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THE PARSON'S STORIES.

I ONCE knew a wealthy widow whose large plantation and swarms of negroes did not give occasion for half as much attention and trouble as her only daughter, Kate. The mother was a vigorous specimen of her sex, broad and ruddy, used to being up early of mornings, with a voice which could be heard and felt from "the gr't house," as the mansion of the white folks was called, to the "quarters" where the blacks lived. It was little her slaves cared for their overseer in comparison. For "ole Miss Kate"—the mother's name being the same as the daughter's—they did care. She was the highest ideal of energy of which they could form any conception, and of sleepless watch also, so far as smoke-house, corn-crib, poultry-yard, cotton-gin, press or field was concerned. Pallas Athene was a vaporous phantom to the Athenians as a tutelary deity in comparison to Mrs. Ryle in the eyes of *her* subjects. She was their superstition. If she did not see everything know everything, hear everything, do everything on the plantation, it was impossible for the whitest-headed old Cudjo on the place to suggest the exception. Never sick herself, never off the ground, apparently never asleep, she worked harder than the hardest worked hand there, and always harder than "the smartest boy" of them all in "the rush of the season," when the last handful of cotton was to be got in and the last bale of the crop to be pressed. She was present at every birth among the blacks, doctored all their sick, cut and had made under her own eyes all their clothes, saw in person to all their food, directed the least details of every funeral. Any idea of a Providence beyond "ole Miss Kate" on their part was vague to the last degree.

But Kate the daughter—and she had no son—was ten times the trouble to her of all her place and people. At eighteen the lesser Kate gave assurance of filling up in fullest measure and in due time the utmost outlines of the older and larger Kate. It was her having neither husband nor son to do it for her which had so developed the mother, compelled to manage her large property herself. Now, Kate the younger had gradually secured to herself the exclusive care of so much of the possessions of her mother as came under the head of "the stock." A serious charge it was, requiring and wonderfully developing all the energies of this duplicate of her mother. The plantation rolled its acres upon one side along a "river-bottom," the wavy black soil of inexhaustible fertility for cotton and corn whenever the pecan trees, with their wagon-load of nuts, in the season, had been girdled or cut down for the crops. On the other side of the "gr't house," which stood upon a ridge aboye chills and fever, the surface spread in billows as of the heaving sea to the horizon, one wide wealth of the sweetest and richest mesquit-grass, over which roamed at will the horses and cattle. This was the undisputed domain of Kate Ryle the younger. Every spring she saw to the ingathering and branding of the calves and colts, hundreds at a time. The milking and making of butter and cheese at the spring-house, where water was abundant, were her care. All this demanded early rising, to say nothing of being almost always in the saddle and on "the lope"—*i. e.*, a long gallop—over the prairies after willful cows or wandering mares and colts. Very little time had Miss Kate for French or novels. She had a piano, but did not open it once a month. Her knowledge of crotcheting was as vague as her dates in history, but then she was a splendid sight to see on horseback with her floating hair and glowing cheeks and radiant eyes; for oh there is nothing in the world so delightful as the open air and the green grass and the swift riding of that Paradise of a climate.

But Satan entered into this Paradise also. Tom Raffles was the son of a neighboring planter. Seeing what came of it in the end, I do not know how it could have been helped. The growing of the grass, the frisking of the calves, the wild careering of the colts with flying manes and tails in the exhilirating sun and wind, was not more an inenviable process of Nature. Having to care for his stock, very often obliged to separate his from hers when their "brands" got mixed up on the open prairies, it was impossible that Tom and Kate should not often meet, and meeting it was impossible they should not have loved. The brilliant atmosphere made it wholly impossible that their spirits should not have foamed and sparkled in it like champagne; being so happy together, very often loping side by side in search of strayed cattle too, it was utterly impossible, I insist, that what followed should not have followed. Kate herself told me all about it. "How could Tom help our men marrying among his women?" she said to me. "Mother got mad, because she hated to have our hands going off to their wives' houses on his place; but I wonder if their men were not coming to *their* wives' houses on our place? Mother told Tom he must stop it, but how could he? She has got so used to telling the people on our plantation what they must and must not do, and being minded, that she thinks she very stars must do as she says."

And that was the way Kate happened to spend those three winter months with us. We lived in a town a day's journey distant from the plantation, and had spent many a delightful day under Mrs. Ryle's hospitable roof; and without a word to us she sent Kate to be our guest, so as to get her away from Tom. It is amazing to me that so sensible a woman should have been so stupid. True, Tom never entered the house, but then I got letters for her all the time out of the office; and why Kate was so fond of long walks almost every afternoon I never knew, beyond her telling me that she was accustomed to exercise in the open air that if she did not go out she would die. I have an impression that the mother thought that my being a minister was a remedy for her daughter's malady—that there was a seriousness in the very atmosphere of my house which would stifle all vain desires on the part of her wayward offspring.

When the sagacious mother supposed Kate's affection for her objectionable suitor was cured by such separation, she wrote for her to return, and to me, telling me how heartily she was obliged for the hospitality on my part which had broken off her daughter's love for "that abominable Tom Raffles."

Kate left us on Monday. Saturday evening she was back at our house—on horseback this time—and Tom with her. They fastened their horses down at the front gate, but I saw them, and made up my mind, as they walked up between the rows of cactus-plants to our door, I would not do it.

"This is Mr. Tom Raffles," Kate said introducing him, a rough, honest-faced fellow enough, in his Sunday clothes, which always deform men of his bronzed and muscular sort.

"I see he is," I said promptly; "but Kate. I cannot do it. Your mother trusted me, and I will *not* do it. I am sorry to disappoint you, but I will not."

"Who wanted you to?" she said as promptly; and added, "Oh, Tom! but wasn't it funny?" and as she coolly took off her things she laughed as people never laughed who never lived in the open air.—"I thought I should have died," she explained, for Tom was evidently to be the secondary person of this curious couple. "It was all I could do to sit on my horse. There she is now—run and help her out, Tom."

As she spoke there was the roll of wheels at our gate, and before Tom, who was in no hurry about it, could go, Mrs. Ryle the mother ran into the room, panting and out of breath, exclaiming, "Hold on! stop! don't you do it, sir! They've run away. I'll never consent; she isn't of age."

"I have just assured them that I will not," I hastened to say as Mrs. Ryle laid her large and eager hands, one on each of my shoulders and pushed me back. What a magnificent woman she was!—expanded, as Queen Elizabeth was, by so many years of absolute rule into as powerful a female in every sense as you would wish to meet. It was easy to see that in a few years her daughter would equal her in every way; she was her mother's own child.

"We don't want him to," she said, and added, "Oh, but I thought I should have died!"

"Come," her mother said to the gentleman who had accompanied her daughter, "You go away. A nice neighbor you are, to let your women marry my men, and toll them off my plantation that way, as if they could be back by daybreak in time for the cotton-patch! And now you want to steal Kate! No, sir! Go away!"

"It almost killed me," the daughter continued, laughing until the tears ran down her cheeks.—"Do hush, ma, one moment.—You see, she would find out. Oh, we knew that," the audacious young lady explained to the company. "We know mother, and so we fixed for it. Tom had the license in his breast-pocket, all ready. When we started on horseback we knew she would be after us in her buggy. Her horse is the best, and the road is splendid. But we knew Mr. Lobbin would be riding out to his Sunday appointment—he is the circuit preacher, you know—as regular as a clock."

I did not know, but her mother did, and exclaimed aloud, turning from crimson to chalk as she did so.

"It was the funniest thing!" the young lady went on. "We could hear her wheels rattling behind. Tom did not know what to do. Sure enough, as we loped along, there was old Brother Lobbin jogging along toward us on his old white horse. The first thing you know, Tom had his bridle on one side and I on the other, the old man whirled around and his horse galloping between us. I can talk faster than Tom, and explained it to him as we went. Tom managed to get out his document and unfold it for the old man to read as we tore along. You see," the girl laughed, "we held tight on to the old gray as we rode. Sometimes Tom would let go to give him a cut with his raw-hide, and then again I would. We had whirled Brother Lobbin around so suddenly, and were going so fast, that he got confused. He is never very bright, you know, if he is good. Tom showed him a twenty-dollar gold-piece, and slipped it in the old man's vest-pocket as we galloped up hill and down, for the wheels were rattling close behind us. And that was all, and here we are!"

"You see, he married us," Tom explanied.

"I could hardly keep on my horse," the exuberant young lady broke in. "Brother Lobbin had never gone so fast, nor his horse either, in his life. 'Dost—thou—take—this—woman?' he said, every word jerked out of him as you see Kershaw pumpkins out of a wagon when the team is running away. We were quick to say 'yes,' when the time came. But he wouldn't make a prayer for us at the end; he said it would be wicked to pray loping. But we are married, and we let him go as we came into town.—It's all too funny for you to stay mad with us, mother. We'll make the best children in the world—won't we, Tom? Both plantations will be one now, mother, and the black folks can marry as they please."

The bride's laughter subsided, however, as her mother turned, went down to her carriage, got in and drove off without a word. Nothing I could say, as I assisted her in, seemed to be even heard by her. The young people rode back the next day to Tom's plantation, but it was many a long month before the mother relented. My own impression is that a bouncing bady boy was the intercessor at last. All is made up now. Tom has his hands full with the two plantations, and the emancipation of the slaves has by no means simplified the management thereof. He is his own overseer, however, and he certainly has able assistants in his mother-in-law and wife.

Next week I propose to tell about a mother who ran away from her daughter.

☞ Two things a man should never be angry at—what he *can* and what he *cannot* help.

A Boy's Adventure.

THE following incident happened last month to a boy residing in Monroe county, this state. Among the residents of that vicinity is a family named Snyder. Near their farm are some fields that were once under cultivation, but which have been neglected by the owner who lives in New York, and they have grown up with underbrush. The buildings of this deserted farm are also falling into decay, and in what was once the door yard of the dwelling is an old well. The cattle of the neighboring farmers having free access to these fields, boards were laid across the well some years ago, and the brush having grown up about it, its existence was almost forgotten.

Frank Snyder, an eight year old son of the farmer mentioned, was sent on Monday, towards evening, to look up a cow that had wandered off in the woods. He frequently went on such errands, and his parents did not manifest any uneasiness at his being absent longer than usual until it grew dark, and he not yet returned. Thinking that he might have stopped at a neighbor's, about three-quarters of a mile distant, his father went after him. He was not there.—Meantime a heavy thunder shower had come up, and it had grown extremely dark. Mr. Snyder hurried back home. The boy had not come, and it being evident that he was lost in the woods the alarm was given throughout the settlement. Great excitement prevailed, and men with lanterns started out in various directions to look for the missing boy.—The rain poured in torrents. About ten o'clock one of the searching party, in passing through the lot containing the old well, heard a faint voice calling, "Papa! Papa!" The farmer went in the direction of the sound, and as the light of his lantern fell on the clump of bushes surrounding the well he discovered the lost boy lying on the ground.—The man raised him to his feet. He was dripping wet and unable to stand. One of the boards over the well was broken, and it required no explanation on the part of the boy to tell where he had been. The man who discovered him carried him home, and the news was soon carried to the anxious seekers in the woods.

The boy was so nearly exhausted that he could with difficulty speak, and it was some time before he was sufficiently restored to give the following account of his adventure:

He had been unable to find the cow, and he started back home about six o'clock. When he went out a pheasant had flown out of the clump of bushes by the well, and upon reaching the lot, in coming back, he went over to see if the bird had a nest there. He stepped in on the boards covering the well, and one of them broke and he fell to the bottom.—His descent was so sudden that the boy did not at first comprehend where he was. The ice cold water, in which he stood waist deep on regaining his feet, recalled him to his scenes. Except the streak of light that came down from the opening above, all was dark as night.

He was at first nearly overcome with terror at his situation, and called loudly for help. But after a time he realized the folly of expecting to receive any response to his calls, and set about as calmly as possible for some way to escape. The stones with which the walls of the well were laid were rough and jagged as far up as the boy could reach, and the chinks and crevices between them were large. Frank says that he knew the only way of escape that was open to him was to climb up the wall, aided by the jagged stones and cracks. Unfortunately the well was too wide to permit his placing a foot on either side, by which his ascent would have been comparatively easy. So he was compelled to creep up one side. After several attempts he drew himself from the water, one crevice affording a secure footing while he felt above for another. He could see by the opening above that the well was not very deep, and the little fellows says he prayed to God to give him strength to reach the top. His progress was very slow. The stones were damp and slippery, and as he slowly dragged himself up the wall his great fear was that he would miss some foothold and fall to the bottom again. This fear was realized when the boy was half way up. As he was feeling carefully above him for another crevice the stone upon which he was standing with one foot gave way, and he was the second time precipitated into the water. Getting up to the point from which he fell had taken him a long time, so long that he could see by the hole above that it was getting dark outside.

The fall and the thought of having all his difficult task to do over again were disheartening, but he lost no time in renewing the ascent. He removed his shoes this time, thinking he could cling better to the stones in his stocking feet. He had been considerably bruised by his fall. Before he had gained the height he had reached before, his fingers were torn and bleeding, as were his feet. He could feel the blood ooze out from beneath his finger nails when he thrust his fingers in the crevices and drew himself up. After making a step upward he was obliged to stop and rest. At last he got within four or five feet of the top. In reaching up for another crevice he found that quite a large stone had been placed in the wall, and in order to get another hold he must make his way either to the right or left. In edging around this obstacle his feet slipped out of a crack where he had placed them, leaving him clinging to the wall by the tips of his fingers. He could not recover his footing, and after sustaining his weight for an instant by his fingers his hold gave way, and, with a cry of agony, he plunged once more back to the bottom.

Frank says that he gave up all hope of getting out of the well. His strength was almost gone, and the thought of again dragging himself, with torn fingers and bleeding feet, up the wall was maddening. But he says he thought of his father and mother, and knew that they would be almost crazed at his long absence, and this nerved him to renew the attempt to escape.

The rain had now commenced falling and everything was wrapped in the densest darkness. By the same slow and painful stages the boy made his way up the wall, after resting himself for several minutes, standing in the chilling water.

He says it seemed to him as if it must be nearly morning, so slow was the progress he had made. At last in reaching up he touched the boards covering the well.

He was so overcome at this that he did not dare move for a long time for fear he would lose his hold again. Finally he felt cautiously about, and found the opening through which he had fallen.—After a moment's rest he got both hands on the top of the well, and putting all his strength in the last effort drew himself out on the ground. He took a step or two and fell to the ground unconscious.

When he recovered he saw the lamp of the man who discovered him and called. It must have been about 6.15 when he fell in the well. It was 10:30 when he was found, having been in the well at least three hours.

The boy's hands, feet and limbs are terribly lacerated, and his body is badly bruised. His finger tips are worn nearly to the bone in some places. It spite of his injuries and terrible experience, no serious consequences are anticipated.

The Responsibility.

A young man had been sadly intemperate. He was a man of great capacity, fascination and power; but he had a passion for brandy which nothing could control. Often, in his walks, a friend remonstrated with him, but in vain; as often, in turn would he in vain urge his friend to take the social glass. On one occasion the latter agreed to yield to him; and, as they walked up to the bar together, the bar-keeper said:

"Gentlemen, what will you have?"

"Wine, sir," was the reply.

The glasses were filled, and the two friends stood ready to pledge each other in renewed and eternal friendship, when he paused, and said to his intemperate friend.

"Now if I drink this glass and become a drunkard, will you take the responsibility?"

The drunkard looked at him with severity and said:

"Set down that glass."

It was set down, and the two walked away without saying a word.

Oh, the drunkard knows the consequence of the first glass! Even in his madness for liquor, he is not willing to assume the responsibility of another becoming a drunkard.