Through Two Administrations

Character Sketches of Kentucky

Pattie French Witherspoon

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CHARACTER SKETCHES OF KENTUCKY

PATTIE FRENCH WITHERSPOON

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PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE REIGN OF AUNT ARETHUSA.

The name, "Aunt Jinsy," stands out in my memory framed in gray mists of steam and garlanded with light blue wreaths of fragrant, aromatic vapors.

Sometimes in my dreams I am a child again, and then I see Aunt Jinsy, as she peeps into the steaming oven, "ter see 'f dat tucky's done ter er turn," or again as she leans over the boiling pot, fork in hand, "ter turn dat possum e'en fer e'en."

Aunt Jinsy was not like the up-to-date combined servant, who accomplishes in the forenoon what formerly occupied a plantation of negroes a full day, and then spends her evenings out.

Aunt Jinsy was an old-fashioned painstaking specialist; she was the highest dignitary in the domestic hierarchy, being head-cook or more familiarly speaking, "fust-cook."

If Aunt Jinsy had lived in this generation she would have enjoyed the title chef, as it was, she was only, "fust-cook." She was a true caterer nevertheless, and helped to win for Kentucky her reputation for good cooking.

Aunt Jinsy never dressed fowls, prepared vegetables, scrubbed or scoured, all such menial tasks were beneath the dignity of her exalted position.

A visitor, who had been very much impressed with the old woman's deliciously cooked viands, also with her apparent leisure, —she could be seen at almost any hour of the day in summer, standing under a shade tree with her arms resting on her hips, or fanning with a turkey wing—one day asked the pointed question, "What is your part of the cooking any how?" "La, honey," she replied, as she stooped to mop her face with a corner of her apron, "'tain nuffin much, I jis flabors an tastes leetle an dat's 'bout all."

Aunt Jinsy seldom soiled her hands by attending to the fire. We used to say her children were the dampers of her stove. If the fire needed "mending" she would poke her head through the window and call out, "You George Washington." In a short time

that Secretary of the Interior would appear staggering beneath a huge armful of split ash. He would throw his burden in the woodbox with a loud crash, which would be echoed in a few moments by a smart thrash over his head; reminded of her majesty's presence, George Washington would mend the fire noiselessly and dexterously. If the fire had been neglected so long it needed a "leetle coaxin," Aunt Jinsy would again scream out, "fetch dem chips hyar dis meenit, Abe Lincoln." In a little while another woolly head would darken the doorway leaning far over to the left in consequence of a large basketful of chips which he carried on his right hip.

Having deposited his basket Abe Lincoln would convert his lung powers into a bellows, and soon the "coaxin" chips and the persuasively forceful gusts of wind that issued from the cavernous depths of Abe Lincoln's jaws would produce a mighty smoke, that was clearly shadowed by the scorched eyebrows and sooty smears on the face of the bellows.

Aunt Jinsy rarely made mistakes from nervousness. "I'se seldomly eber flustrated," I heard her say one day, "cept'n when dey

tehs me, Mis Arthusalem's done com'd, an den I jis goes all ter pieces. Hits wonderful whut sarchin power dat name Arthusalem's got ober me, pears lak hit jis runs all ober my flush an back jints same's er corncob." Indeed, Aunt Jinsy always spoiled the first meal after Aunt Arethusa's arrival. While my aunt was her sworn enemy, I think the old 'cook did not mean to begin hostilities so soon, but she just smelt the battle from afar and it "flustrated" her.

Milly, Aunt Jinsy's eldest daughter, waited on the table and did light housework. As she would carry the dishes to the kitchen after the first meal was over she would report with a grin, "Mis Arthusalem say yo done furgit all yo eber knew'd bout cookin', an she say de sughar yo wais on dem appuls is scanlous, she say dey's sweetin nuff fer zerbes." "G'long wid yo sass, gal, I know'd whut dat ole maid gwine say 'thout yo jawin' 'bout hit," and Aunt Jinsy would bring the broom handle down on poor Milly's head with considerable force. Milly would leave her dinner untasted and go off to the woodshed, blubbering and declaring that she ought not to be blamed for what white folks said.

So much for Aunt Arethusa's introduction to the kitchen. Aunt Arethusa was my father's eldest sister. She spent her early life on a farm in New Hampshire. When her parents died the old homestead was sold for debt, and my aunt came south to live with her younger sister, with an annual visit of six months to us thrown in.

I overheard Aunt Arethusa say to a neighbor one day, "Poor William Henry," she always spoke of my father that way, "might have landed on the supreme bench if he had only remained in an atmosphere of energy, but instead of that he came to Kentucky and just threw himself away."

To my aunt the most coveted position in the gift of the people was supreme judgeship. The neighbor, who was a devoted admirer of my mother, did not stay long after Aunt Arethusa's burst of confidence, and I thought she was rather stiff when she told my aunt good evening.

She said afterwards, "If Miss Arethusa thinks marrying a beautiful Kentucky girl that's a saint compared with some folks and an heiress besides is throwing one's self away she must have high notions."

My father's tastes were unquestionably literary, and I do not know what pre-eminence he might have attained had he pursued his profession of law.

He had neither knowledge nor experience of agriculture, in fact it was an open secret with the negroes that he knew nothing about "crapin."

When I was quite young I was told that our beautiful bluegrass farm was hopelessly mortgaged.

"What is a mortgage, Aunt Jinsy?" I one day asked when I heard the negroes discussing our finances in the kitchen.

"Why bress de po leetle chile," Aunt Jinsy said in tones commiserative of my ignorance, "er mortige, honey, is er warmint whut sucks yo blood an keeps on suckin' twell hits got de las drap, dats zactly whut de beeshup said in spekin' uv de mortige on de mulber' meetin' 'ouse."

For weeks I could not be persuaded to go alone in the dark for fear of encountering that new monster.

Aunt Arethusa came to us the first of March, that season of all the year that is most trying to nervous temperaments.

Father would be depressed from listening to the hands' gloomy foreboding about the spring's being so late there would be no time for ploughing.

Mother, dear little patient mother, who had been exposing herself all winter waiting on her own family and sick neighbors, and who had been wearing old cast-off thin clothing that we might be warmly clad, would be in bed with nervous chills and "a general give way," as Doctor Tom expressed it.

I have sometimes thought that mother's nervous chills which came always on the first of March, may have been something like Aunt Jinsy's "miseries in her back jints," when she heard "Mis Arthusalem's done com'd."

To add to the discomfort of the season we would be out at elbows and knees and clamoring loudly for new clothes, which mother was too honest to buy until she had money to pay for, and that necessary commodity would not be forthcoming until the hens should begin their spring laying, and until the green grass should turn the butter into a golden marketable color, for mother never colored her butter.

At such times Aunt Arethusa would come among us as soothing as a March wind.

Aunt Arethusa had a weather bureau of her own, that had one peculiar advantage over most signal services; it was this, she knew just where a draught would strike five minutes before it left the storm center. When she would see us come trooping home from school she would get out her black handkerchief and hang it on the knob of a high-back chair in a conspicuous place before the window, and then the somber storm signal would wave at us ominously.

The home-coming would have been rather gruesome but for the little mother who stood behind the chair and nodded and smiled at us brightly, like the sun behind the cloud.

Aunt Arethusa had another peculiarity which may have been occasioned by her extremely sensitive nerves—sound traveled to her faster than light, science to the contrary notwithstanding. She would cork up her ears, and scream a little, fully two seconds before we slammed the door.

I think my aunt was not in full sympathy with my mother's methods of housekeeping. She would spend the first day after her

arrival going through cupboards and presses and taking a general inventory of the premises, and for days afterward the atmosphere about our house would be redolent with the pungent odors of soapsuds, burnt camphor, sulphur and various other disinfectants.

The sense of smell was strongly developed in Aunt Arethusa. I have seen her stick her nose in a dark press, and after an investigating sniff or two she would go away, as well satisfied about the condition of said dark press as if an arclight had been turned upon its contents.

A cobweb was not a study in æsthetics to Aunt Arethusa, it was rather a disgraceful stain on a housekeeper's escutcheon, and she would have engraved it upon the sluggard's coat of arms.

After my aunt had looked to the ways of the household she would turn her attention to the farm. She would compel my father to go over his books with her, a task not much to his liking, but Aunt Arethusa would hold him to it until they had gone over the very last page of debits and credits.

The result of such investigations would prove that my father was getting deeper in debt every year, and Aunt Arethusa would

declare that our extravagance was reckless considering poor William Henry's condition.

Then would ensue a period of cutting down expenses subject to my aunt's cold, incisive judgment.

She would take the keys and the management in her hands, and my mother's authority would be usurped in her own house. I have often wondered why father permitted such tyranny, and why mother did not openly rebel against it. I think it was their deep, unquestioning affection for one another that made Aunt Arethusa's interregnum at all sufferable.

My father had great deference for his elder sister, and respected her opinions on points of business highly; indeed, Aunt Arethusa's reputation for economy and good judgment was far-reaching.

I think my mother was one of the best economists I have ever known. She mended, made over and handed down our little garments in a way that must have appeared truly pathetic to our more prosperous neighbors. Our friends often sent her some of the garments their children had outgrown, and she always received them gratefully. She practiced quietly and unobtrusively the most conservative system of economy.

She sometimes made a great show of tying a bit of bright ribbon around my sister's curls, and of sewing new brass buttons on our shabby coats, hoping by such simple arts to beguile our innocent fancies from the chilling effects of early poverty.

She never forgot to put in our school baskets the turnovers of apple-butter, which she often made with her own hands, partly to vary the size and print, but principally, I think, to keep Aunt Jinsy from wasting materials. Aunt Arethusa's economy was a gaunt, blatant, hydra-headed monster that howled at us from all her methods. It stared at us from her cold, uninviting luncheons, it mocked us from her smouldering ash-covered fires. Wood cost us nothing, indeed it was so abundant my father often gave it to the town people, the only stipulation being that they should cut and haul it themselves and afterwards burn the brush.

My mother often said she thought a bright wood fire was inspiring; my aunt thought otherwise, or that it was inspiring notions of extravagance, which should be suppressed rather than encouraged. I fancy Aunt Arethusa is before me, sitting prim and stiff on a high, straight chair, never touching the back

of it for an instant, her lips are blue and pinched habitually, as if with cold, though around her angular form shoulder-shawls (her one compromise toward comfort) are piled two inches thick; now and then she looks searchingly over her glasses at the poor little sleepy tow-heads that are bending low over their books; woe. to the hapless urchin who is caught studying designs in wall-paper or carpet rather than arithmetic or geometry. She raises the index finger and shakes it threateningly: "Mark my word you will miss that lesson, sir, and if you do you shall go over it till you can recite it perfectly. I shall hear you say it in a short time, when I've turned the heel." The harsh clicking of her rapidly flying needles begins again and suggests to the laggard student her rigid severity.

Now the fire struggles into a cheerful blaze, and we are unconsciously stimulated by the expansive influence, the hum of voices conning their lessons is quickened, and we keep pace with the spirited fire-captain.

Suddenly my aunt leaves the room; she returns with a gourd full of water which she throws spitefully upon the bright flames; we murmur in our hearts but dare not complain;

the cinders and ashes fly up at Aunt Arethusa rebelliously, and she is forced to retreat; her eyes are blinded with smoke, and as she staggers from the room she treads upon our toes—somehow poor Aunt Arethusa was always treading on people's toes. Our aunt evidently thought we would not appreciate the necessity of her regulations until we should be thoroughly aroused to our condition of miserable poverty.

My father was an absent-minded man, unobservant of small things, and I think he was really unconscious of his sister's disagreeable policy. I know he felt sympathy for her because she had no home of her own; perhaps he thought she would feel more independent if allowed to share in the household duties. He may have thought that such a division of responsibilities would prove a relief to my mother. I think he was unadvised in that opinion, for my mother continued to do the work while Aunt Arethusa carried the keys and did the managing.

If mother submitted gracefully to the new order of things Aunt Jinsy's grace did not extend so far. Her disposition, that was uniformly cheerful and obliging under mother's mild regime, became morose and stubborn

when exposed to Aunt Arethusa's curt commands.

My aunt's great hobby in regard to food was that it should be well and thoroughly cooked; she had a great dread of raw germs.

I must confess the truth, though it show Aunt Jinsy's disposition in rather a bad light, we never had raw food upon our table except during Aunt Arethusa's administration. At times the cooking would become intolerable, and my father, who had naturally a small appetite, would be reduced to a glassful of milk and a cold cracker. Aunt Arethusa would storm at Aunt Jinsy, and Aunt Jinsy in turn would storm at the stove.

"Declar fore gracious, Mis Arthusalem, I dunno whut curus kin uv speerits done got in ter dat stove, pears lak hit gits more oncommodatin' ever day, an hit jes pintedly 'fuses ter cook at de bottom. Mayhap ef yo'd git de hans ter sort er clean 'er out hit 'ud tak de meanness out uv 'er; 'tain nuffin but comtra'ness, no ways, I'm spectin."

My aunt would stop the farm hands and compel them to give the stove a thorough cleaning under her personal supervision. To her great wrath and indignation the following meal would deteriorate rather than im-

prove. She would fly to the kitchen for an explanation and Aunt Jinsy would be ready for her.

"Dey done git 'er too clean dis time, Mis Arthusalem, her ain gwine do no good twell 'er kin uv fill up leetle; hits jis lak er nigah whuts dress up, he ain gwine wuk twell he gits de starch off'n he shut, an git er leetle grease on ter dat shine, kase 'tain natchel fer nigah er stove ter be too clean; jis give 'er time an she'll come roun, Mis Arthusalem."

My aunt would be forced into submission by such unanswerable philosophy.

Mother, who had suspected all along the real secret of the trouble, would slip out quietly and say, "Wont you try to fix things a little nicer, just for Mars William's sake, Aunt Jinsy? You know he hasn't much appetite at best, and he has eaten so little lately it almost frightens me."

Aunt Jinsy would begin in a loud, excited tone. "'Tain no use, Mis Kal-line, ter try ter fix suthin out'n nuffin. Ole Mis Arthusalem she don' give me nuff grease ter shorten er griddle cake let er lone bistits, an ez fer sugar, 'tain nuff ter tone down one dumplin', not speakin' uv de sass."

"I know all about it, Aunt Jinsy, but I can't help it, and besides you know we are poor now and can't afford such rich seasoning," mother would reply, while a tear trembled in her voice and perhaps in her eye.

Aunt Jinsy would melt all at once, and her voice would drop from a high rasping key to a low mellow croon.

"Jes tek yoself in ter de house, honey, ole Jinsy ain gwine give in twell she brin' dat ole heefer roun to some gumption," and Aunt Jinsy would kick the stove maliciously to hide her ambiguous remark. "Don yo worrit yoself, po chile, tings gwine show 'provemeant bimeby, in course Mars Weelium got er hab suthin fit'n ter eat, in course."

Aunt Jinsy would return to her good disposition and good cooking, and for days afterward we would fare royally. Aunt Arethusa was always greatly mystified at such seasons of refreshing.

She kept the keys under the strictest surveillance during the day, and slept with them under her pillow at night. I once heard her suggest to father that she believed Aunt Jinsy had a pass-key, but father refuted the accusation promptly.

George Washington one day whispered to me in the hay loft when we were discussing our improved fare. "I'se teh yo de secet, Shanky, ef yo swar yo won neber teh; why mammy she gittin' de tings fer de good cookin' out'n her own chist, ony she don wan ole Mis Arthusalem ter know nuffin tall 'bout hit, kase her's so mean yo know."

I think my mother visited very little when Aunt Arethusa was with us out of consideration for our feelings. Sometimes it was absolutely necessary for her to accompany father to town on business, or again she would be summoned to a sick neighbor's.

Then would come a day of visitation. Aunt Arethusa would line us up, black and white, and would read to us from a note-book that she kept with strict accuracy all the misdemeanors we had been guilty of since the day of her arrival, winding up with a summary review of our faults of the previous year, which she always declared had not improved but had rather grown worse. Then proceeding on the mathematical basis of compound interest, she would calculate with cool impartiality just how many years it would require, at the present rate, to place us in the penitentiary.

It may be interesting to note the effect such dire prophecies had upon our susceptible natures. The younger children usually wept, more over my aunt's expression than the prophecies, I think; we older ones often sniggered, while George Washington actually yawned, in consequence of which my aunt was wont to regard him as her most hardened case.

In our back yard not far from the kitchen there stood an old two-story bee-house that had long been abandoned by the active colonies; the ground floor was used for storage purposes, while the upper room afforded us a City of Refuge from our dread Nemesis.

I know my aunt strongly suspected our whereabouts, but she could not make sure of them, because we usually kept well secreted after we had once reached our vantage ground.

She could get no information from the servants in regard to our rendezvous.

"Fore de goodness, Mis Arthusalem," Aunt Jinsy would invariably reply to an inquiry from my aunt concerning our disappearance, "I dunno whut is become uv dem young rabscallions, dey's allus roun 'n 'bout under yo feets 'cept'n when yo wants um an den yo

can't lay hans on er sinle woolly head on um."

The faithful ally would "tote" wood and chips all day rather than betray George Washington or Abe Lincoln.

The ascent to our loft room was made by means of a steep, insecure, old ladder. It was a narrow gauge road that positively refused to bear the weight of people over twelve years of age; our George Washington said it sometimes creaked with him after he had eaten a very heavy dinner. This difficult access rendered our fortress doubly impregnable.

One Saturday in May mother went to town with father, to be gone all day. We children were on the alert, and we escaped to the bee-house before Aunt Arethusa had turned the heel of her stocking, a task which she never laid aside for any consideration when once it had been commenced.

It was a warm, spring day, and the close atmosphere of the musty loft drove me to the door to seek a cool, inviting breeze on the outside. I was standing on the topmost round of the ladder, balancing myself with a long pole, in imitation of a rope-walker I had seen at the last circus, when my aunt appeared upon the scene. The shock was so

sudden it almost made me lose my balance. I knew it was too late to retreat, besides I felt secure on my lofty perch, so I held my position.

My aunt did not command me to come down—I presume she knew it was useless. I heard her say to Pete, one of the farm hands who passed near at that time, "I'll give you fifty cents, Peter, if you will convey those young culprits to the house." The bribe was exorbitant considering the briber, but Pete declined the flattering reward and won at once my everlasting gratitude.

"La, Mis Arthusalem," he replied, "hit ud tak mo'n fif cent ter mek me resk my life on dat ladder, hits sartin deaf fer er grow'd nigah ter try sich er caper," and, pulling his slouch hat low over his eyes, Pete gave me a dreadfully wicked wink of *camaraderie* and went on his way grinning. Foiled in that attempt my aunt found recourse in her old reliable green-backed grammar. Aunt Arethusa was a school teacher when she was young, and I think she always continued the teaching of grammar as a profession. We children talked in a way that shocked her cultured ear greatly. I am sure she thought that our rude conduct was the result of our

incorrect grammar, for she often said, "Conversation is but the parent of conduct."

I heard her say to mother one day, "You southern people speak a language of your own that is scarcely intelligible to me, since it is composed of provincialisms and negro dialect."

She rarely remained with us ten minutes at a time without pulling out the old green-backed grammar. As I stood balancing myself with my long pole my aunt, determined to preserve at least some show of discipline, called out in a shrill voice, "Clarence, I command you to conjugate the verb *to love* in all of its parts declaratively and interrogatively, and if you disobey me, sir, I shall certainly report you to your father."

Now I liked to conjugate verbs, and I thought I could do it with great credit to my education; in addition to that, my conspicuous position presented a good opportunity to show off. Accordingly I consented to go through with the verb to the edification and admiration of my audience in the rear. It went very smoothly with us both till I came to the preterit tense interrogatively, then a wicked suggestion popped into my head. "Did we love, did you love,"—a fatal pause.

"Go on this minute," my aunt cried, angrily.

"I can't go on till you answer my question, Aunt Arethusa," I replied, airily.

The audience in the rear, that was now crowding the open doorway, applauded this sally tremendously, and I felt as proud as a stump speaker when he hears his "backers" call out, "Amen."

Aunt Arethusa always carried in her pocket nuts and candies and an orange, which she said she was keeping for good boys and girls. They rattled temptingly when she walked, but we had long ago given up the vain hope of ever deserving them, for we supposed that no children in this "Wilderness of Woe," as my aunt always called the world, would ever receive merit from her hands.

To my surprise my aunt drew from her pocket an orange and aimed it at my head with such nicety that in trying to dodge it I lost my balance, and would have fallen into the hands of the enemy but for the timely aid of the faithful Washington, who pulled me safe into the retreat.

In a short time the orange was peeled and divided, and I ate my segment with keen relish. I think it was regarded as the spoils of my bravery.

My aunt passed on to the kitchen, where Aunt Jinsy, who had been an eyewitness to the scene, was trying hard to look "outdone," though the tears on her face and the smile that lurked about the corners of her mouth were strongly expressive of her real sentiment. Through the crack in the door we heard our aunt give express commands, in a very loud voice, that we were not to have any dinner.

George Washington was the eldest boy in our ranks, and was therefore the acknowledged leader of the army.

The original Washington was not more faithful to his starving soldiers at Valley Forge than our commander was to his little staff. He would scout out on foraging expeditions to the orchard and would return with his blouse stuffed with green apples and gooseberries. At other times he would start from the spring with his old straw hat full of water, and the famished garrison would drink the few drops that remained in it when it reached them with all the borrowed relish of adventure. When we thought our aunt had returned to her knitting, George Washington sneaked to the kitchen to reconnoiter the prospects for dinner.

He returned in a short time with the joyous report, "Mammy's all right, an say she gwine whustle when hits time ter come fer de bastit."

We were tearing around at a great rate in a game of Blind Man's Buff when we heard a low whistle. The game was quickly suspended, and George Washington climbed down the ladder on his hands, head foremost, a cautious measure that we highly approved.

He started toward the house, creeping on all fours, to indicate to his anxious watchers the cunning vigilance that was necessary on so hazardous an undertaking. He told us afterwards that when he stepped upon the porch he heard "Mis Arthusalem" coming down the hall. He was certainly hard pressed, he dared not advance, retreat would cut off all hope of the much needed supplies; like his illustrious prototype, he resorted to stratagem. He was a ventriloquist of no mean skill. Knowing that my aunt was both absent-minded and suspicious, he threw his natural voice in the direction of the pantry door. Aunt Arethusa supposed she had left the key in the door, and she trotted back in great haste, expecting, as she afterward de-

clared to Aunt Jinsy, to find George Washington head foremost in the sugar barrel.

Meanwhile the wily conjurer had secured his prize and was relating to us his thrilling adventures. While poor Aunt Arethusa was dining frugally on cabbage and corn-dodgers we were feasting sumptuously on fried chicken, hot biscuit and pound cake, which latter we accompanied with some of Aunt Jinsy's choice blackberry wine.

My aunt had a special program for each day of the week, which was carried out with unvarying regularity.

Monday was set apart for washing and scrubbing. On Monday my aunt constituted herself a custom house officer with full authority to examine all shoes that passed through the doors. I know there was no smuggling allowed, and I can vouch for her fidelity to her government. We were often detained a half-hour in the rain and snow, scraping and cleaning our feet, before being allowed to venture upon the sacred precincts of a white pine kitchen floor.

Tuesday was smoothing day, when everything was arranged and smoothed, except perhaps a few wrinkled brows and ruffled tempers. Chairs were ranged along the wall

with grim precision, and children were expected to sit where the chairs were placed without disarranging the harmonious order of things. Wednesday was called "baking day," though more truthfully speaking it was starving day. The supply of the week before was always exhausted on that day, and the new allowance was not to be touched under twenty-four hours. I can scarcely now imagine a feast on Wednesday. Thursday was miscellaneous day, which included dusting and sweeping, the airing of feather beds, the darning of stockings, the counting and sorting of silver, the washing and rearranging of empty bottles, the winding of loose strings into one ball, and all the odds and ends that had been left over of the previous day's work. Friday was charity day. My aunt was not remiss in her church work, on the contrary she was aggressively prompt.

Friday morning Aunt Arethusa would start out, wrapped in a sort of gray mist, composed of gray bombazine, gray veil, and gray or grim smile. She carried on her arm a large basket filled with home-made bread, soap and lectures. I do not know what become of the lectures, we sometimes

found the bread and soap airing in the alleys. Saturday was a general review of the week's work. Servants were required to freshen and perfect the various tasks they had thought completed, children were enjoined to demonstrate by incontestable proofs the progress they had made at school during the week. Sunday was children's day. Before breakfast my aunt began paying us her attentions by rubbing smartly our heads and necks with a coarse, crash washrag, because, as she said, the Saturday night's bath had been unsatisfactory. After that enlivening exercise we were allowed to sharpen our appetites on a breakfast that consisted of oatmeal and cold light-bread with a tumbler design of milk in water colors.

We were then marshalled into the library where we stood, one at a time, with our feet on a line, our hands crossed behind us, while our tongues rattled through with the Confession of Faith without the moving of a muscle or the grasping of an idea. Then came the shorter catechism, which each child was called to recite as a whole, questions and all. Following that came a dissertation from my aunt on the prophecies of Daniel, which she expounded with much confidence

and comparative ease. We were then dismissed to get ready for church.

I do not know whether Aunt Arethusa wore the same gray bombazine all through my childhood, or whether she only preserved the pattern and sample of the original and when necessary ordered a duplicate. I am inclined to the opinion that she had but one, which doubtless owed its durability to the pungent odors of camphor and tobacco that fell from its somber folds.

When we had all assembled on the front porch my aunt would give the signal and we would fall into line, single file, and march away to our country church.

If there was any dispositisn to turn aside to examine a passing butterfly, or to stoop to smell a roadside flower, Aunt Arethusa would tell of a lad who broke his leg when he was trying to catch a butterfly, and then she would relate the sad history of a little girl who disobeyed her mother and smelt a flower, and afterward fell into a deep sleep from which she never awoke in this world, all of which wayside episodes were truly effective and had a tendency to keep our lines straight.

Always we entered the church door a full hour before the services began, in order that we might get our minds off the world and be ready for the text, as my aunt expressed it. I am afraid our poor little weak natures were more frequently ready for a nap; such indulgences were not allowed—my aunt was charged with electric glances.

We returned home with appetites that are possible only to children who have nodded through a long sermon. Hungry as I was I often felt like pushing back from the scant, cold repast in disgust, but a glance at mother's patient face would calm my rash indignation, and I would finish my meal in silence. In the afternoon all the children on the farm would assemble in the kitchen, and my aunt would place us on high benches without backs, arranging the woolly and straight hair in an alternate series, that we might have a brotherly feeling for each other.

Then she would refresh us with long passages from Matthew Henry's Commentary, a rather knotty subject for theologians, but my aunt passed over his abstruse metaphors with grim satisfaction.

One afternoon a poor little fellow fell asleep and rolled upon the floor. Matthew

Henry was closed with a bang and my aunt gave us a short, crisp treatise on total depravity.

After the precedent of foreclosure by the sleeping boy, the experiment of napping and falling passed into a time honored custom and the extracts from Matthew Henry were forcibly shortened. The evening services were concluded with the singing of five hymns of six verses each.

I think we must have injured our voices in such exercises, because of the sudden opening of our surcharged spirits.

At five o'clock Aunt Arethusa retired to her room, worn out with her efforts during the day; we were left to the soothing care of our parents.

CHAPTER II.

THE SECRET.

One day I was prodding the ground in the garden with a forked stick, hoping to discover a well of water. The water-witch, aided by my natural inclinations, led me to the shade of an apple tree where the ground was loose and mellow. I was digging away carelessly when my little spade struck a hard substance that at once excited my curiosity. In a short time I had unearthed an old rusty iron box. I tried again and again, but could not open it. I regarded it with rapturous glances nevertheless, and believed I had found at last an Indian treasure that would furnish us all with a fortune.

I ran toward the house loudly heralding my discovery, but no one paid heed to my habitually boisterous conduct. I heard mother singing in the cellar and I ran down the steps to her, holding my prize above my head. I never saw my mother more excited and vexed than she was when she caught

the box from my hands and quickly locked the cellar door. Then in tones agitated but stern she demanded of me an explanation. Amazed at her displeasure I told the circumstances that had led me to discover the box in a straightforward manner that convinced her I was telling her the truth.

She was silent for a moment and then she said, musingly, "I will have to explain it; I am going to tell you a secret, my son," she began in a low tone, "and if you ever mention it to any one I shall certainly punish you severely."

"I will never tell a soul, certain sure, mother," I replied with childish sincerity, and waited for mother to begin. "That box belongs to your Aunt Arethusa," she began at last; I opened my mouth to express surprise but mother motioned to me to be silent, "and she would not exchange it for the wealth of the world," she continued.

"Long years ago your Aunt Arethusa was engaged to be married to a young man named Charlie Northcutt, who lived far out in the West. The wedding day came; your aunt was dressed and veiled for the ceremony, the guests had assembled, the minister was waiting; all that long, long day they waited,

but the bridegroom never came to claim his wife. For weeks your Aunt Arethusa would array herself in her bridal dress and veil every morning, and would sit in the dark parlor all through the day still waiting. Finally they stole the dress from her at night, and then she became more natural and seemed to forget her sorrow, but they noticed that she kept that little iron box near her always. Sometimes your aunt believes Charlie Northcutt deserted her purposely, and then she buries the box and tries to forget him. At other times she believes he was killed on his way to the east, and she digs up the box and keeps it in her own room. Your father is afraid all the time that someone will find and steal the box, and if that should happen he believes she would lose her mind. She had a long spell of illness here before you can remember. She raved and tossed in agony, and the doctor said unless her mind could be relieved she would die of brain-fever.

"I listened attentively to her mourning one night as I watched alone by her bedside, and I caught enough of her incoherent longing to direct me to that box that was then buried under the willow tree by the

spring. When I returned with it and showed it to her she caught it in her hands eagerly, and kept it in bed with her during her illness."

"But what's in the box?" I cried, hastily, when at last mother paused.

"I cannot tell you, my son, for I have never seen inside it." Mother went out first to see that no one was passing, and when she called me softly I ran to the garden and buried the little rusty box in its grave under the apple tree. In the afternoon mother went to a missionary meeting and we were left at home. I kept aloof from the other children and watched my aunt closely.

When she thought we were all at play she started toward the garden. She carried a shawl on her left arm and in her right hand she held a trowel.

A strong temptation to follow her beset me, and I yielded to it. When she had passed out of sight in the long arbor, I darted through the gate and dropped down on my knees behind a hedge of currant bushes that bordered the walk. I crept stealthily on my hands and knees till I came near the old apple tree; when I peeped through the bushes I saw that my aunt had wrapped the heavy shawl closely about her,

though the air felt warm to me through my thin blouse.

The sun shone kindly on Aunt Arethusa's pale face, and I thought she might have been pretty when she was young; the apple blossoms overhead shattered, and a shower of pink petals fell softly on the old gray shawl; the sad complaining of a wandering dove was the only sound in the quiet garden.

Aunt Arethusa opened the box with trembling fingers and took from it some faded roses; her tears fell fast on the withered flowers and she bent over them tenderly, as if she hoped to catch in the blighted blossoms the fragrant dreams of the long ago.

The sun fell on an old ambrotype as she held it to her lips, and I heard her whisper softly, "You have blighted my life, Charlie, but I love you still."

I was surprised when I looked down to see a drop of water sparkling on my hand; I had never thought I could sympathize with Aunt Arethusa to the extent of a tear.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

MY AUNT MARGARET.

But for the counter attraction of Aunt Margaret, my mother's youngest sister, we might have entertained some prejudice against a certain social element. Always when I first hear the expression, "old maid," a cold chill passes over my nervous system, for somehow the recollection of Aunt Arethusa is lingering, frosty still.

But following that comes a stronger and deeper impression that drives away the chilling vapors, with a swift rush of mellow memories.

Aunt Margaret did not realize her ideal of homemaking; her brothers and sisters wanted the shining example of her Christian life around their own firesides.

She spent less time with us than with the other members of her family; I know it was not because she loved us less, for she and

mother were devotedly attached, and I think each was the other's favorite sister.

It may have been that mother was more unselfish than the others and demanded less of her time, and then, to make use of one of Aunt Arethusa's provincialisms, father was always "hard run," and my aunt had a morbidly sensitive dread of adding care and expense to our family.

My grandfather was the wealthiest farmer in his Bluegrass county, and he gave to each of his married children a farm of one thousand acres.

Aunt Margaret, the youngest child, received an equal share in stocks, bonds and cash-paper.

She was only sixteen when her father died, and her estate was placed in the care of a guardian, more renowned for honesty than for business capacity.

At the final settlement, he could account for but one-half of the original trust.

He urged the breaking out of the war as a set-off for his delinquencies.

The unfortunate man had a very large family -|- a very small bank account, which equation == 0, in a commercial sense. Aunt Margaret did not press her claim.

My aunt spent a good part of the remainder of her capital in equipping and refurnishing soldiers for the war, and in caring for the widows and orphans of the strife. In addition to this, there are a good many charitable institutions in Kentucky to-day that owe the successful struggle of their infancy to her fostering care.

She reserved just enough of her principal to yield an income sufficient for a meager support.

Aunt Margaret came to visit us in the soft, melancholy days of October, and to me that month is haloed with sacred associations and is the fairest of all the twelve sisters. Mother was willing to add an indulgence to the occasion, and we stayed out of school on the day appointed for her arrival.

They did not have to drag us from the fascinating manufacture of "mud pies" to wash our faces, comb our hair, and array us in fresh waists and aprons.

We begged the privilege of wearing our Sunday clothes; we promised solemnly we would not soil them at the table or tear them climbing trees.

Long before it was time for the stage coach to arrive we would be hanging over

the bars, waiting with impatient eagerness the coming event.

George Washington, the trusty sentinel, would climb a tall hickory tree that afforded a commanding view of the road, and when he would see the old mud-colored coach climbing the long hill he would put his fingers in his mouth and blow a shrill whistle that would arouse us to great activity.

The bars would be cleared at a single leap and black legs and white would rush down the hill, quickly losing their individuality in the mad charge of infantry.

I never knew whether George Washington jumped from the top of the hickory tree upon the driver's seat, (he was a great jumper), or whether he simply outstripped us in the race, certain it is he always occupied that coveted position when I came up out of breath with the old coach. It was considered a great honor to be entrusted with the care of any of Aunt Margaret's bundles, but the boy or girl who carried the black basket to the house was the hero of the campaign, and was envied accordingly.

I think we did not keep an extravagant table when my aunt was with us, but each article of food that came from Aunt Jinsy's

fingers was a masterpiece and was highly dignified by its perfection.

At dinner my aunt managed to taste a little of everything, and she afterwards complimented Aunt Jinsy on each individual dish, and the old woman was thereby stimulated to greater and more ingenious successes.

After dinner my aunt would call for the black basket, and a half-dozen volunteers would start off in quest of the treasure.

Aunt Margaret's basket was just the opposite of Pandora's Box; it contained something for each member of the family that was heart-satisfying.

Its masterhand of genius struck the responsive chords of our young natures with exquisite skill, and swept the whole register of children's delights, from the big boy's football to the baby's rattle. The City of Refuge, or more properly speaking, the Passage of Janus, was kept closed during Aunt Margaret's visits.

We no longer avoided the house and sought out-of-door amusements; on the contrary it was a great pleasure to sit quietly around the fireside and watch for the ball of yarn that sometimes rolled under the divan. The smile and "Thank you, dear," were sufficient com-

pensation for the bump and cobwebs one was sure to gather in a scramble after the lost ball.

My sisters and the little negro girls, who were just playing with the occult art of knitting, would sometimes walk up to my aunt's chair and lay their tangled webs in her lap, with puzzled faces and with weary sighs of failure.

She would soon ravel the mistake, and her deft fingers would quickly bring the confusion back to the regulation stitch.

I think Aunt Margaret spent her life picking up dropped stitches.

The Sabbath was the best day of all the week when Aunt Margaret was with us.

The pleasures began early in the morning when she brought to our bedside the dainty article that she had fashioned with her own fingers, and had, perhaps, sat up late the night before to finish.

It was always a joyous surprise to the pleased child and to the grateful mother, for the little garment whose place it supplied had generally been turned and made over until it was thin and faded. After breakfast we pulled her into the library, not that she

was unwilling to go, but we were eager and impatient to hear the beautiful stories about the pictures in the old family Bible, which she told in such simple language we could all understand. We found the little negroes had anticipated our movement, and when we reached the room they would be peeping in shyly through the half-open door, clad in gay linseys and sombre jeans, with well-scrubbed, shining faces, and with heads all frowzy from the recent combing that had been given them in honor of the occasion.

They were always invited in, and looked over our aunt's shoulder with undisputed equality. It was a great privilege to walk next to Aunt Margaret, and to hold her hand on the way to church, and the bidding for the honor often began a week ahead. On the way she would call our attention to the flowers of the field, and would quote to us the passage, "Consider the lilies how they grow, they toil not, they spin not, and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Then she would point to the sparrows and would tell us that God fed them, and that not one of them fell to the ground without his knowledge.

I never could rob a bird's nest after those talks by the way, for somehow when I thought of it I felt like it would be stealing from God.

We all carried our Bibles with us to church, and when the minister announced the morning lesson there was a great fluttering of leaves and each one tried to be the first to find the passage.

Sometimes the minister's arguments and theology were ponderous, and fell with such force upon a poor little weak head it could no longer preserve its equilibrium.

It would then gravitate slowly but surely toward Aunt Margaret's lap, and there dream of heaven and God's love in the true theology, "as a little child."

In the afternoon Aunt Margaret started with Bible and hymnbook in hand for Aunt Jinsy's cabin, and always we followed, for we dearly enjoyed such excursions. The scene comes before me now in the vivid present.

As we enter the door we see a great display of red bandana handkerchiefs, tightly drawn and knotted into headrags, and also a numerous variety of chequered cotton aprons, that have been so stiffly starched they stand out

in bold relief and magnify the portly figures they are intended to subdue.

All the negroes in the neighborhood are congregated in Aunt Jinsy's cabin.

Aunt Jinsy herself sits in the middle of the spacious room; with alternate smile and frown she plays the dual role of hostess and field marshal. She holds a long broom in her hand, and from time to time she sweeps the broken rock hearth in front of the old-fashioned fireplace with one end, and with the other she taps the hapless woolly head that yawns or otherwise shows the least symptoms of life.

When Aunt Margaret reads the chapter from the Bible there is no interruption save the snoring of the sleeping babies, and an occasional soft, subdued whine from a privileged hound that, stretched out in front of the fire, lies dreaming of fox hunt and chase.

Now and then Aunt Jinsy, on pretense of making up the fire, stoops over and peeps into the oven to see if the drop cakes are coming on; she always handed hot drop cakes and strawberry shrub at the conclusion of the services, which doubtless had something to do with making them so popular. Aunt Margaret did not quite approve of the

established custom, I think, but she did not chide Aunt Jinsy for her simple hospitality.

And now my aunt raises a familiar hymn and the women drop in slowly, one by one, until the anthem swells beyond the smoked, cracked rafters and mingles with the soughing wind, and is echoed by hill and woods.

The men keep, time with their feet and sing a low, monotonous chant in bass and tenor, that forms an agreeable accompaniment to the women's high soprano.

Suddenly there is a break in the smoothly flowing melody, an old sister is "gittin happy," and she throws in hallelujahs and runs away with the time regardless of tune or leader; but she falls back into line now with a prolonged wail; she will be found presently composing her nerves in a short nap.

At the conclusion of the singing Aunt Margaret preaches a short, conversational sermon that is listened to by all, except perhaps Aunt Jinsy, who still keeps one eye, and most of her attention, on the drop cakes, lest they burn and leave a scar on her reputation as a cook.

Aunt Margaret always put up our school dinners when she was with us. She never

allowed us to see what she was preparing, and she made us promise not to look into the basket until the noon recess.

Always it was understood that the largest piece of pie, cake or candy would belong to the boy or girl who should make the best recitations during the forenoon.

I think my aunt wanted we should realize at an early age that life held "high tides" for us all, but that it remained with us whether or not we would take them at the "flood."

It was a great incentive to industry to work for those unknown, unclaimed honors. Always she stood at the front door waiting for us, shading her eyes with her hand and looking away toward the western slope that she knew we must cross.

Before she kissed us she would hold our heads back, and looking in our eyes would ask how it had gone with the lessons and the playfellows.

Aunt Margaret was considered timid and peculiar about some things, but somehow they were such little things I need scarcely make mention of them. She never went into a large assembly except to church; she always carried her pillow and tallow candle

wherever she went, and she was more afraid of a mouse than a snake.

She avoided the society of gentlemen, and almost fainted if anyone ventured to tease her. This last was considered an unaccountable eccentricity by certain of her own sex.

I had been kept home all day in consequence of a very sore throat. In the afternoon I was playing with my marbles on the floor when I found Aunt Margaret's ring that had slipped from her finger while she was sewing. I had often looked at it admiringly, but had never held it in my hand before, and I examined it closely.

"Who's Clarence?" I cried, as I read the engraving on the inside. Mother caught the ring quickly from my hands and gave it to my aunt.

"Tell him, Carrie, he's old enough now," Aunt Margaret whispered, and she hastily gathered up her work and left the room. Mother looked very grave when she called me to her side. "I am very much grieved, my son," she began as she laid her hand upon my head, "that you have been guilty of such rudeness, how often have I told you not to read writing on anything that belongs to others; I am afraid your aunt will have a

nervous headache in consequence of this shock." I wanted to run after Aunt Margaret and beg her pardon, but mother held me back.

"It's too late this time," she said sadly, but try to remember, my son, that some one always suffers from rude, thoughtless acts. "Besides," she continued, "the children will soon be coming from school and your aunt has asked me to tell you all about it."

"A good many years ago," mother began in a reflective tone, "when your Aunt Margaret was young she was very beautiful."

"She's beautiful now, mother," I cried impetuously. "Yes, I know, dear, but I was speaking of another sort of beauty. Her gray blue eyes, that looked oftener brown than blue, her long golden hair that fell in shining curls to her waist, her regular features and clear rose-tinted skin, made a face that the world called beautiful."

Mother paused for a moment, and I looked at the light, fantastic flames that danced merrily in the old wood fire; I fancied I could see Aunt Margaret in her youth and beauty.

But soon the embers broke in a shower of sparks; the image faded.

"And what else, mother?"

"Your aunt was admired and loved by everybody, but that did not satisfy her, it was the habit of her life to make other people happy. I have often seen her, at an inn fair where friends would come crowding around her, take some of the young men who wanted to talk to her across the room, where a bashful girl would be standing with no companion but her own shadow.

"On the way she would have something pleasant to say about her modest friend's attractions that would at once enlist the sympathetic attention of her companion. Sister Margaret always knew how to get a man interested in one of her friends; I think there are married women to-day who might look back and say truthfully that she won for them their husbands."

I thought mother was talking to herself, so I tried to be patient. She looked through the bare, leafless trees to the far-off stretch of golden clouds, and seemed to be ignorant of my presence.

"Please go on, mother," I at last cried.

"Your aunt liked best of all the young minister who had the care of our church at that time. We all loved him, he was so brave and good. They were going to be married in a

month, and start away off to cross the seas to carry the Gospel to the heathen, when the war began and he went as chaplain to the 5th Kentucky Regiment." "Was he killed in the war, mother?" I asked, in eager anticipation. "No, dear, not that exactly, but he caught pneumonia from exposure and they brought him home in a short time.

"Your aunt was with him on the last day; a little while before the end he motioned to her to sing, and she sang his favorite hymn, 'Nearer my God to Thee.' He died at sunset." "Is that why she always sings that hymn at sunset?" I cried, with kindling interest. Mother bowed her head, she could not speak.

After a long pause I asked abruptly, "Did I ever see Aunt Margaret's sweetheart, mother?"

"No child, Clarence Atherton died three months before you were born, and your Aunt Margaret named you for him."

Mother almost took my breath away when she made that startling disclosure. I comprehended for the first time the true origin of my name, and for the first time I felt reconciled to it. I had thought it a hard fate that had named me for a dead preacher,

when my brothers and sisters all had living patrons that gave substantial evidence of the pride they felt in their namesakes. I began to understand why the lace on my frills was wider than the other children's, and why I was sometimes called "the favorite."

At the tea table I stared at my aunt with open, unconcealed attention, for I felt that a new interest had attached itself to her life. I noticed that she ate very little and seemed agitated.

Finally mother attracted my attention; she gave me a glance and frown that I quickly interpreted, and I dropped my eyes in confusion. I loved Aunt Margaret better than ever, after I had heard the sad chapter in her history. I constituted myself her chosen knight on all occasions, and I had the child-like ambition that she might find in me something to remind her of the Clarence she had lost.

At twilight, when mother would be busy with the milk and fowls, we would gather around Aunt Margaret in front of the old-fashioned fireplace, and there in the dusky shadows she would tell us about brave Christian men who had left their homes and gone across the sea to carry the Gospel to grown-

up people who had never heard about Jesus.

I fancy I can see now the fitful fire-flames lingering tenderly on Aunt Margaret's earnest face and piercing the shadows of the gathering gloom. She would tell of the hardships the missionaries endured, but she loved most to dwell on the rewards and golden crowns, and the Master's "Well done," that were waiting for them in heaven. My young imagination was so fired by these talks I felt that I wanted to start on a missionary tour to the stars.

One afternoon I was passing through the hall when I heard Aunt Margaret singing softly in the parlor. The door was half open and I crept in on tip-toe, though mother had often told us not to disturb her at that time.

The sunlight on her golden hair and the upward glance of her soft, appealing eyes awed my very soul.

I was familiar with the pictures and histories of Enoch and Elijah, and I say it with all reverence, there was something in the light on her hair and the rapt expression of her face that reminded me of their sudden translation.

I dropped down on my knees behind her chair and caught her apron strings. When

she had stopped singing I looked up; the sunlight had faded from her hair, her head was resting on her hands, and I heard her whispering a prayer.

I stole from the room like a culprit. I felt restless and unhappy all that evening, and when mother came to tuck me in my bed I told her how I had disobeyed her.

She said it was very wicked in me to suppose I could keep my aunt on earth if God wanted to take her, and then she knelt and prayed that my presumptuous sin might be forgiven.

That night I dreamed that the angels came and carried Aunt Margaret to heaven, and when I awoke in the morning my pillow was wet with unconscious tears.

The next afternoon I was pitching ball in the front yard, when a voice smote on my ear sadly, like the last soft breath of a summer wind dying in the autumn woods.

I dropped my ball quickly and crept under the lilac that grew at the parlor window, and there with bowed head and clasped hands I prayed God to let my aunt live a little longer.

CHAPTER II.

COURT DAY IN KENTUCKY.

Court day is a great event in a small Kentucky town, and stands third on the calender of social epochs, giving precedence only to circus and election days.

It is a great commercial rally and the men are truly on 'change all day.

On court day the Kentuckian is willing to exchange, or swap, everything he owns from his bluegrass farm to his jack-knife.

One can trade extensively on court day without having a cent of money; the only currency he need have is a young filly or a foxhound. Dogs are legal tender in Kentucky.

The story is told of a clever young countryman who, without a penny, started to town early one morning on court day, walking and leading by a string a pair of well-matched foxhounds.

Late in the evening he returned home in state, riding a frisky "two-year-old," with

sugar and coffee in the saddlebags for his family.

In explaining the situation to his admiring neighbors, he exclaimed, "Yer see its all er-long uv my bein' sich er dog-gored good jedge uv er anermule."

This expression was intentionally comprehensive, and doubtless had reference to certain weak specimens of the human family that had fallen into the clutches of the wily trader.

Early in the morning "bunches" of fat cattle come in on all the roads leading to the village, walking slowly and with becoming dignity, as if they were conscious of the favoritism extended to them by their masters.

The proud Roman, who reviewed the trophies and victims of his late conquests as he passed beneath the triumphal arches erected in his honor, was not more elated than is our Kentucky Cincinnatus, when he drives up court day his herd of one hundred sleek, fat thoroughbreds.

Following the cattle come droves of fat hogs that toil laboriously over the stones, burdened by the weight of their great flesh.

The dissonant ringing of cracked bells announces the approach of a flock of sheep.

They hasten to do the bidding of an imperious shepherd dog, that trots by the ranks with sedate dignity, like a commanding officer reviewing his troops.

Now and then they bleat piteously for the green meadow and shadowed brook they have left behind forever. Last of all come herds of men and dogs; the faithful animals follow their masters' lead dutifully, eager to catch the gossip about the last fox hunt, and equally eager to scent out the probable date of the next one.

It is considered not quite proper for women to appear on the crowded thoroughfares court day. The streets are often very muddy from the unusual trampling and splashing made by the stock in their recent importation, and besides that, the men and horses claim the honor of representing the State for the day.

Occasionally a country housewife is smuggled through the ranks in a closed vehicle, to exchange her butter and eggs for coal-oil and prints. She usually has an eye, if not a hand, on "pa" all day, and often keeps that gentleman from intemperate measures.

In the afternoon she has the melancholy satisfaction of driving "pa" home in a state

of only semi-intoxication, whereas she looks about her and sees poor Maria Ellen's husband reeling, and riding with his face toward his horse's tail, and the poor thing congratulates herself that her "pa ain't that bad off."

Court day affords a fine circulating medium for candidates, quack doctors and other humanitarians.

On one street corner the tooth doctor who extracts teeth without pain holds forth to a crowd of inquisitive negroes, who in turn hold their broad palms over their jaws with jealous care, lest the oily-tongued doctor conjure their sound "chawers" whether or no.

On the public square in front of the court house the patent medicine man stands in his wagon, that is drawn by four white horses, and in stentorian voice sets forth the virtues of his King Cure All.

The country men push and fight their way through the crowd savagely, for fear the medicine will give out before they get a chance at it.

In the midst of it all comes the minstrels' band; the horses bow their necks and prance the "Jockey's Minuet," and the whole town presents the appearance of a fairground.

The street urchin is almost driven to desperation by the conflicting attractions. He darts here and there between the horses' legs and wishes devoutly he could be five boys on court day instead of one. He thinks it isn't fair that everything nice and funny should come on court day anyhow, when often between times he is forced to tease his favorites for whole days at a time just to get up the enlivening interest of a dog fight.

The village papers feed on the material court day affords them for a month afterwards, until another court day.

The shopkeepers run to their doors every few minutes during the day, to see "what's goin' on," and in their absence the shoplifters—who came up from the city "to do" the town, along with the tooth doctor and the patent medicine man—empty their cash drawers at their leisure.

The farmer tells his wife when he lights his pipe in the evening, "The streets was that crowded, Jess, it's er good thing you and ther childen wasn't thar, court day aint no fit'n time fur women folk ter be draggin' roun' town nohow."

The agent from the city, who went up to collect a few debts, exclaims with a yawn as

he steps upon his return train, "The country wasn't as lonesome as I expected to find it."

On court day the merchant drapes his windows with his gaudiest colors, and generally makes it a point to work off old goods at high prices, because he knows the men are delegated to do the shopping.

But poor John often loses the sample he is to match and forgets the number of thread he must buy before he gets outside of the barn lot.

When he arrives at the town he enters the little dry-goods store and tries to describe to the smiling clerk the kind of dress Mary Ann is making that lacks just enough for the sleeves. He concludes his vague description with the expression, "It's a kind of flowered tweed, I think."

The clerk is slightly puzzled; the accomodating proprietor comes to the rescue, and sends his subordinate to wait on a lady.

He pulls down two-thirds of his stock, and throws the heavy bolts on the counter with great pride and calm assurance, which mean in substance, "If you can't find it there, sir, it's not to be had in this country."

They together go over the goods carefully and patiently, but poor John finds no shade

in his mind's eye that corresponds to the prismatic colors on the counter.

At last the merchant, determined not to show how very limited his stock is, exclaims, "I've nothing in the house to-day that corresponds to your description, sir. It will probably be in next week though, in fact I'm looking for that very article on every train. Good morning, sir; call again, and bring your wife."

The disappointed purchasing agent leaves the store and forgets his errand.

Late in the afternoon, after he has made some very good or very bad trades, and has celebrated the same in a convivial treat, (the remedy is alike in both cases), John orders his horse and starts home.

Suddenly the vision of Mary Ann, standing in the doorway demanding her sleeves, confronts him; he turns his horse's head once more toward the village.

When he enters the store he sees a bolt of light green silk, slightly mildewed, that has been left on the counter; he admires it, and asks the price of it. As the customer is a man the shrewd merchant prices the goods to him at *only* (great stress on the last word), one dollar per yard, that being at least dou-

ble the amount he would dare charge any woman.

Poor John thinks it is a great bargain; he buys ten yards of it and three spools of red thread, and pays for it like a little man—on credit. He is so pleased with his bargain he buys a bundle of red candy for the children and wraps it all up in one package, to run together harmoniously. He carries the green silk home in triumph, to make the sleeves for poor Mary Ann's navy blue calico dress.

By all odds the most important event on this memorable day is the court day dinner given by the women for the benefit of some church or society. They do not advertise their feast, nor do they employ a town-crier to proclaim it on the streets; this fair syndicate knows there is no necessity of incurring either expense.

In Kentucky all who are not related to each other are in love with one another, and so everybody is interested in everything.

At noon the all-pervasive aroma of boiling coffee and the insinuating suggestion of roast turkey float out upon the frosty air and remind the men that it must be almost dinner time.

Soon the fair maids decide they will attempt something in the way of illustrating, in *personis*. Adorned in dainty muslin caps and aprons, that enhance their coquetry, and holding cupid-painted waiters mockingly in front of their hearts, they pose before big plate glass windows.

Then the men *know* it is dinner time, and they flock to the dinner room in large numbers. A burly old farmer from way down in the "neck" enters the room and stands awkwardly on one foot waiting for directions. He wears an overcoat that is green with age rather than youth, his pants are stuffed in long buskins, an old beaver cap stopping just short of his shaggy eyebrows completes his rustic costume.

At last he is shown to a place next a young gentleman who is *a la mode*, from eyeglasses to oxfords. The old farmer takes his chair and his neighbor's appetite at the same time; the latter makes a great show of sucking an olive in his fingers, and presently leaves the table in deep disgust because the old farmer is actually cutting his meat with a knife.

The man who has just come in—followed by half a dozen comrades who are sticking very close to him just now—is the big-

hearted candidate who is bringing in some jolly floaters at his own charges.

It is not quite proper to speculate on futures at a church entertainment, but the sanguine candidate thinks he has his men, or will have them before the day is over.

And now the young lawyer saunters in with a toothpick in his mouth, as who should say, "I've had my dinner, ladies and gentlemen, but I am so full of public spirit I'm willing to make another effort for the benefit of society at large. I want it distinctly understood, however, that mine is a benefit and no personal gratification."

When the lawyer begins to eat he discovers that cheese and crackers do not render a man altogether insensible to table comforts.

That young man with hungry eyes and nervous manner is the editor; he throws down his last fifty cents with affected indifference, and says hurriedly, "No, thank you, madam, I haven't time to eat, I just dropped in to take a few notes." He continues the argument mentally. "It would be fatal to my reputation as a poet to eat in such a crowd; the people must be made to believe that I feed on classic lore."

Alas! for the editor; his healthy old appetite gets the better of his morbid young theories, and he is soon eating with the rest.

He chooses the daintiest viands however, and tries to prove that his taste is epicurean enough to be classic.

The room is rapidly filling. The clatter of dishes, the hum of voices, the chinking of coin almost intoxicates the fair doorkeeper. In her vivid imagination she fancies she can see the old debts flying away on the tails of little silver kites.

Dorothy is waiting at the door; when Philemon enters she claims him for her table, and nobody disputes her right; only when she passes Mary King's table that amiable friend looks daggers at her, but Dorothy only tosses her head and smiles and enjoys her power.

As she leads the way she drums lightly on her waiter, and Philemon's clanking spur keeps time to the melody.

Dorothy wears a cap and apron, and Philemon is commonplace in greatcoat and boots, and there are no conventionalities.

Dorothy leads him to the far end of the room, to a grotto made of bitter-sweet and Wandering Jew, where the mistletoe is hang-

ing thickest and the holly berry is blushing reddest, and where a tiny table is spread with the daintiest specimens of her drawn linen and embroidery.

Dorothy hands him a bowl of oyster soup and she spices it with such saucy, willful coquetry that presently Philemon finds himself choking on a bit of flattery and a half-cracker.

He recovers his self-possession and grows jovial and even familiar.

But Dorothy becomes reserved, cool and icy, the mercury drops rapidly, and Philemon is distinctly conscious of an all-over-shivering sensation, though the temperature of the room is at summer heat he has on his overcoat and is drinking boiling hot coffee.

Suddenly a happy thought suggests itself to Philemon. He draws from the depths of a sacred inside pocket something that he keeps well concealed in his broad palm until he has it under the cover of a napkin.

Philemon lifts one corner of the cover and Dorothy sees a tiny morocco case, then he touches a spring and there flashes before her eyes a great and awful truth; the prattling witness of a solemn vow.

She knows the cattle market must be good, because the stone is, oh, so large; she would dearly love to know what it cost, but of course she mustn't ask now. Dorothy's tell-tale face reflects all the colors of the prism that in turn reflects the light of a deep love; their eyes meet, and Dorothy is subdued.

We dwell with great pride upon our modern inventors and we call their discoveries and applications new.

Love is the oldest and best electrician after all; in a single love-glance there flashes all the events of a past life, all the hopes and plans for the future. It is great sport for two dear friends to talk about the weather and play leading roles in the farce of every-day life, when all the while a symphony, so soft that none but the angels can hear it, is being sung, a duo by two hearts that throb in time.

When Dorothy looked at the diamond ring she felt that she had reached the first milestone on a new highway, and like many another traveler she faced about and reviewed the starting point.

While Philemon ate his turkey with undisturbed appetite, Dorothy fell into a reverie.

She is crossing the brook again on her way to school; Philemon is holding her hand as she steps upon the slippery, unstable rocks; the water is very swift to-day and she is half afraid of falling. Some one drops a waiter, there is a crash, and Dorothy believes she is falling into the brook; a glance at Philemon reassures her.

Now they are at school and Philemon is whispering to her the answer to her question, and the teacher says in an awful voice, "You will remain after school to-day, Philemon, for prompting in the class," and Dorothy shudders perceptibly.

School is over and she is waiting by the bars; will Philemon never come, but he is coming at last and he finds, accidentally, in his pocket a mellow apple that he has been saving for her all day; he further certifies his appreciation by dashing up a slippery steep and plucking a branch of bitter-sweet for his friend. Dorothy is delighted with it, but she asks simply, "Why do you reckon people gave this pretty heart-shaped berry such a queer name, Philemon?" Philemon shakes his head and says honestly, "I don't know now, Dorothy, but I'll find out some day and tell you."

Now they are at the fair, and Dorothy is holding in her hands the popcorn balls and balloons that Philemon has bought and given her; she is very grateful to him at present, for he has just knocked down two little rivals for teasing her about Philemon.

The years fly by; Dorothy is driving in the ring for the prettiest turnouts with Philemon in his new buggy, behind his beautiful fast horse. Through the lace frills of her white parasol she sees the crowds looking at them with admiring interest, but Philemon keeps talking to his horse in such fond terms she almost grows jealous of his other idol.

And now they are tying the blue ribbon on their buggy, the people are cheering wildly, but above the roar of voices and the music of the band she hears Philemon call her softly his Rowena, and all the novel names he can recall.

Always they go together in the same beautiful, light spinning, rubber-tired buggy, to the picnics and parties and fish-fries, and everything is lovely, only the horse travels so fast there isn't time to say much on the road.

And now Philemon is riding by her side on the fox hunt; she urges her lithe, ambitious

mare to her utmost speed, and they scarcely displace the late clover blossoms as they fly over the rolling meadow lands. Through plowed land and brier patches they keep the same gait; they are far in the lead, the voices of their companions have died away in the distance, and there is no sound that breaks the stillness save the hurtling of a frightened dove, that Dorothy touches in her mad flight, and the yelping of the dogs not far ahead.

Dorothy's long light hair has fallen, and is streaming gold in the sunlight, her cap is almost off, but she has no time to replace it.

Still their horses are neck by neck and they leap the ditches and clear the bars as one. And now her horse trips, but she doesn't fall, for Philemon is holding her left hand; she didn't know it before, and she jerks it away and tries to scold him, but the wind snatches away her breath. They are flying on again, always side by side, and Philemon is talking to her, but she hears not a word that he is saying.

Now, oh, victory! they are first at the "close," and Philemon claims the brush for his "Die Vernon."

As she reviewed all these scenes, always it was Philemon who played the hero in each act.

Dorothy has a great many admirers and is very popular, but always in all circles there is a center around which the satellites must rotate.

Dorothy thinks now there is but one sun, and she does not regret the attraction that holds her heart to its place.

Philemon pushes back from the table; as he throws down his napkin in the careless, elegant fashion he turns over enough coffee to spoil a beautiful piece of embroidery done in wash silks, that won't wash.

"Oh, Philemon," Dorothy exclaims, "you've spoiled that beautiful centerpiece, and it took me two months to work it."

Philemon looks helpless and miserable; he almost wishes he had taken oysters at a restaurant on a marbletop table, where they have no embroideries.

Suddenly a sunlight idea shines on his dark situation, "Never mind, Dorothy, dear," he whispers, "I'll buy you another one this very day." "As if he could buy another," Dorothy exclaims aside, in awful apostrophe, "it's a wonder he hadn't said he'd get Mary King to work it for me," she thought, with indignation.

Poor Philemon doesn't know what to say to pacify Dorothy, nor indeed could Dorothy

herself tell him, only it seems to her that everything he attempts to say or do only makes matters worse.

Dorothy weeps, and Philemon walks away in anger, and that is the second milestone on that road of sharp angles.

When Dorothy looks at her poor little wreck, the bitter-sweet smiles at her mockingly and seems to suggest, "You understand my name now." She finds nothing but thorns on the holly branches, and she thinks the white berries on the mistletoe look weird and ghastly, like spectral witnesses of broken troth. The frowzy, unkempt blossoms on the Wandering Jew look as inscrutable as cowled monks; fanned by a light gush of wind, they shake their heads mournfully and seem to whisper, "There are no oracles for angry lovers."

When Dorothy dropped her eyes sadly, overwhelmed in the presence of so many condemning witnesses, she saw a glove lying under the table.

She picked it up hastily and ran with it through the crowd; she was so tall and slender she had no difficulty squeezing through the chairs. She reached Philemon just as he was opening the door.

"Here's your glove," she gasped, and she smiled through her tears a very rainbow of forgiveness. And Philemon, happy Philemon, when he caught the radiance of that smile thought the earth had made an extra rotation, to turn midnight into noon, for his especial benefit.

Poor Dorothy was so weak she had to lean against a wall for support, and Philemon fairly reeled with joy when he stepped upon the pavement. A bachelor, who had been standing on the outside for an hour trying to get his courage to the point of entering, remarked with a sinister smile, "That feller's drunk."

"Wal I dunno, neighbor," replied a good-natured farmer, who had slyly observed the little drama of the court day dinner, "mayhap he's hed a leetle sip o' ther wine o' love in thar, an yer know that's powerful stimerlatin' but it b'aint intoxercatin'—eh, neighbor?"

The bachelor did not reply; he had fled in terror and had gone back to his ledger without dinner.

We boys greatly enjoyed a trip to town with father court day, and we kept jealous account of our turn.

One court day I was going with father down an alley to look at a bunch of calves, when our attention was arrested by loud, angry threats, mingled with low, half-smothered wails.

As we drew near we saw a muscular woman beating a small urchin unmercifully; the boy's face was pale and pinched with suffering, and he lifted his small hands entreatingly to ward off the blows.

The woman's coarse red hair had fallen to her waist and was flying loosely in the breeze, her tattered garments hung in ragged fringe about her angular form, and the blows that fell from her bare arms were mingled with curses.

As we came up to them, a policeman pushed his way through the crowd, and catching the woman roughly by the arm, exclaimed, "Drunk again are ye, come er long, yer'll sleep in jail to-night, ole Margit."

I let go father's hand and ran up to them excitedly. "Her name's not Margaret," I said, stoutly. The policeman looked at me in mute surprise, but the woman broke out in a loud voice.

"Faith an the laddie's roight, its Maggie O'Ferrall ye're spakin wid, an ef its Marget

ye're afther, ye'll haf ter be sakin furder."

Satisfied to hear from the woman's own lips her name was not Margaret I ran back to father.

He lectured me in his mild way, and told me I should not have interfered.

I heard him tell mother about it that night when he thought I was asleep. "It's wonderful, Carrie," he said, "the influence your sister Margaret has over these children, her very name is sacred to them."

CHAPTER III.

HOW WE CARRIED THE ELECTION.

Father changed politics when he changed climates. After he came to Kentucky he became a strong advocate of Democratic principles. One year his party called upon him to run for the office of County Judge.

Now father was slow and deliberate in all of his movements, and it was generally understood that his party was to do the running, but he allowed them to use his name on the ticket.

He was an old-fashioned orator of the Henry Clay school and he made some telling speeches during that campaign.

Now and then an old gray-headed man—who makes perhaps two trips to town in the year, and those always on court day—catches me by the arm, and leading me aside tells me with kindling eyes and parliamentary flourishes what "powerful stirring" speeches my father made in that race at Pretty Run schoolhouse and Three Forks blacksmith

shop. He then looks me over critically from head to foot, shakes his head mournfully, and muttering in an undertone—of which I catch the phrase, "never ecal his pa, never in this world,"—turns away sadly.

Our village physician was a jolly child-spoiling old bachelor.

We called him Dr. Tom, not feeling quite free enough to call him plain Tom like father; we were on far too good terms with him to call him Mr. Mitchell, in imitation of Aunt Margaret.

Dr. Tom made us a good many visits at certain seasons of the year; I think they were social visits rather than professional.

To our childish fancies he was directly descended from St. Nicholas, and we often held spirited arguments as to whether he was the son or grandson of that patron saint.

Without waiting for an invitation we would dive into his pockets, and with screams of delight draw out nuts, rosy apples, and always candy hearts in infinite variety.

We one day asked Dr. Tom why he always brought candy hearts; they were pasty and not very sweet, and our judgment cried out against such a poor investment of money. He turned very red at our question and told

us in a low, subdued voice, "They are good for the heart, children, fine for the heart."

After that we ate them as a sort of medicine. In the very depths of the long pocket there was often a book for mother, and a song for Aunt Margaret.

Father talked very little about his election, and we received most of our news through Dr. Tom.

"Will's bound to get it," he said one day, rubbing his hands together and winking with one eye at Aunt Margaret and smiling with the other at mother.

"You see the other feller's from the brush and they say he can barely spell and write his own name; he ain't to be put in the same catalogue with your husband, ma'am," and Dr. Tom gave a hearty roar of laughter that must have been a tonic to mother's anxious fears.

All the democrats felt so sure of success, none of them did any serious electioneering.

Father made a few speeches among his friends, just to air the old platform, and perhaps to show that he could stump a congressional campaign when the time was ripe.

The night before the election father came home looking very much cast down.

In answer to mother's look of inquiry he said, "I have just heard to-day of a report that is being circulated about our race that is highly damaging to me.

"It comes from the upper end of the county where Jackson's strongest.

"It had such a wonderful effect on the laboring men in that section, they have had it published and they are now circulating the libelous bills all over my own territory; I think I can see they have already alienated some of the tobacco tenants."

"But what is it, William?" mother cried, and she clung to the armchair in which father was sitting and looked very pale.

Father drew from his pocket a yellow sheet and handed it to mother, and she read from it in a trembling voice:

"Whereas, this race is the Aristocrat against the Common Man, Capital against Labor, the Bluegrass against the Pennyrile, we call upon all honest, hardworking men to elect a representative of the working class.

"Put in a man from the plough, boys, and he'll sharpen your points so the furrows won't seem so long and rough.

"The good times will come then, and you'll

find money in your horseshoe tracks, certain sure.

"You can't expect a fellow that's never held a plough-line nor felled a red oak to feed your women and children when the crops fail and the hard times come.

"We don't want Latin and Greek and all that sort of stuff in this here office; we want experience and hard common sense."

"If we had only known of it sooner," father began, "we might have met and contradicted it in a fair, open fight, but it's too late now. And the worst of it is," he continued, "none of the boys appreciate the situation but old Tom; he's working like a trooper, says he won't go to bed all night, he's going to put the time in among the negroes."

I think we did not quite grasp the full significance of the report, but when we looked at mother's face, which was our barometer, we saw indications of dark days; our laughter died away on our lips and we fell under the shadow of the gloom.

Aunt Margaret alone remained cheerful. Though usually taciturn, she became the leader of conversation that evening.

She argued that father had been surprised by the unexpected report into anxious fears; she hoped there were no grounds for such gloomy forebodings; she concluded her arguments with many bright prophecies of the morrow.

I somehow had a vague hope that Aunt Margaret was going to lift the shadow; she always seemed unusually animated and helpful when we were in trouble, and in those young years I thought of her always as smoothing careworn wrinkles from the brow of old age and lifting sorrow-vails from the bright eyes of youth.

The next morning when we were all at the breakfast table, Aunt Margaret asked father if I might stay out of school and accompany her to town that day.

Father dropped his fork in surprise, and, looking up, exclaimed, "Why, election day is not a very good time for a lady and little boy to go to town," but he cleared his throat suddenly and said no more. "I will be there only a little while," my aunt replied, and she left the table abruptly.

I thoroughly enjoyed a ride behind Aunt Margaret on her little bay mare, and I was truly distressed when we had climbed to the

top of the last hill and I saw not far away the court house steeple.

We left our horse at the inn, and with my hand in Aunt Margaret's we started up the street toward the court house.

It was a mild day in the early part of November, and the man who kept the polls was sitting at his desk on a platform that had been erected for him on the court house square.

Around the platform the crowds surged and wrangled in loud and angry dispute.

The streets were so blockaded with rough, drunken men we were forced to take refuge in the doorway of a neighboring store.

Dr. Tom saw us approaching, and he made his way to where we had halted uncertain how to proceed. He listened to my aunt's hurried whisperings without comment, save an occasional fat-man's wheezy cough, that had passed into habit with him, and some very grave nods, that were both emphatic and affirmative.

I had never thought of Dr. Tom except as a jolly confrere of St. Nicholas, but when he took Aunt Margaret's arm in his and marched with her into the crowd he looked tall and

commanding, and my imagination, that was always teeming with fairy lore and negro superstition, suggested that perhaps some magic power had suddenly transformed Dr. Tom into an all-conquering knight, and I half expected to see him ride away on a white griffin with Aunt Margaret behind him.

Instead of that he landed us on the platform where the litttle clerk was sitting; I thought he looked small and weak indeed compared with our mighty hero. "It's irregular, I tell you, and I can't permit it," the little clerk kept insisting, but Dr. Tom paid no heed to him. He pulled his table to the rear of the platform, and leading my aunt to the front he quickly withdrew, leaving Aunt Margaret with no support but mine.

I must state here that my aunt was very well known in our county, especially in the upper or "Pennyrile" precinct. She often spent the summer months at some famous sulphur springs that were situated in that locality. During her sojourn at the springs she organized a Sunday-school at the district school house, nursed the sick and visited the humble people for miles around. As we pushed our way through the crowd I noticed that a great many gray-haired men took off

their hats and remained uncovered till my aunt had passed.

Suddenly the noisy uproar dropped to a low murmur of expectation, and several voices cried, "hear, hear."

Dr. Tom afterwards explained that marked courtesy to us; he said the report was flying from mouth to mouth that Aunt Margaret had come to declare father had withdrawn.

I felt my aunt leaning heavily upon me, and when I looked up I saw a bright flush had spread over her usually pale face. She began in a clear, distinct voice that must have been heard by all.

"I know you are surprised to see me, neighbors and friends, for those of you who are acquainted with me will call to mind that I never seek excitement. I am here before you now to correct an error—to tell the truth.

"Brother William Henderson came home last night discouraged and cast down. He showed to us a bill like those I see some of you now holding in your hands. My friends, the insinuation on that sheet is unjust and untrue; the sheet itself is the skulking weapon of a coward."

A loud cry of indignation broke from the surprised and disappointed crowd, and a

great uproar ensued, in which were mingled the curses of drunken men and the loud voices of some who cried, "Down with the woman, et ain't fair nohow."

I crept close to Aunt Margaret, and when I looked into her face her eyes were closed and her lips were moving as if in prayer.

The autumn sunlight came through the trees just then and fell with soft radiance upon her uplifted head.

Mike and Pat, who kept the tollgate on our pike, were standing just in front of the platform; when they looked up at Aunt Margaret they uncovered their heads and crossed themselves devoutly.

I could hear Dr. Tom's voice above the noisy uproar calling upon the policemen and the good citizens to enforce quiet. As he pushed and fought his way to the front Mike and Pat followed his example, and a goodly number joined in a crusade against the insurgents.

The outbreak was traced to the rude "Pennyrile" element; they were soon silenced by the persuasive powers of superior numbers, and there was no further interruption save a low, suppressed murmur of discontent that dared not express itself.

"Thank you, my friends," Aunt Margaret began again, while a bright smile of gratitude illumined her face, "you have saved my voice and my reputation as a speaker.

"The word 'aristocrat' is used on that sheet with the sting of reproach; it suggests the proud man who spreads every day upon his table a feast while his neighbors are starving around him, who courts the favor of the rich and rejects and despises the humble appeals of the poor.

"My friends, I think we have no aristocrat in North Fork; certainly you know Mr. Henderson does not answer that description.

"Ask the colporter and the widow and orphan if he does not welcome them to his home, and give them the armchair by the fire and the honored position at the table. I will remind you, good friends, that brother William's farm of one thousand acres has been reduced to what is known as the Woodford tract of two hundred acres, that lies immediately around his homestead, and that is encumbered with liens; the very roof over his head is mortgaged.

"This loss of property has been brought about, not by proud indulgence and reckless extravagance, but because he endorsed for

poor men, who were not able to meet the notes when they fell due, and the creditors called upon brother William for payment.

"I have known Mr. Henderson to advance money on everything from a cradle to a coffin.

"You cannot perhaps pay him back in the same coin, dear friends, but you have it in your power to show him favor to-day, and be sure it will be entered as a payment on the old note of gratitude that God himself holds.

"As for the Bluegrass against the 'Pennyrile,' I want to say that I think our friend Mr. Jackson must be satisfied with his 'neck of the woods.'

"I have understood that he owns several farms in that locality that are unencumbered by debt. We all know he could dispose of them and, if he preferred, buy a Bluegrass valley farm. Our friend must secretly think 'the lines are fallen unto him in pleasant places.' Perhaps, too, he has found that 'Pennyrile' is better for sheep than Bluegrass.

"Stand by brother William, neighbors, until he has educated these boys;" here Aunt Margaret took my cap off and passed her fingers lightly through my curls.

"Help him to lift the mortgage from his home as he has helped many of you to do, and you will aid him to realize the highest ambition of his life, to die owing no man anything. I know he uses this in a broader and fuller sense than I have given to it. We all know, do we not, dear friends, that we owe our neighbor other and higher obligations than money."

Aunt Margaret lifted her hand and the men pulled off their hats and bowed their heads reverently.

"May the God of all grace keep you by his power, and help you to live as becometh disciples of the Lord Jesus, is my prayer. Amen."

Dr. Tom and Mike fairly lifted us from the platform. When we stepped upon the pavement the men fell back on both sides and left us a wide passage.

We waited at the inn while my aunt rested a little, and when at last we did start we rode very slowly. Dr. Tom wanted to send her home in his buggy, but she would not allow it.

On the way home Aunt Margaret asked me not to say anything about "our little speech." I kept the secret very low, but I held my head conspicuously high, and I

waiked apart all day in the cloudy abstraction of deep mystery.

Father did not go to town that day; he said he knew they would call on him to use money and whisky, and he had resolved that he would not stoop to such dishonest measures if it cost him his election.

That was a long, long day; everyone on the place was restless and uneasy but me. I felt that I had acted the part of a hero, and I awaited the issue with unassumed indifference.

Just at "candle-light" there came a loud knocking at the door.

When father opened the door we heard Dr. Tom's voice break out in noisy congratulations. Aunt Margaret slipped out quietly by a side door, and mother stood holding to the tall mantelpiece for support. In a short time Dr. Tom entered the room leading father by the hand.

"Allow me to present to you, ladies and gentlemen," he began in a melodramatic tone and manner, "County Judge William Henderson."

Father caught mother, who was ready to fall, in his arms, and we joined hands and

danced around them in merry glee, with Dr. Tom as ringleader of the band.

After our clamorous demonstration had subsided, Dr. Tom sat down in the large armchair, and throwing his head back began to chuckle softly, just as if he had been in his little office all alone.

"It was grand, that's what it was, but who would have thought it, and yet it was just like her; brave as a lion, and shoulder to the fore-wheel, for all she's a prudish old maid."

"What is it, Tom, let's have it, old boy, don't keep the fun all to yourself," father cried with unusual animation, "I know I owe my victory to your efforts," he added gravely.

"Hem, not much," Dr. Tom began deprecatingly, "you see it's all the result of that little speech Miss Margaret made this morning. I called it little, but I'll tell you, Will," here Dr. Tom leaned far over and slapped father on the knee, "Henry Clay and John C. Breckinridge couldn't have beat it, in point of—well, in point of point and all that sort of thing."

"What's that?" father cried in amazement.

"Here now, you don't mean she hasn't told you about it, old fellow, well I'll be dogged

if that ain't just like her too," and Dr. Tom rocked backward and forward and laughed and choked and became so red in the face, I beat him on the back with both fists as hard as ever I could, and I thereby took occasion to pay him back for some of the unpalatable medicine he had choked down me.

At last to our great relief he exploded in a roar of laughter that almost threatened the foundations.

After he had recovered from his intemperate mirth, Dr. Tom told all about the speech Aunt Margaret had made, and how some of the men had been so affected by it they could scarcely command their voices when they went up to vote, and how one fellow had nearly choked another one for calling her an old maid.

After I had corrected Dr. Tom for various inaccuracies while he was relating the stirring incidents connected with the speech, I marched off to where the negroes were huddled together at the dining-room door listening to the news "'bout Marse Will's 'lection."

"Humph, that's no news to me," I began indifferently, "I've known it all the time. Didn't I stay out of school just to go with her, and didn't she lean on me so hard it

mos' broke my back, but I didn't care, and then when the drunken men began to curse and fight, didn't I stand up right close in front of her?"

My arrogant words and pompous manner carried with them such weight that George Washington was evidently of the impression I had made the famous speech instead of Aunt Margaret, and he regarded me slyly from time to time with admiration mingled with envy. His drooping eyes and general air of dejection said plainly, "You've beat me in a race at last, Shanky."

Aunt Jinsy was not deceived by my vainglorious language, indeed she rather offended me because she would look over my head straight at Dr. Tom.

When she left the room her stiffly starched apron, that she always "kep handy in case uv comp'ny," was liberally sprinkled with tears and was ready for another ironing.

Aunt Margaret remained in her room all evening. Every time the door was opened Dr. Tom would give a little cough of expectancy, and then when it was closed he would give a much softer cough of disappointment. I knew what it meant, because when we were waiting at the inn for Aunt

Margaret I heard him cough that same way, and when I asked him if he had a cold he said, "No, I just thought I heard your aunt coming."

Contrary to my usual habit I awoke very early on the morning after the election. Our room adjoined the one occupied by our parents, and the door was always left open between them.

As I lay idly watching a spider swing from the ceiling, I heard father and mother talking in a way that at once aroused my curiosity. I sat up in bed and listened.

"I felt so sorry for poor old Tom last night, Carrie," father said, "he looked so sad and lonely when he started away, I had half a mind to make him stay all night, only I was afraid your sister might not like it."

I wondered why mother did not answer at once, she always seemed very fond of Dr. Tom, and regarded him almost like she did Uncle John.

At last she asked in a cautious undertone, "Do you think he loves her still?"

"Carrie, I know he never has loved any other woman, and I think he isn't likely to transfer his affections at this late autumn of life when the frost is on his hair. It's a pity,

too," father continued, "Tom's big-hearted and open-handed and would have made a good husband.

"He was always too modest for his own good. When she was young you know how he stood back and waited for the other boys, and now he knows there's no use. Poor old fellow, he'll speak out for every friend he has, but when it comes to pleading Tom's case his tongue's tied."

There was a pause then, and I sat rubbing my eyes and wondering if I was still dreaming.

Father began again in a lighter tone, "Sometimes I think, Carrie, if you would use your influence with your sister we might match our king and queen yet."

Mother spoke rapidly and in a low voice, and I did not hear her reply.

"Well, I suppose it would do no good," father said sadly, "and besides I think Tom doesn't expect it now, he is satisfied just to worship her at a distance."

"I hope the children are not awake," mother said suddenly, and then I heard her walk softly in our room. When she reached my bed I was snoring loudly, according to sounds and appearances.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUNSET.

An old sugar maple tree grew so near the west end of our house the wide-spreading upper branches almost touched a window in the room Aunt Margaret occupied.

One afternoon I was sitting in the old tree reading a book of fairy tales, when I heard the children seeking me far and near, and calling on me to join their sports. I was interested in my book and did not answer their call; fortunately for my purpose there were enough leaves on the tree to conceal me, and the children passed on and began their game without "Shanky."

The invulnerable and charmed life of a certain wicked dwarf was claiming my attention, when suddenly the soft tones of a voice, to which I was never indifferent, floated up to me. I closed my book and peeped through the leaves; I saw Aunt Margaret kneeling at her window, and I knew that she was praying.

As I listened I heard her begging God to give my elder brother John the grace to conquer his hasty temper. When she called my name it seemed to me that my heart almost stood still. I knew my faults, for Aunt Arethusa had not failed to remind me of them once every day and three times on Sunday. Mother had wept and prayed over them with me, but somehow I had never felt much concerned about them. I had supposed I would outgrow them as I had my headache and my kilt-skirts.

When I heard Aunt Margaret pleading so earnestly for me, and when I saw the tears stream through her thin fingers as she wrestled for my soul, I felt that I must indeed be a sinner, and I wanted to fall at the feet of Jesus and add my prayers to hers. I thought she would certainly discover me, for the tears rained from my eyes and fell thick and fast upon the withered leaves.

When Aunt Margaret had finished praying she looked away toward the west, and I heard her whisper softly, "I am trying to be faithful, Clarence dear, but oh, it is so hard to let the light shine through these houses of clay. I am tired and weary, Clarence, my

day has seemed very long; oh, when will the sunset come for me?"

The following Sabbath I presented myself as a candidate for admission and baptism into the fellowship of the Mt. Zion Baptist church.

When they called upon me for my experience, I told the circumstances that led to my conversion.

It is the custom with Baptists in Kentucky to give the right hand of fellowship to a convert, during the singing of a hymn. Father and mother came first, and then followed the good brethren and sisters.

I was wondering why Aunt Margaret hadn't come when suddenly she stood before me. She laid her hands upon my head and prayed that I might be set apart for the work of the ministry, and she added in a whisper, "Oh God, may he take Clarence's place."

That was a great day at Mt. Zion. Dr. Tom came forward weeping like a child, and asked the brethren to pray for him; he united with the church a short time afterwards. Two old gray-haired men who hadn't spoken for years clasped hands around the altar, and two young men who had been suspended

for dancing fell upon their knees and renounced the forbidden pleasure.

A short time after I united with the church, Aunt Margaret had a violent attack of illness. Dr. Tom called three times a day, and though he never failed to bring the candy hearts he looked very solemn and seemed to forget how to laugh. The neighbors and kind friends from the town came in throngs to inquire about Aunt Margaret. Indeed, so many came mother had to ask some of them to stay all the time to answer the inquiries of the others.

There were visitors at the house all the time, but our home seemed very desolate to me, and I was glad when the faint ringing of the school bell called me away to school.

Aunt Jinsy took great pride in the visitors and in the presents they brought, and she kept an accurate account of each.

She called me to the kitchen one evening, and unpinning from her hair a paper that she kept concealed under her head-rag, she began, "I jis wants yo ter sot um all down straight and reg'ler, honey, an soon's eber Aunt Marget gits leetle pyearter ole Jinsy gwine tote hit upstars an han hit ter 'er 'ersef. Hit 'ull be powerful satisfyin' ter 'er

whut's allus studyin 'bout uder foks ailments she ain never got no time ter tink bout 'ersef.

"I teh yer, chile, dey's tekin on scanlous 'bout yo Aunt Marget, but yo ain ole nuff yit ter specerlate on hit seemin'ly.

"I'm gwine teh yo now, dey ain mek no sich ter do ober Mis Dan'ls, when she's tuk down las' fall wid fever, ef she did mar' er furman, whut's rich and powerful connected. Dat's 'cisely whut I teh May Sue, dat's 'er yaller nigah, whut comes hyar ter ask 'bout Mis Marget, an whut's allus bragin 'bout de Dan'lses and dey high doins. Yo see, chile, May Sue user ter b'long ter de Dan'lses an she tink she bleege ter hol' up fer um. I ain got no time fer dat May Sue nohow; she too white, an she hol' 'er hed too high fer nigah. Howsmever, when I teh May Sue dat, she ain say nuffin, do she's ter'ble contamnation nigah at times, but I jis looks 'er in de eye squar, and she know'd wight den she ain gwine hol' out 'gin gospel truf wid ole Jinsy. Dat mek 'er hol' 'er jaw in, an she sot dar lookin' lak she los' 'er las' frien', an prisintly she gits up an start off, wid 'er hed hangin down wight low lak, an I know'd I done kilt 'er, 'case May Sue she's mons'ous proud o' dem ole Dan'lses."

One afternoon I was looking for my ball that had rolled under the lilacs near the front porch when I heard the front door closed softly, and looking up I saw Dr. Tom walk across the porch and sit down on the old settee near father.

For a while neither of them spoke; Dr. Tom pulled a late blossom from the honeysuckle that grew on the porch, and bent over it so tenderly, somehow it made me feel sad.

I heard afterwards that Aunt Margaret had thanked him that afternoon for his kind attention to her during her illness; that she spoke to him so graciously it loosed poor Dr. Tom's tongue, and he declared to her the love he had kept secret so long.

"How is she now, Tom?" father asked at last. "She can only last a little longer, not more than a day at best," he responded in a hoarse whisper.

Dr. Tom started away then, and father put his arm around him and walked with him to the gate, and I—I forgot my ball, I forgot all things except that the brightest light of my young life was about to fall away into shadows forever.

The following day was the Sabbath, and

oh how empty it seemed without that presence that had filled it so full.

The sharp outlining eras in our lives are carved oftener by events than by years. In that long, long day I think I passed from the shallows of youth into the swift tide of manhood.

Late in the afternoon I was standing under the parlor window, half expecting to hear Aunt Margaret's voice flow through the little casement, when father called me.

The other children were with him, and they had been seeking me.

Father told us Aunt Margaret had called for us, and after making us promise we would not disturb her by weeping, he led the way upstairs.

We went into the room on tiptoe, holding each other's hands.

Aunt Margaret called us one by one to the bedside; she smiled and pressed our little hands in hers, but she was too weak to talk.

We knew what it meant, though we had never before been in the presence of the grim stranger.

Death has an alphabet of black letters the child soon learns to lisp.

We forgot our vows and wept bitterly. An expression of pain passed over Aunt Margaret's face, and mother asked if she must send us from the room.

She shook her head, and calling my name, she whispered to me to quiet them.

I led the children behind a little screen, and kneeling down I asked God to help us keep our vows. We then joined right hands and with our left we drew from our pockets an old white glove and a piece of cedar, the emblems of our little society; we threw them in a heap upon the floor, to witness the vows we made afresh.

I think we would not have cried then for our right arms.

When Aunt Margaret looked at our pale, resolute faces, she smiled brightly; I believe she knew we had been praying.

As I drew near her bedside a flood of golden light from the setting sun fell upon her hair, and I saw the gray in it for the first time.

She pointed to the setting sun and opened her lips. Poor mother, I felt such sympathy for her then I almost forgot my vow. She tried to sing, but somehow her lips wouldn't form the words.

Aunt Margaret sighed faintly, but it wasn't like mother to disappoint any one, far less a dying sister. She turned around quickly and faced the setting sun and sang the old hymn through without a break, only when she said, "e'en though it be a cross that raiseth me," I thought it sounded more like a prayer than a hymn.

I watched my aunt closely, for the varying lights and shades upon her face suggested strange, new thoughts to my mind.

When mother sang the last verse—

> "Or if on joyful wing, cleaving the sky,
> Sun, moon and stars forgot, upward I fly,"—

the old, old smile broke over Aunt Margaret's face, only brighter and happier than ever before, as when the gray tints of dawn melt in the stronger, deeper tones of the rising sun.

When mother turned around the pale lips were drawn and silent; the long day was ended, the sunset had come at last.

As I looked in the cold, empty face, I had the simple fancy that Aunt Margaret's spirit had floated away on the melody of the old hymn she loved so well.

Dr. Tom stole in softly; when he read the sad truth in our faces he fell on his knees at the bedside.

Mother tried to whisper to him, and father laid his hand on his head, and I—I thought of my vow and ran from the room.

Our regular minister was away, watching by the bedside of his boy who was ill at college, when Aunt Margaret died, and the man who conducted the funeral services was a young man and a stranger.

I heard the neighbors say afterwards, he preached a "powerful, liftin' sermon," but somehow I didn't like it. It may have been because his voice was unfamiliar; I think a funeral is not the place for a strange voice to make a good impression.

There we naturally watch for notes of sympathy, and we think we discover them only in the tones of old friends that have mingled in our mirth and subdued our sorrows.

When the minister had concluded his discourse proper, he said he wanted to make a few remarks about the deceased. "I did not have the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with sister Maggie," he began, but I interrupted him.

"Her name was not Maggie, sir," I cried, "it was Margaret." Mother shook her head at me and father frowned, but an old gray-haired man, whose family my aunt had often helped, cried out in a voice broken with emotion:

"Aye, aye, the lad's right, stranger; yer see it don't come natchel to none o' us that a'way, so ye'll jis please ter call 'er sister Marget."

THE END.