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CHAPTER I.

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS GO IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURES.

Twelve-year-old Arthur Dale Dustin did not look in the least like a Prince, that bright September afternoon, sitting on the topmost rail of the zig-zag fence. As he dangled his brown legs idly, he wistfully watched his cousins at the play in which they would not allow him to join. He loved to play as dearly as any other twelve-year-old boy; but somehow or other he was always left out of their games by the boisterous crew of little Dustins whom he called cousins. He tried his best to like what they liked, and to be one with them, but something always seemed to happen to prevent.

Once, when they all went down to see the well that his uncle John Dustin was drilling deep into the earth with the hope of striking oil, they found the men away and for a few minutes had the place to themselves. Thereupon Cousin Dick, who was two years older than Arthur, climbed up the derrick, and, watching his chance, sprang on the end of the great walking beam that was working slowly up and down with ponderous strokes. Here he rode on the back of his mighty wooden steed for a few seconds, while the other children shouted and clapped their hands with admiration.

Then Dick came down and dared Arthur to perform the same feat; but the boy held back. He was not afraid, not a bit of it; and even if he had been he would gladly have done any thing Dick dared do, merely to win his good will and that of the others. But his Uncle John had forbidden them even to go near the derrick or the engine unless he was there to look after them. The others seemed to have forgotten this; but Arthur remembered it, and so refused to ride on the walking beam because it would be an act of disobedience. Then Cousin Dick sneered at him and called him a "'fraid-cat," and all the others, except tender-hearted, freckle-faced little Cynthia, took up the cry and shouted: "'Fraid-cat! 'Fraid-cat!" as they crowded around him and pushed him into the derrick.

Just then Uncle John returned and the others ran away, leaving poor Arthur, looking very confused and red in the face, standing in the middle of the derrick floor. Then, when his uncle in a stern voice asked him what he was doing in that place which he had been strictly forbidden to enter, Arthur hung his head and would not say any thing; for he was too brave a lad to be a "tell-tale," and too honest to tell a lie. So his Uncle John said that he was a naughty boy who had led the other children into mischief, and that he might go right home and get into bed, and stay there for the rest of the day as a punishment.

Poor Arthur obeyed; and as he walked slowly towards the only place in the world he could call home, great tears rolled down his cheeks. When the other children, who were hiding in the bushes, saw them they called out: "Cry-baby! Cry-baby!" Only little Cynthia ran out and put her arms about his neck and said she was sorry; but Dick pulled her roughly away.

Another time, when Cynthia asked Arthur to build a house for her dolls under the roots of a great tree that had blown down just on the edge of the woods back of the house, he, being an

A BIG NEWFOUNDLAND DOG CAME DASHING DIRECTLY TOWARDS THEM.

obliging little soul, consented at once to do so. Under the huge mass of roots and earth they played happily enough at making believe it was a cave, and Cynthia was radiant with delight over the beautiful time they were having. For a little while Arthur experienced the novel feeling of being perfectly happy. Then, all of a sudden, a shower of earth and gravel came rattling down on them from above, and with it came a mocking chorus of: "Girl-boy! Girl-boy! Look at the girl-boy playing with dolls!" and little Cynthia began to cry over the ruin of her beautiful baby-house.

Upon this, with a quick blaze of indignation, Arthur picked up a bit of stick and flung it with all his strength at the tormentors who had brought tears to his little cousin's eyes. It was aimed at nobody in particular, but it happened to strike Dick on the cheek and make a slight cut, from which the blood flowed. Thereupon the big boy ran crying home to his mother and told her that Arthur had struck him with a stick, in proof of which he showed his bloody face. Then Mrs. Dustin, who always acted upon the impulse of the moment, took down the apple switch from over the mantel-piece, and gave her nephew a whipping which, she said, would be a lesson to him. Poor little Cynthia tried to explain how it had all happened, but her mother had no time to listen and only told her and the other children to come away from the bad boy and not go near him again that day.

Some days after this, when all the others had gone on a fishing expedition, upon which they had refused to let Arthur and Cynthia accompany them the boy proposed a beautiful plan to his little cousin.. He remembered his fairy tales his own dear mother used to read to him and now he said:

"Let us make believe we are a prince and princess, Cynthia, and go out into the world in search of adventures."

Cynthia had not the remotest idea of what was meant by "adventures," but she was willing to agree to any thing that Arthur might propose.

So the two children set forth, and nobody noticed them as they went out of the front gate and walked, hand in hand, down the dusty road.

They had not gone far before they discovered a poor little robin just learning to fly, that had fallen into a ditch by the roadside, where, in a few minutes more, he would have been drowned. Of course, they rescued him, and, while the old mother and father birds flew about them, uttering cries of distress and begging them not to hurt their baby, Cynthia dried his wings and carefully wiped the mud from his downy feathers with her pinafore. Then Arthur climbed over a fence and gently placed the little trembling thing down in the soft grass on the other side.

Next they found a yellow butterfly whose pretty wings were all tangled in a spider's web. Of course, they set him free, and had the pleasure of seeing him flutter joyously away. Arthur said these were beautiful adventures, and both the children looked eagerly forward to finding some more, but they walked nearly a mile, and were becoming very hot and tired before they met with another.

ON THE FLY LEAF SHE WROTE WITH A TINY GOLD PENCIL.

All of a sudden, as they were passing a cottage by the roadside, they were startled by a deep, loud bark, and, turning, they saw a big Newfoundland dog bound over the front fence and come dashing directly toward them. Now, while Arthur was very fond of dogs that he was acquainted with, he was also very much afraid of strange dogs, especially big ones, and his first impulse upon this occasion was to run away. Then he remembered that he was a prince and that princes were always brave. So he told Cynthia to run as fast as she could and hide in the bushes. As she did this the brave little fellow turned a bold front, though he was trembling in every limb, toward the enemy. The next instant the big dog sprang upon him, threw him down, rolled him in the dust and then stood over him, wagging a bushy tail and barking with delight at what he had done.

Arthur, who thought he was certainly to be killed, shut his eyes and for nearly a minute lay perfectly still. He opened them on hearing a tramping of hoofs, a jingling of harness and a loud "Whoa!" Then, no longer seeing the dog, he quickly scrambled to his feet. He was right under the noses of a pair of splendid horses, and behind them was a fine carriage, from which a beautiful lady was just stepping.

"Why, little boy," she said, as she took Arthur's hand, and led him away from in front of the horses, "don't you know that you came very near being run over? and that it is dangerous to be playing out here in the middle of the road? Now run into the house, and ask your mother to brush your clothes, and don't ever do so again."

"But I don't live here," said Arthur, lifting his dust-covered little face to the gracious one bent down to him. "I live a long way off, and I'm a Prince and Cynthia is a Princess, and we were looking for adventures, when a big dog knocked me down; but he didn't hurt Cynthia because I defended her, the same as princes do in the stories my own mamma used to read to me."

"So you are a Prince are you?" laughed the lady. "Then you must be 'Prince Dusty.' Well, if you will get into the carriage and show me the way I will take you home to your castle. But where is your Princess? What did you say her name was?"

"It is Cynthia," replied Arthur, "and there she comes now."

As he spoke poor terrified little Cynthia came timidly out from the bushes where she had been hiding and crying with fright for the last three minutes.

Then the beautiful lady took them both into the carriage and ordered the coachman to drive on, while she soothed and comforted the children and wiped Arthur's dusty little face with her own embroidered handkerchief.

She looked anxiously at him when he told her that his name was Arthur Dale Dustin, that his dearest mamma and papa were dead, and that he used to live in New York, but that now he lived with Cynthia's father and mother, who were his Uncle John and Aunt Nancy. She asked him several questions about himself, but always seemed to forget his name, and only called him "Prince Dusty."

When they reached the Dustin house she kissed both the children good-bye and gave Arthur a beautiful copy of Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales that she had in the carriage with her. On the fly leaf she wrote with a tiny gold pencil that hung from her watch-chain: "To Prince Dusty from his Fairy Godmother." Then she said she must hurry on and drove away, leaving the children standing by the roadside and staring after the carriage as long as the faintest cloud of dust from its wheels was visible.

As they turned slowly into the front gate and walked toward the house Arthur drew a long breath and said: "Cynthia, that is the very most beautiful adventure I ever heard of. It's beautifuller even than the stories my own mamma used to tell, and I've got this lovely book to show that it is all true."

Poor Arthur was not allowed to enjoy the possession of his book very long, for his Aunt Nancy, who had been alarmed at the children's disappearance, and now gave them only bread and water for their dinner, took it from him and laid it on a high shelf, saying that it was altogether too handsome a book for a little boy to have.

Arthur begged and pleaded with tears in his eyes that he might be allowed to keep his book, claiming, justly, that it was his very own and had been given to him to do as he pleased with; but all to no purpose. His Aunty Nancy only said that she would give it to him when the proper time came; and then, adding that she was too busy now to be bothered with him, she bade him get out of the house, and not let her see him again before sun-down.

So the sensitive little chap walked slowly away, trying in vain to choke back the indignant sobs that would persist in making themselves heard, and feeling very bitterly the injustice of his Aunt Nancy's action. He longed for sympathy in this time of trial, and for some friendly ear into which he might pour his griefs. Even Cynthia's company was denied him, for she was seated in the kitchen under her mother's watchful eye, taking slow, awkward stitches in the patch-work, a square of which was her allotted task for each day.

"I'll find uncle Phin," said Arthur to himself, "and tell him all about it, and, perhaps, he will somehow find a way to get my book again, and then I'll ask him to take me away from here to some place where I can keep it always."

Somewhat cheered by having a definite purpose in view, the forlorn little fellow started across the fields toward a distant wood-lot, in which he knew his sympathizing old friend and adviser was at work.

Uncle Phin was a white-headed, simple-hearted old negro, who, some years before, had been a slave belonging to Colonel Arthur Dale, of Dalescourt, in Virginia. He had been the constant attendant, in her daily horse-back rides, of the Colonel's only daughter, the lovely Virginia Dale, to whom her father had formally presented him, as a birthday gift, when she was fifteen years old.

Three years later the spirited girl, refusing to marry the man whom her father had selected for her, ran away with Richard Dustin, a young Northerner recently graduated from a New England university, who had accepted a professorship in one of the Virginia colleges. This marriage proved so terrible a disappointment to her father, that, in his anger, he declared he would never receive a communication from her, nor see her again, and he never did. The young couple, accompanied by the faithful Uncle Phin, went to New York. There their only child, a boy, named Arthur Dale, after the grandfather, who refused to recognize him, was born, and there they lived in the greatest happiness until the child was nearly eleven years old, when the beautiful young mother died, leaving Richard Dustin utterly heartbroken. Soon afterward he removed with his idolized boy and Uncle Phin, who had filled the position of nurse and constant protector to Arthur from infancy, to the home of his childhood, a little rocky farm in Northwestern Pennsylvania.

He had but one relative in the world, a brother who lived near one of the mushroom-like towns that sprang up during the early days of petroleum. When, a year after the death of his wife, Richard Dustin was also laid in the grave, it was in the family of this brother, John Dustin, that Arthur and Uncle Phin found a home.

Richard Dustin left no property save the rocky farm that was too poor even to support a mortgage. As his brother John had a large family, the new burdens now thrust upon him were not very warmly welcomed. In fact Mrs. Dustin strongly urged her husband not to receive them. She was Arthur's Aunt Nancy, a hard, unsympathetic over-worked woman who grudged every morsel of food that the new comers ate, and seemed to consider that every thing given to Arthur was just so much stolen from her own children.

Uncle Phin, it is true, worked hard and faithfully to do what he could toward earning the bread eaten by himself and his "ill marse," as he persisted in calling Arthur; but he was old and feeble, and the best that he could do did not amount to much. The scanty, but neat, city-made wardrobe that Arthur brought with him to his new home, had not been replenished by a single garment, and now the boy's clothes were shabby and outgrown to such a degree that his mother's heart would have ached could she have seen him.

Although he was a thoughtful, imaginative child, he was remarkably strong and active for his age. He had learned to read and write at his mother's knee, and his father had, during the last year of his life, found his only pleasure in planning and directing the boy's education. Arthur was therefore as far in advance of his cousins in this respect as he was in refinement and ideas of honor. He was so very different from them that though he tried hard to love them and make them love him, they, with the exception of little Cynthia, to whom he was an ideal of perfection, united in cordially disliking him.

This dislike was shown in every possible way, and resulted in many a heart-ache, and many an unjust punishment to the lonely orphan boy. Many a night he slipped from his little cot bed in the back shed, and, creeping to where Uncle Phin slept in a hay-mow in the barn, poured his troubles with bitter tears into the sympathetic ears of the old negro.

Then the faithful soul would open wide his arms, and, nestling the fair head of his "ill marse" against his broad bosom, would soothe and comfort him with gentle croonings and quaint

WOULD COMFORT AND SOOTHE HIM WITH QUAINT, QUAVERY PLANTATION MELODIES.

quavering plantation melodies. His singing was always accompanied by a slow rocking motion of the body, and finally the blue, tear-swollen eyes would close, and the boy would drop off into a sleep full of beautiful dreams in which he always saw his own dear father and mother. Then Uncle Phin's frosted head would droop lower and lower, until he too was asleep and dreaming of his long-ago cabin home under the magnolia trees of old Virginia. Thus these two would comfort each other until morning.

Now, choking with a sense of injustice and wrong at the hands of his Aunt Nancy, little Prince Dusty fled across the fields in search of this friend. He was filled with the determination to beg Uncle Phin to take him away from that hated place, to some other where they might live happily together for always and always.

CHAPTER II.

A GALLANT RESCUE AND ITS UNJUST REWARD.

Besides Uncle Phin Arthur had another friend. This was Brace Barlow, a torpedo-man, whose business it was to shoot oil wells, but who had worked for Mr. John Dustin when Arthur first came there to live. He and the lonely boy had taken a great liking to each other. Now, as the latter walked along the road toward the place where Uncle Phin was at work, thinking intently of his own griefs and trials, he was aroused by a cheery: "Halloo! Arthur, boy!" behind him. Turning quickly he saw his friend, the torpedo-man, driving a light wagon and laughing at him.

"'Fraid you're getting old and deaf, Arthur," said Brace Barlow. "Could have run over you without half trying."

"Oh, Brace!" cried the boy, forgetting his troubles and his errand in a moment, "can't I go with you?"

"Well, I don't know why not," was the reply. "I'm only going out a few miles to shoot a well, and if you aren't afraid of nitro-glycerine I guess you can come."

Of course, Arthur was not afraid, and would not have acknowledged it even if he had been. So he clambered into the wagon beside his friend, and rode away, as cheerfully as though there were not nearly two hundred pounds of the dead-

HOLD THE SHELL, BRACE, THE ROPE'S BREAKING.

ly explosive stowed under the wagon seat.

At the well, which was to have a torpedo exploded at its very bottom, a thousand feet underground, to stimulate its sluggish flow of oil, Arthur eagerly watched his friend's operations. They two were alone in the derrick, for none of the men would have any thing to do with nitro-glycerine, and so Brace, who needed some assistance, was glad to have that of the bright, careful boy who so willingly offered his services.

A long, tin tube, that they had brought with them, was hung in the mouth of the well by a stout cord that ran over a pulley above it and down to an iron reel attached to one of the derrick posts. When it was in position Brace began to pour glycerine into it from the square, two-quart can that had been stowed under the wagon-seat, while Arthur looked on with breathless interest. The long tube was almost full, and a weight of nearly two hundred pounds hung from the cord when a slight, almost inaudible snap, caused Arthur to look up.

Something, perhaps a jagged bit of iron in the pulley, had cut the cord half in two, and the rapidly increasing weight that it was made to bear, was untwisting and parting its remaining strands. It was the snapping of one of these that attracted Arthur's attention. A moment later the cord would have given way. The torpedo would have plunged into the well and would probably have exploded from concussion with the iron casing before it had dropped many feet. With such an explosion both Brace and Arthur would instantly have been blown into unrecognizable fragments.

"Hold the shell, Brace!" cried the boy, "the rope's breaking!"

The torpedo-man was quick to act in an emergency, for his life was made up of them; and, without hesitation, he did as directed. As the strain was thus taken from the cord, Arthur drew it down, cut it at the weak spot, tied the ends in a firm knot, and reeled it taut again. Then Brace rose from his stooping posture, and, not till then, did he realize what had happened. As he comprehended the situation he said quietly:

"You have just saved my life, Arthur, and I thank you for it."

Then he completed his task as though nothing had happened. Two minutes later the torpedo had been successfully exploded, and the friends were driving homeward talking over the incidents of the shot.

Brace set the boy down at a cross road not far from the Dustin House, and, bidding the torpedo-man good-night, the little fellow ran home, feeling happier than he had for weeks.

Though he hardly realized the full value of the service he had just rendered his friend, he was sure that he had been useful at a critical moment, he knew that he had been praised for what he had done, and he felt more manly than ever before.

It was growing dusk when he reached the front gate, where faithful little Cynthia was anxiously watching for him and wondering where he could be.

"Oh, Cynthia!" he cried as he drew near and saw her, "I've had such a good time. I've been well shooting with Brace Barlow, and I saw the rope just as it was going to break and told Brace, and he held the torpedo while I tied a knot in it, and he said I had saved his life, though I don't see exactly how, and the very minute I get grown up I'm going to be a well-shooter."

It was absolutely necessary for the enthusiastic little fellow to pour into some sympathetic ear the tale of what he had done. He had performed a brave act; and, in the first flush of his excitement, he longed to be praised for it, as we all do whenever we have done any thing that we consider especially good, or worthy of commendation. It is a reward of merit, to which all who have earned it are entitled, and to withhold just praise is as cruel as to extend unjust censure.

Cynthia would not have been guilty of any such unkindness. Her eyes opened wide as she listened to the tale her Prince told of his brave deeds. She was just catching her breath to tell him how splendid she thought them, when they were startled by the sound of a harsh voice calling:

"Arthur! Cynthia! Come into the house this minute, you naughty children, and don't stay out there breathing the night air."

"A boy must breathe some kind of air, Aunt Nancy, and when it is night time I don't see how he can help breathing night air," laughed Arthur, as he reached the house; for not even his aunt's harsh tones could, at once, dispel his good spirits.

"Don't tell me," answered Mrs. Dustin. "I say night air is poison, and I won't have you breathing it. Now, I suppose you think I don't know where you have been all the afternoon; but I do. You've been off with Brace Barlow, who ought to know better than to take you, shooting wells and trying to get yourself blown into mince-meat just to make more trouble for me. Yes, I know all about it, in spite of you sly ways. Now you may go right to bed, and not a morsel of supper shall you have this night, which may be it'll be a lesson that you will remember for one while any way."

Mr. John Dustin, who sat smoking his evening pipe by an open window, rarely interfered with his wife's management of the children; but now he spoke up, saying:

"That won't do, wife; you only gave the boy bread and water for his dinner, and it won't do to send him to bed without any supper. I believe in proper punishment, when it is deserved, as much as anybody; but when it comes to starving, that's quite another thing. It shall never be said that my brother Richard's only son was starved in his uncle's house. So give the boy his supper and plenty of it. Then you can send him to bed if you see fit."

Mrs. Dustin knew that when her husband spoke in this tone he meant to be obeyed; so, without a word, she set a plain but bountiful meal before Arthur. From a boy's experience of bread and water punishments, and supperless nights he was wise enough to eat heartily all that he possibly could, in spite of his heavy heart. He ate in silence, and for some time nobody else spoke; only Dick, who sat at the farther end of the room with the other children, chuckled and made faces behind Arthur's back for the benefit, and to the huge delight, of his companions. He was greatly pleased at the result of his tale-bearing; for it was he who, overhearing Arthur tell Cynthia that he had been well-shooting with Brace Barlow, had hurried to the house and repeated the information, with some picturesque additions of his own deviating, to his mother.

Once, during the silent meal, little Cynthia tried to create a diversion in her cousin's favor by remarking timidly to nobody in particular, but to the company in general: "Arthur says Brace Barlow says he saved his life."

"Who says what?" inquired Mrs. Dustin, turning quickly and fixing her sharp eyes on the little girl's face.

"Brace Barlow says, I mean Arthur says Brace Barlow says, he saved his—"

"Oh fiddlesticks!" interrupted her mother. "You don't know what you're talking about. It isn't at all likely that either of them did any thing of the kind. The sort of danger Brace Barlow goes into is quick and sure. When it once gets started, there isn't any chance for life saving, or for telling of it afterwards. Arthur ought to know better than to go round boasting in that way to a little girl like you, and I should think he'd be ashamed of himself for doing it."

Arthur listened to this unjust and cruel speech with a flushed face and a feeling of choking indignation; but he did not say a word. Young as he was, he had already learned that in a contest with an unreasonable person, silence is the weapon of wisdom.

After finishing his supper the forlorn little fellow, accepting his punishment without a murmur, though he could not imagine what wrong he had done, retired to his cot in the wood-shed, where he was quickly blessed by the presence of sleep, the comforter.

The next day was the bright one in September with which this story opens, and Arthur is introduced as he sits on the top rail of a zig-zag fence watching the other children at play.

Fired by the accounts of his adventures of the day before, as narrated to them at second-hand by Cynthia, for Arthur could not be induced to say another word concerning it, his cousins had determined to have a miniature well-shooting of their own. They spent the entire morning in the construction of a very shaky little derrick, about ten feet high, and how they were busy drilling a well, which they hoped to put down to a depth of at least two feet. When it was finished they proposed to shoot it by means of a cannon cracker that they had saved over from Fourth of July for use on some such special occasion.

The scheme was well planned, and seemed likely to be carried out, for the children were enthusiastic over it, and, under Dick's direction, worked most diligently. Arthur would gladly have joined in this fascinating occupation, but the others would not have him. As Dick scornfully remarked: "What can a

IT STRUCK HIM AND FELL TO THE GROUND, EXPLODING AS IT DID SO.

city chap like you know about building derricks, and drilling wells? You wasn't raised in the oil region."

So Arthur was forced to content himself with sitting on the fence and watching them. Occasionally he turned for a chat with Uncle Phin, who was cutting brush in the field behind him, and who took a long rest whenever he reached the end of a row that brought him anywhere near his "ill marse." Finally, after one of these rests, during which Arthur had paid no attention to the operations at the miniature derrick, he left his perch and followed Uncle Phin for a short distance into the thick brush.

While in there he was startled by a perfect babel of sound coming from where the children were at play. There were yells and shouts of laughter, mingled with cries of pain, and an angry screaming, together with piteous calls of: "Arthur! Oh, Arthur! Come and make 'em stop!"

Like a young deer the boy bounded out of the corn and over the fence, followed, much more slowly, by Uncle Phin. Arrived upon the scene he quickly comprehended the situation. In an unfortunate moment, just as the well was completed and ready to be shot, Cynthia's dearly-loved little white kitty came demurely walking in that direction looking for her mistress. At sight of the little animal a brilliant idea flashed through Dick's mind, and he at once proceeded to carry it out. He said:

"We can't have much fun shooting a dry well anyhow, 'cause there won't be any oil to fly up in the air; but I'll tell you what. Let's have an execution by 'lectricity. It'll be immense, and here's the prisoner already waiting to be executed."

Thus saying, the cruel boy snatched up the little white kitty, and bidding the others hold Cynthia, who was ready to make a furious struggle in defense of her pet, he ran with it to the derrick. Here with the make-believe drill rope, he hung it by the tail, so that the little pink nose was but a few inches from the ground. Then lighting the fuse of the great cannon cracker, he placed it directly beneath the victim, who was now uttering piteous cries of pain and terror, and ran to where the others were shouting with delight over the new and thrilling diversion so unexpectedly prepared for them.

Poor, desperate, little Cynthia, kicking, biting, scratching, but struggling in vain with the young rascals who held her fast, began, as a last resort, to call upon Arthur, the brave Prince who had defended her against the big dog, and she did not call in vain.

Hatless and breathless, with the fire of righteous wrath blazing in his blue eyes, the plucky boy came flying to the rescue. He had no thought of the overwhelming odds against him. The princes of his fairy tales fought whole armies single-handed and why should not he? His impetuous speed carried him right through the shouting group assembled to witness the execution of the hapless kitty, and two of them were flung to the ground before they knew of his presence. An instant later he reached the little derrick. The fuse had burned down into the body of the big cracker, and in another second it would explode. Without the faintest trace of hesitation the little fellow seized it and flung it behind him.

An explosion followed almost instantly, and was accompanied by a yell of pain. The moment Dick recognized Arthur, and perceived his intention, he sprang after his cousin, and was directly in line when the cannon-cracker came flying toward him. It struck him and fell to the ground, exploding as it did so, and burning his bare feet painfully.

Furious with rage the cowardly young bully rushed at Arthur, who was releasing the white kitty from her unhappy position, and with a savage blow knocked the little fellow down. Then he jumped on him, and began to pummel him, screaming: "Take that, will you! and that! I'll teach you! I'll show you who's boss round here!"

All at once these cruel cries were changed to yells of dismay, as, whack! whack! whack! a shower of stinging blows fell upon Dick's shoulders. Uncle Phin, who had followed Arthur as fast as he was able, had arrived just in time to save his "ill marse" from any severe injury at the hands of his enraged cousin, and to administer, with a stout stick, the thrashing that the young rascal so well deserved.

In less time a minute cowardly cousin Dick and his frightened followers were scampering away towards the house, where they proposed to lay their side of the case promptly before their mother. Cynthia had gone after her beloved kitty, and brave little "Prince Dusty," who had flung himself into Uncle Phin's arms, was sobbing as though his heart would break.

"Sho, Honey, sho! Don't you cry now," murmured the old man in soothing tones. "'Member dat while you is a 'Dustin by name, you's a Dale by breedin', an' comes of Dale stock—you's mos' a man now, a young gen'lmin, an' it won't nebber do fer sich as you is to cry like a lilly gal. Sho now, Honey, sho."

Neither of them heard the quick, determined step that approached them from behind, and so occupied was poor troubled Uncle Phin in soothing and comforting his charge, that it was an easy matter for Mrs. Dustin to snatch the trembling boy from his arms. Then she marched majestically away, without a word, but dragging her victim relentlessly after her.

Uncle Phin half started to his feet when he first realized what was happening, but sank back again with a groan, and murmured: "De good Lawd, he mussy on His lamb."

Then he bowed his frosted head on his knees and the hot tears trickled slowly between his black fingers.

While he thus sat helpless and despairing, poor Arthur was taken to the house and there whipped until the apple tree switch broke and his Aunt Nancy's strength was exhausted. Then, telling the boy that this was a lesson for him to remember as long as he lived, she bade him go to the wood-shed, which was his sleeping-room, and stay there until she should release him.

During this undeserved punishment not a cry had escaped from the boy nor had a tear found its way to his eyes. He bit his under lip and clutched his hands, but not a sound did he utter. He remembered what Uncle Phin had just told him. He was almost a man now, and no man, especially a Dale, would cry for a whipping. So, though the little face was drawn and white, and the boy trembled until he could hardly stand, he held out to the end as bravely as ever a martyr under torture, and when he was thrust into his chosen place he sat on the edge of his rude bed rigid and tearless. His mind was in a furious whirl, but above all was the overwhelming sense of injustice and outrage.

Finally he sprang to his feet, crying: "I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" and then, flinging himself on his bed, he gave way to a burst of passionate weeping.

"Oh! mamma!" he cried. "My own mamma! Why don't you come for me and take me away from this dreadful place? I can't stay here any longer! Indeed I can't, mamma! Oh! come for me; do come! Please, mamma, come for me, and take me to where you are!"

For nearly an hour the forlorn child cried for the dear ones who had left him; then his sobs gradually died away, and, utterly exhausted, he fell into a troubled sleep.

In the meantime little Cynthia, who had grown very weary of the search, met her father coming home from his work, and when he inquired what was the matter with his daughter and who had made her cry, she told him the truth of all that had happened, so far as she knew it. Mr. Dustin had begun to suspect that Arthur was ill-treated by his cousins, and as he listened to Cynthia's story his face grew very stern, and he said: "This matter must be looked into."

When they reached the house and he was told that Arthur had been severely punished for trying to kill Cynthia's kitten and for fighting with Dick who had rescued it, and that Uncle Phin had beaten Dick, Mr. Dustin's anger could not be restrained. He said:

"Wife, I am afraid you have made a terrible mistake and punished an innocent child for performing a noble act. If what Cynthia tells me is true, and I believe it is, Master Dick is the boy who tormented his little sister and would have killed her pet. Master Dick is the coward who thrashed a little fellow three years younger than himself for bravely rescuing the victim of his cruelty. Master Dick is the one who told a lie to hide his own wickedness and cause his cousin to receive the punishment he himself deserved. And Master Dick is the boy who is acting for the whipping that I shall give him before he is many minutes older.

"In regard to my dead brother's child, I want it understood that so long as he remains under my roof he is never again to be punished for any fault, real or fancied; and if anybody