an hour agone. "A boy!" he exclaimed, in fierce con-

"Oh, fool! Oh, fool!" When he came away from the window he saw Glory-Ann standing in the doorway with a cup of beef tea, a diet ha abominated.

"Ah, that's right!" he exclaimed, with bitter gayety, as he quaffed the oup that neither cheered nor inebriated. "Build up my strength within the next twentyhours, Mom Bee. I must get away from here to-morrow." "You look lak hit," said Glory-Ann,

secretly pleased to hear him call her 'Mom Bee." (But he had done so unwittingly.) "Better not be too brash. You gwan overstrain vo'se'f," Who is that young sprig I saw just

now dancing attendance upon your young lady?" he asked, with assumed carelessness, as he set down the cup.
"Dat's Mawse Paul Herry," Glory-Ann

made answer. "He's got a liever's shop in Savannah; but he's come home to see his kin, 'long o' Miss Lottie's weddin'dat's his sister. His gran'ma is de colonel's cousin, en' him en' Missy ain't met up sence she wuz a chile. Now you jest mind ez I tell you, en' mek yo'se'f easy. You ain' gwan git away fam here ter morrer. You needn't try. De fambly is gwan be gone se-verial days, en' I gwan tek charge o' you. Dem's my orders-from Missy herse'f."

John Fletcher felt the blood rush to his face, though he put no faith in Glory-Ann's garrulity. He found himself her thrall, however, for his strength would scarce admit of any exertion; and in deed, when he grew calmer, he was content to walt, feeling that it would be an ungracious act to steal away in the absence of the family.

> CHAPTER XXXI. WINIFRED AND MER FATHER.



"You shall read for wourself."

Winifred remained in Tidlahassee some days after her father and her aunt returned to Thorne Hill, and when she came home again Capt. Fletcher bad taken his departure. She said, with more vehemence than seemed necessary, that she was very glad, although she presently asked the colonel, with some anxiety:

"Father, I hope you weren't rude to Capt. Fletcher, that he went so suddenly? He is Aunt Winifred's friend, you know.

"Wherefore should I be rude to my guest?" said the colonel, in a tone of cold surprise. "But I don't deny that his presence was a constraint."

"Yes," says Winifred, wearily, "Now we can turn all our thoughts to Brer Nicholas. You know we must find him." The colonel frowned. "It is a hopeless undertaking," he said.

"We might advertise?" Winifred suggested, engerly. "Advertise?" repeated the colonel, re-

coiling. "Drag our family history into the public prints? Don't think of such a step for a moment." What does it matter, so we find him?"

Winifred faltered. "It is not to be thought of," the colonel reiterated, sternly. "Besides," he added, after a moment's pause and with stifled sigh, "it would avail nothing. Nicholas knows where to find us. You don't reflect that he has a wife, and his

wife has her influence, of course." Winifred turned very pale. "Do you think that Dosia?"— she stammered; but she was unable to finish the question. "Nicholas does not wish to be found;

of that I have long been convinced," said the colonel, coldly. Winifred made no reply. A great bitterness filled her heart and abided there.

She spoke no more of Nicholas, for she no longer hoped to find him; and in abandoning that hope she seemed to have abandoned all interest in life. The colonel was distressed beyond measure. He still held to the theory that because she was young she must

crave gayety; and, willing to make any acrifice for her sake, he said to her one Winifred, would you like to live in town; to give up Thorne Hill and go to

Tallahassee?" "Oh, no! no!" said Winifred, shrinking as from a blow. "I want to live and die

"But times are so changed, Winifred, and if you no longer find it a happy

She turned quickly and looked at her father, and it was as if the scales had fallen from her eyes. She saw him old and careworn and lonely, and all at once the filial love that had so long been held

in abeyance leaped into life.
"My father! My father!" she cried,
with outstretched arms. "You must let me love you! Since we cannot reach my brother there is no one cige for me to love. Do not be so cold and stern with

me. I need a little petting." But caresses and endearments were not in the colonel's way; how deeply he was moved he found no words to tell; he could only put his arms around his child, felt some burning tears drop upon her hair.

"It is because I am so little," she whispered, with a pathetic attempt at playful-"And I haven't been a very good

daughter, my father"—
"My dear child!" the colonel faltered. "But I shall be a good daughter from this time. Only, let us stay on at this dear old hill. I don't want ever to go anywhere else. This is home, and I am so happy, now that I am no longer shut out from your heart, my father!"

The colonel was hurt. "I have never shut you out, Winifred," he said. "No: it is that I have so long shut myself out!" Winifred declared, with the generosity of an affectionate nature.

"But that is over, and life is lovely still."

Her voice shook a little, and she brushed away the tears that would rise.

The blessedness of love is rather in loving than in being loved; and from this day Winifred was happy beyond words in lavishing upon her father all those fond attentions she had been wont, as a child, to bestow upon her brother. The colonel could not suddenly change his nature; he was shy of giving caresses, of uttering terms of endearment; but he submitted to his daughter's demonstra tions, and she was content.

Miss Elvira was greatly puzzled at this new order of things. "I don't know what has come over you of late, Winifred,' she complained. "Your father isn't used to all that fussing. Aren't you afraid you will annoy him?" But Winifred only laughed, and Miss Elvira sighed and turned a page of Bishop Ken. She found

thard to understand Missy.

Glory-Ann likewise found it hard to understand Missy. "Well, well," she commented to herself, "I thought, fust, she was a-pinin'; but hit do 'pear now lak she is plum' glad dat Yankee is gone. Hit's a pity he wuz a Yankee, 'cause I reckin he got mo' money den Tallahassee gemmen, dese days; en' Missy better have

She ventured, one day, to say as much to Missy, adding: "Hit did 'pear ter me lak he sot a heap o' sto' by you, honey." "You'll never see him this way again, Mom Bee, I hope," said Missy.

"H'm?" grumbled Mom Bee. "Hit's one o' dem Taliahassee gemmen, den?" De is quality, tubbe sho, but whey's de money? Dat what I studies,"

Old Gilbert, too, had his views on the subject, though he did not deliver them quite so plainly. The old man was now comfortably settled in his rehabilitated cabin, with his ground well plowed and his hen house stocked, yet he was not altogether content; not that he lacked anything for which he could express a wish-"but hit wuzn't lak de ole times," he complained to Missy. "All de ole niggers is disuppearin', en'

de new ones is all begigged fur politics. En' Sis Dicey, po' crittur, is dat foolish she can't 'member me no longer den I kin tell her who I is. One way en' another, de is all changed. 'Ceptin' of Glory-Ann," he presently added, in a tone of mild reprobation. "Glory-Ann is jes' ez satisfied in her own jedgment ez ever she wuz. I tek notice she ain't changed none -in sperrit."

"En' mo'over, I tek notice, Missy, wid rer en' wid sham estly, "what dishyer ole plantation ain't a-gwan on lak hit useter. De orter be a younger man den mawster on dishyer plantation. We needs Mawse Nick, tubbe sho'. Now, doan you go ter sighin' dat a-way, Missy, en' I gwan tell you somethin' prime comfortin'; you put vo' 'pendance in Mawse Gin'ral Fletcher, en' you

"No," said Missy, with a far off look in her eyes. "We've done with him for-

"You gwan see," old Gilbert repeated. The days went by; the tender green of the oak tassels and the purple blush of the Judas tree began to hint of spring's return; and Missy renewed one of the oys of her childhood, hunting wild violets in a nook she knew of old. As she was returning from one of these expeditions, in the gloaming, her father met her with the unexpected tidings that he had a letter from Nicholas.

Missy did not exclaim, she did not turn pale, she did not grow faint; but the shock of joy and surprise for a moment deprived her of speech; she could only look at her father beseechingly.

"My dear child," said the colonel, compassionating her, "he is safe and

"Oh, God is good!" she broke forth.
"My dear, dear brother! Let us go to him, my father! I cannot wait; my heart drags my body!"

"Winifred, sit down," the colonel commanded. "You will make yourself ill." "No, no," she protested, with tearful laughter. "I am too full of joy to be ill! Oh, tell me all, quickly."

"Not unless you promise to be calm," the colonel insisted. Winifred sat down. "I have been calm for years," said she; "let me be

mad with joy now." Her father's eyes filled with tears. 'You shall read for yourself," he said, as he put the letter into her hands.

There were only three short pages, but these were eloquent with the desire for reconciliation.

"Ah! let us go to him at once!" cried Winifred. "No, my daughter," the colonel re-

plied, with sad decision; "Nicholas must come to me." "Yes, he must! he must! But write: write now! Say, 'My dearest son, come home.' He is your 'dearest son,' you know," she urged, detecting a shadow on her father's face, "for you have no other."

"You must leave me to write my letter in my own way," the colonel said in-exorably. "Nicholas shall come home; but you must remember that he will not come alone."

"No; you will have two daughters." The colonel turned away, impatiently, He had never thought of Dosia Furnival as his daughter; he could not bring himself to think of her in that light now; but he could make up his mind to accept her as his son's wife; and it was not Dosia's advent that he dreaded; it was Miss Roxanna White against whom he revolted. For Eoxanna the Inevitable, Roxanna the Avenger, had written to the colonel; but, with characteristic reti cence, he said nothing of this to Wini-

It had never been Winifred's habit to confide her joys and sorrows to Miss Elvira, but now a sort of rage for sympathy urged her to call on that gentle, inane lady to rejoice with her. She almost snatched the little worn book of devotions but of her aunt's hands, exclaiming, with laughter and tears-

"Oh, let us give thanks to God with

not out of a book! For my brother that was lost is found again!" "Winifred!" said Miss Elvirs, with

mild rebuke. "It is-unladylike to be so-forcible "Brer Nicholas—haven't you heard?"
"Yes; I have heard," Miss Elvira sighed, in answer; "that is why I went to my devotions." Then Winifred saw that

she had been weeping.
"Surely — you rejoice?" she asked,
trembling; for it frightened her to realize what hatred and anger waited to rage in her heart against whoever should re-

fuse to rejoice at her brother's return. Miss Elvira turned her eyes away. "The old joy died," she said, sadly, when Nicholas rode away in the rain that summer night, nearly nine years

ago. It can never come again." "You are cruel, you are wicked to say that!" cried Winifred. "No, Winifred; I am only experienced.

I loved Nicholas dearly, but when I think of his coming now my heart fails me. There will be a difference; it is only kind to warn you."
"What difference?" Winifred demand-

ed, with fire in her eyes.
"Why should we deceive ourselves, child?" said Miss Elvira, querulously. 'You know that Nicholas will not return alone.

"Would not Dosia be my sister?" cried Winifred. "Would she not be your niece and my father's daughter? She is beautiful, and she is good; I accept Do-

"Oh, Dosia," said Miss Elvira, slightingly. In a certain sense she, too, accepted Dosin; that was inevitable.
"And as to the little boy"— Winifred began, with a tremulous tender-

"It is Nicholas' child," Miss Elvira interrupted, placidly; the child likewise she could accept, "But there's that dreadful Miss Roxanna White; we shall

never be rid of her." "She has been a good friend of Brer Nicholas; I love her for that," said Winifred, undaunted, "Let her come, and let her stay, if she likes; Thorne Hill has

"My dear, you don't know her! She is a grenadier in petticonts. Such a letter as she has written your father! She refuses to be parted from Nicholas and his wife and child; if they come, come will she; and we shall live under

martial law." "And we shall be very happy," Winifred insisted, though in her heart of hearts she felt the shadow of her aunt's forebodings.

> CHAPTER XXXII. AFTER LONG YEARS



This father forgot his injured pride. When old Gilbert was informed that Nicholas would be coming home in a few days he exclaimed, with triumphant

thanksgiving: "I knowed hit! Bless Glory!" Hukkom you knowed hit? sneered Glory-Ann. "Is you tryin' ter mek out

you is Solomon en' de prophets?" "What I done tell you, Missy?" pur-sued old Gilbert, serenely indifferent to this taunt. "Put yo' 'pendence in Mawse Gin'ral Fletcher.' "He had nothing to do with it!" cried Missy indignantly, "Brer Nicholas wrote of his own accord; he said never a word

of your 'Mawse Gin'ral Fletcher.' I won't be indebted to Capt. Fletcher. We've returned all he did for Brer Nicholas, and there's an end of him." "Is dasso?" said old Gilbert regretfully.

'Well! well! Tubbe sho!" "Hukkom you is so sot beginst de capen all of a suddent?" Glory-Ann remonstrated. "Times I is heerd you say Chancy can't mek waffles fitten fur him to cat, en' now you talk lak he wuz good

riddance! You is jes' ez onsartin ez a chile, Missy; dat you is," "I wish I were a child," Missy sighed, with a vague, unwilling apprehension of the truth of her Aunt Elvira's declaration that the old joy could never come again. As the day for her brother's return drew near she had discovered in herself, to her sorrow and confusion, an inexplicable shrinking from that long delayed meeting, a feverish eagerness to have the agony of joy over and done

with. In her anxiety to eliminate as much as possible of the element of pain and embarrassment that she could not but feel waited upon this first meeting, she essaved to coax her father to his best behavior. "You will not look stern, my father?" she entreated, with a smile that struggled to express a confidence she did not feel. "For the old time is over; for-

get-forget the past." The colonel frowned impatiently; but a little time ago this same inordinate Winifred bad declared that to forget was

"I have written Nicholas to come home; I have made no conditions," he said, a little coldly. "I never do things by halves, and I shall not behave in a manner unbecoming a Thorne."

Missy sighed and said no more. It was a dark and stormy night when Nicholas rode away from Thorne Hill, young, buoyant, ardent, defiant; he returned on a bright spring day, sobered and saddened. And he came not alone; he brought with him not only his wife and child and the redoubtable Roxanna-he brought with him also the shadows of the long, sad years of absence and estrangement. They wrapt him about as with a mantle; they made themselves visible in his hair, prematurely gray; in the deep lines that marked his handsome face, in the sadness of his eyes, in his drooping figure, and in the carclessness with which he were his shabby, threadbare clothes. Missy would never have known him, and the shock of finding him so changed went nigh to break her heart.

It was a meeting in which sorrow inevitably outweighed joy. The colonel would have preferred to see his son first alone, but his pride and his shyness made him shrink from exacting this; and when the carriage that brought Nicholas drove to the door he stood on the piazza erect, composed, with Miss Elvira trembling on one side of him and Winifred trembling on the other, while old Gilbert and Glory-Ann, in jealous rivalry, maintained a respectful distance in the rear. But at the sight of Nicholas, as he came up the steps, this father forgot his injured pride, his anger, his disappointed hopes; he remembered only that this, his son who

was lost, was found again, and he took

exile in his arms. And there was a great silence, broken at last by old Gilbert's devout ejacula-tion, "Praise be ter Glory!" for which Glory-Ann rebuked him with a vigorous thrust of her elbow, and the inquiry: "Is you plum forgot de manners you tuk

away fum Thorne Hill?" Dosia, beautiful still, with a certain majestic grace, in spite of her poor and faded dress, stood apart, proudly shy; for at this supreme moment no one thought of her or the boy, whom a gaunt, grim giantess held in her arms with an

air of determined proprietorship.

To Missy her brother looked like stranger, but when he turned to her she threw herself into his arms with a passionate burst of tears that had, alas! little kinship with joy. This was not the brother she had lost. The past was never to return.

The colonel gave his son's wife a more gracious welcome than Missy had dared to hope, and he took his little grandson in his arms and kissed and blessed him; but for Roxanna White his only greeting was a stiff bow.

Time had made his mark upon this vigorous amazon since the day she attacked the colonel on the road side; but she still carried her head high, and the fire in her eyes was not quenched. Plainly, in spite of time, here was the same Roxanna, unterrified and uncompromising. When Missy would fain have found a likeness to her brother in the little boy, "He's the bawn image of his grandfather, Job Furnival!" Roxanna

declared, grimly. But this declaration, made for the colonel's discomfiture, failed of its effect, so far, at least, as he was concerned, for he had taken himself away.

It was soon manifest, however, that Col. Thorne was not vulnerable to Rox-anna's thrusts; he had the air of looking over and beyond her into space, and to a certain extent he ignored her. Not that he held her devotion to Nicholas cheap. He had desired, indeed, to make som substantial acknowledgment of her services to his son, but when he spoke of this, in a private interview, not long after Nicholas' return, Roxanna took fire.

"Pay me?" she shricked. "Is that yo' meanin'? You can't pay me! The war ain't cleaned you out entire, Col. Thorne, but you can't never give yo' son an' yo' grandson mo'n what I've give 'em. They an' Dosia together have had the heart outen my body; what kin pay me fur that but theyselves? I spoke my mind once pretty free, Col. Thorne, which hit done me good; an' I'm boun' ter speak hit free some mo'. Don't you go ter lieve hit was all Nick's grit what hilt him back from you so long; he ain't never got yo' letters, 'cause I kep 'em

"Woman!" exclaimed the colonel,

choking with indignation.
"Yes, I'm a woman," returned Roxanna, with composure. "That's how come my heart ached an' burned fur Nick an' Dosia when you flung 'em off. I tuk 'em fur mine, an' I'm got a grip on 'em what can't be shook a-loose. Whar they go, thar I go; whar they stay, thar

"But, Lor' A'mighty bless yo' soul, Col. Thorne, I ain't layin' up no grudge beginst you 'long o' what's past an' gone. I've toted my load 'long o' Nick Thorne, an' I mek no doubt you've toted yourn. Accounts is squared now; you let 'em stay squared. Hit's a po' business ter be openin' new trade with trouble; I ain't no objections ter be stayin' here 'long o' you all, fur I don't eat no idle bread whar. An' bein' you're a bawn gentleman, you got no occasion, as I kin see, ter set me a-drift-(bein' how I ain't yo' son," she added mentally).

The colonel had no desire to set Roxanna adrift; he acqueisced in her presence with dignity, if not with cordiality and, happily, she did not prove so uncomfortable an element in the household as had been feared. Miss Elvira, in exlaining the situation to the friends of the family, was accustomed to say, with a neat little air of commendation, that Roxanna White "knew her place;" but Roxanna stated the case somewhat differently.

"I ain't claimin' ter belong ter the Thorne family," she said; "all I ask 'em is, gimme space ter myself, an' lemme have the raisin' o' that chile, an' I'm satisfied." "An' what manners is she fitten ter

teach Mawse Nick's boy?" Glory-Ann demanded, in dudgeon. "Po' white trash! Lawd, how times is changed!" "She allers wuks ter do right," said

old Gilbert, charitably. "Dat ain't gwan render her quality, is hit?" retorted Glory-Ann. "No, hit ain't," old Gilbert admitted. "But lack o' bein' quality ain't gwan

hender her fum gittin' ter hebben, ez I kin see. "Hit's dis yeth what I'm discussin'," said Glory-Ann, with supreme disdain.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A WARNING. "I got somethin' on my mind ter tell you, Winifred Thorne," said Roxanna White, mysteriously; "an' p'r'aps you'll thank me, an' p'r'aps you won't; but I'm boun' ter open my mouth in 'cordance

with my lights."
"About what?" Winifred asked, with more amusement than curiosity. They were sitting under the scuppernong arbor, where there was little or no danger of interruption, and yet Roxanna looked around cautiously to make sure there was no one near.



"Little sister, this friend of mine is no "S'pose you know," said she, in a

tragic whisper, with a bony finger on Winifred's arm, "as how the colonel was a-writin' an' a-pesterin' constant after Nick, all ter get him home agin, after he done turned him adrift?" "Yes, I know," said Winifred, reluct antly. She did not wish to speak of the

"Lawd, you needn't git riled," said Roxanna. "I ain't riled, not now; but them days I hadn't got my cawnsent ter tek up my roost on this Thorne Hill, an I was on the watch cawntinual, so ez never one o' them pesterin' letters o' the colonel didn't come inter Nick Thorne's hands."

"You wicked, wicked woman!" cried Winifred, up in the vehemence of her wrath. "No. I ain't wicked," said Miss White.

complacently. 'Management ain't wick-edness; an' I'd a squar right ter manage, seein' ez I'd picked Nick up. I was dead sot beginst him comin' home; but how you reckin I come ter change my mind? "You repented, I hope," said Wini-

fred, severely.
"No, I didn'. You seddown an' lemme tell you. Ez nigh ez I ken mek out, hit

"A Yankee? "I said a Yankee. Lawd, they've been plenty enough of late! I knowed him fur a Yankee that minute he opened his mouth; they can't talk nach'ral, like us southerners. This Yankee was a huntin' Nick Thorne," pursued Rozanna, sig-nificantly. "Pr'aps you know somethin' "bout him."

"I know nothing whatever about it." said Winifred, stiffly. "Well," Roxanna continued, "I was skairt ter ask what fur he was aof Nick; but I kep' my eyes skint, an' I found out he was preachin' ter git Nick ter mek hit up with the colonel, an' then I was riled! I had brung Nick ter my way o' thinkin' that he could live an' die thouten his kin an' I Alla". 'thouten his kin, an' I didn't want no Yankee meddlin' with my business. Mo'over, I s'picioned the colonel sont

"No such thing!" Winifred contradict-

ed, hotly.
"No; I foun' out mighty soon ez hit
warn't the colonel," Roxanna said, and paused; but her listener sat with averted countenance, and would give no sign; whereupon Roxanna boldly declared, "Hit was you!" 'That is not true!" cried Winifred. "Bless yo' soul, no!" returned Roxanna, compactly. "No need ter git riled. He ain't said so; but Lawd, child, hit

don't always need word o' mouth ter git yo' arrands done; an' when that air gab gifted Yankee argyfied with Nick Thorne that you held yo' heart sot on gittin' yo' brother home agin, 1 give in, an' con-fessed them letters, an' I told Nick ter write home, pintly, which I hadn't expected ter do nothin' of the sort." If she expected any show of gratitude,

she was doomed to disappointment, "Do you mean to tell me," said Winifred, indignantly, "that my brother would not have written without your

"No," said Miss White, with sober decision; "I ain't no sich a fool ez ter undertake ter tell befo'hand what the onsartin sons o' Adam mought or moughtn' do: but this I kin tell, an' I ain't doubtin ter say hit: Ef ever that circulatin' Yankee gits back ter Thorne Hill, hit won't be ter argyfy with me, nor yit with Nick Thorne, though hit mought be with the colonel p'r'aps." And she cackled shrilly. "He will never come again!" Winifred

declared, with burning cheeks. "Some is easy got rid of an' some aint," said Miss White, sententiously, "I ain" blind, an' in these six months what I've been ter Thorne Hill I've seen one what ain't comin' back-not in a hurry, Paul Herry ain't. I know the looks of them kind. I don't set up ter be a prophet but hit weights me heavy ter give you this warnin', Winifred Thorne-when he comes, that friend o' yourn," and Roxanna stretched out her hard and bony hand to clasp the girl's soft fingers, " dunno nothin' 'bout you, but hit's goin' ter be onpleasin' ter the colonel."

"He is not coming again," Winifred insisted. "We don't want him." And she drew her hand out of Miss Roxanna's sympathizing clasp and went away in a tumult of painful emotions. She conconfessed to none, hardly even to herself, that her brother's return had not brought back the old joy of her childhood. "Brer Nicholas" was at home again, but she was lonely still; something was lacking, she knew not what, or would not seek to know. Yet, as the uneventful days went by,

and season gave place to season, Winifred, if she was not glad with the old joy that once she hoped for, in her brother's return had begun to find a sweet content. She understood at last that her ardent soul had demanded more than was possible under the circumstances, and she no longer expected from Nich olas the absolute devotion she had given him. She had learned the sobering lesson that life, even the most securely ordered life, is subject to the inexorable law of change. Lottie, the cousin she loved best, was

living in a distant town; Paul Herry, who had declared himself heart broken at his pretty cousin's obduracy, was married now, and settled in Savannah, where Bess Herry spent much of her time-and all this had come to pass within two years after Nicholas' return. Yet, though Winifred's life in these days was not gay, neither was it dull; for no life is dull that is filled with duties. This sacred truth had Winifred learned from her old aunt in New York, and she had the wisdom now to make to herself many sweet, small duties that kept her hands busy and her heart at rest. Hardly a day passed that she did not visit old Gilbert and Mom Bee with some little offering-a practice that excited Roxanna White's vehement disapproval. "Them two old free niggers," she was wont to declare, "will devour the colonel's substance, lessen that girl marries somebody what kin moderate her. But hit'll rile

the colonel the day she makes her choice. The trees were bare for the second time since Nicholas' home coming, when Winifred went out, one afternoon, to visit Mom Bee. The wintry sun was reddening the west when she came back; the air was crisp and invigorating, and she prolonged her walk through the grove, where she sat on the horse block to await her brother's return from town, just as she had done, many a time, when a child. The happiness of those blessed days seemed, all at once, to come again,

and she sang aloud for joy. Soon Nicholas rode in at the great gate, and he was not alone; it needed but a glance to reveal that her brother's companion was John Fletcher, and in an instant the joy that had inspired her light hearted song became a dead thing, and a wild, tyrannical exultation took its place. "Why did he come again?" she sighed, trembling. "I was content." She rose up, pale but composed, as the

but it was a cold little hand and the ghost of a smile that she gave John Fletcher when Nicholas said: "Little sister, this friend of mine is no stranger to you. I fourd him just in time to snatch him from Mrs. Theodore Scott. Thorne Hill is the only place for

John Fletcher when he comes south, eh,

horses halted and their riders dismounted;

Winifred?" "I shall hope for a welcome in your brother's name," said John Fletcher, with his grave smile; and Winifred. hardly comprehending, as vet, that she was not dreaming, assured him that her father, her aunt, every one, would be glad to see him.

what startled, welcome for his guest of two winters agone; but Miss Elvira's greeting savored of the question: Come you in peace or come you in war? But Roxanna White was jubilant over

Col. Thorne had a courteous, if some

the fulfillment of her prophecy. "Wha' did I tell you, Winifred Thorner' she said, triumphantly. "Now you heed what I say; many an' many's the time I've seen hit; Love has got Sorrer fur hit's shadder; but I'm yit ter see thet spitin' of love can lessen the shadder."

To Dosia she said: "I been a-preachin' grit ter Winifred Thorne in morial ex-

pectation of this mane happenin'. For And she laughed with settled



"Do you know why I came back?" said

John Fletcher abruptly one morning when he chanced to find himself alone with Winifred. They were in that rigidly arranged parlor, with the same table between them across which he had stretched his hand.

that she would not see, two years before. Winifred looked up, but before she could frame a reply he went on, hurried-"You know I did not have an oppor

tunity to say good-by."
"Ah, then, you came back to say good-by?" exclaimed Winifred. "To say good-by, if that be your pleasure," he answered gravely; "but-to say

something else first. I came to confess myself-a coward." Winifred looked at him in surprise. "When I saw you last," he went on, impetuously, "in this very room, beside this very table, I let a mere uplifting of your hand impose silence upon me, though I had a right to speak-the right of every man with a heart to feel. I was a coward not to tell you then what I have come to tell you know. Alien though you deem me, I love you; were you to proclaim a thousand times that the war

s not over, still, still I love you." Winifred turned her face away. "Between you and me there is a great gulf fixed," she faltered.

"I love you," he repeated, and came and stood beside her chair. "I love you with a love that can bridge over any gulf. "You forget-you-forget!" she sigh-ed; but her voice died away; she could not say again that the war was not over.

"I do not forget; I told you that I

should never forget Col. Thorne's uncompromising daughter. Whether you wish it or not-you are all the world Winifred uttered a little cry and raised her hand, as if in protest; but John Fletcher did not choose now to obey that gesture; he clasped her hand in both his own and Winifred did not take it away. She said to herself that all this availed nothing-that they must part, must surely part presently-must say good-by

forever, since all the world, on her side

and on his, would be against their union;

but she would not deny this little mo-

ment its fleeting happiness. She shiv-ered, but she did not take away her How had it come to pass that this man, but a little while ago a stranger, should stand between her and all that she held dearest-father-brother-home How had he kindled in her passionate and devoted heart a tenderness that dwarfed every affection she had known? She had not been willing to love him, she had struggled hard against it; but she did love him, alas! Why had he not stayed away? And yet, though her heart should break in parting from him now, all her life long she should rejoice and be glad that he did come, that this moment at least had been her own in which to enjoy her empire. Come what might, this moment at least was hers. now and forever, and she bowed her

head upon the two hands that clasped hers and cried out, with passionate "If you knew how I have hated you!" "That makes no difference, if you love me now!" John Fletcher declared, with

an exultant smile. "I have not wished to love you," Winifred said, as she lifted her head, and withdrew her hand. "Must I say good-by then-forever?"

he asked. She turned her face away, and there was a long silence. John Fletcher waited; he desired that Winifred should make her own decision. At last, a can-not help it," she exclaimed. It was not a radiant face that she turned toward him, but John Fletcher knew that he need not say good-by. "I never should have hated you so if I had not loved

you!" She turned very pale and bowed her head on the arm of her chair. She had braved the shadow that waits on Love, and she was ready to defy Sorrow for Love's dear sake, but Love's glad eyes

she could not meet. John Fletcher bent over her with a smile ineffable, and laid his hand upon her head. "Dearest, look up," he whispered. "Do you think I cannot understand? Some must be the first to clasp hands across the bitterness of these sad days; why not you and I?"

"Yes," said Winifred, and she put her

Just then-just then-Enter the colonel! He stood within three feet of them and stared as if petrified. "What does this mean?" he asked in a deep voice of

hand in his again.

ominous calm. "It means that I love your daughter, Col. Thorne," John Fletcher said, ontreatingly. Winifred stood up. "And I love him," she said, in a low but distinct tone. She met her father's angry eyes unflinch-

ingly, though the color surged over cheeks and brow at the boldness of her confession. The colonel regarded her an instant with a stony stare. "You are a fool! You are a child!" he exclaimed, furiously. "No, my father," said Winifred; "I

The colonel softened. "My little daughter," he said, with a tremulous smile, "this is all nonsense; a passing fancy; I am not angry with you.' "It is no passing fancy," said Wini-

am not a fool: I am not a child."

John Fletcher essayed to speak, but the colonel would not hear him. "Ingrate!" he stormed. "Would to God you had died with a rebel bullet in your traitorous heart, or perished out there on the roadside, before you came

under my roof to rob me of my child." Winifred threw herself upon her father's breast and he folded his arms around her. "Oh, no! no!" she cried. "Bless him!

Bless him, oh, my father! You know not what you owe to him; for it was in caring so much for him that I learned how well I love you, my father!" "Do not tell me that, Winifred. Let

him leave my sight—my house."
"But hear me first, Col. Thorne." John