Warner Susan

Daisy

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Elizabeth Wetherell
Daisy

CHAPTER I.
MISS PINSHON

I WANT an excuse to myself for writing my own life; an excuse for the indulgence of going it all over again, as I have so often gone over bits. It has not been more remarkable than thousands of others. Yet every life has in it a thread of present truth and possible glory. Let me follow out the truth to the glory.

The first bright years of my childhood I will pass. They were childishly bright. They lasted till my eleventh summer. Then the light of heavenly truth was woven in with the web of my mortal existence; and whatever the rest of the web has been, those golden threads have always run through it all the rest of the way. Just as I reached my birthday that summer and was ten years old, I became a Christian.

For the rest of that summer I was a glad child. The brightness of those days is a treasure safe locked up in a chamber of my memory. I have known other glad times too in my life; other times of even higher enjoyment. But among all the dried flowers of my memory, there is not one that keeps a fresher perfume

or a stronger scent of its life than this one. Those were the days without cloud; before life shadows had begun to cast their blackness over the landscape. And even though such shadows do go as well as come, and leave the intervals as sunlit as ever; yet after that change of the first life shadow is once seen, it is impossible to forget that it may come again and darken the sun. I do not mean that the days of that summer were absolutely without things to trouble me; I had changes of light and shade; but, on the whole, nothing that did not heighten the light. They were pleasant days that I had in Juanita's cottage at the time when my ankle was broken; there were hours of sweetness with crippled Molly; and it was simply delight I had all alone with my pony Loupe, driving over the sunny and shady roads, free to do as I liked and go where I liked. And how I enjoyed studying English history with my cousin Preston. It is all stowed away in my heart, as fresh and sweet as at first. I will not pull it out now. The change, and my first real life shadow came, when my father was thrown from his horse and injured his head. Then the doctors decided he must go abroad and travel, and mamma decided that it was best that I should go to Magnolia with Aunt Gary and have a governess.

There is no pleasure in thinking of those weeks. They went very slowly, and yet very fast; while I counted every minute and noted every step in the preparations. They were all over at last; my little world was gone from me; and I was left alone with Aunt Gary.

Her preparations had been made too; and the day after the

steamer sailed we set off on our journey to the south. I do not know much about that journey. The things by the way were like objects in a mist to me and no more clearly discerned. Now and then there came a rift in the mist; something woke me up out of my sorrow-dream; and of those points and of what struck my eyes at those minutes I have a most intense and vivid recollection. I can feel yet the still air of one early morning's start, and hear the talk between my aunt and the hotel people about the luggage. My aunt was a great traveller and wanted no one to help her or manage for her. I remember acutely a beggar who spoke to us on the sidewalk at Washington. We stayed over a few days in Washington, and then hurried on; for when she was on the road my Aunt Gary lost not a minute. We went, I presume, as fast as we could without travelling all night; and our last day's journey added that too.

By that time my head was getting steadied, perhaps, from the grief which had bewildered it; or grief was settling down and taking its proper place at the bottom of my heart, leaving the surface as usual. For twelve hours that day we went by a slow railway train through a country of weary monotony. Endless forests of pine seemed all that was to be seen; scarce ever a village; here and there a miserable clearing and forlorn-looking house; here and there stoppages of a few minutes to let somebody out or take somebody in; once, to my great surprise, a stop of rather more than a few minutes to accommodate a lady who wanted some flowers gathered for her. I was surprised to see

flowers wild in the woods at that time of year, and much struck with the politeness of the railway train that was willing to delay for such a reason. We got out of the car for dinner, or for a short rest at dinner-time. My aunt had brought her lunch in a basket. Then the forests and the rumble of the cars began again. At one time the pine forests were exchanged for oak, I remember; after that, nothing but pine.

It was late in the day, when we left the cars at one of those solitary wayside station-houses. I shall never forget the look and feeling of the place. We had been for some miles going through a region of swamp or swampy woods, where sometimes the rails were laid on piles in the water. This little station-house was in the midst of such a region. The woods were thick and tangled with vines everywhere beyond the edge of the clearing; the ground was wet beneath them, and in places showed standing water. There was scarcely a clearing; the forest was all round the house; with only the two breaks in it where on one side and on the other the iron rail track ran off into the distance. It was a lonely place; almost nobody was there waiting for the train; one or two forlorn coloured people and a long lank-looking countryman, were all. Except what at first prevented my seeing anything else – my cousin Preston. He met me just as I was going to get down from the car; lifted me to the platform, and then with his looks and words almost broke up the composure which for several days had been growing upon me. It was not hardened yet to bear attacks. I was like a poor shell-fish, which, having lost one coat of armour

and defence, craves a place of hiding and shelter for itself until its new coat be grown. While he was begging me to come into the station-house and rest, I stood still looking up the long line of railway by which we had come, feeling as if my life lay at the other end of it, out of sight and quite beyond reach. Yet I asked him not to call me "poor" Daisy. I was very tired, and I suppose my nerves not very steady. Preston said we must wait at that place for another train; there was a fork in the road beyond, and this train would not go the right way. It would not take us to Baytown. So he had me into the station-house.

It wearied me and so did all that my eyes lighted upon, strange though it was. The bare room, not clean; the board partition, with swinging doors, behind which, Preston said, were the cook and the baker! the untidy waiting girls that came and went, with scant gowns and coarse shoes, and no thread of white collar to relieve the dusky throat and head rising out of the dark gown, and no apron at all. Preston did what he could. He sent away the girls with their trays of eatables; he had a table pulled out from the wall and wiped off, and then he ordered a supper of eggs, and johnny cake, and all sorts of things. But I could not eat. As soon as supper was over I went out on the platform to watch the long lines of railway running off through the forest, and wait for the coming train. The evening fell while we looked; the train was late; and at last when it came I could only know it in the distance by the red spark of its locomotive gleaming like a firefly.

It was a freight train, there was but one passenger car, and

that was full. We got seats with difficulty, and apart from each other. I hardly know whether that, or anything, could have made me more forlorn. I was already stiff and weary with the twelve hours of travelling we had gone through that day; inexpressibly weary in heart. It seemed to me that I could not long endure the rumble and the jar and the closeness of this last car. The passengers, too, had habits which made me draw my clothes as tight around me as I could, and shrink away mentally into the smallest compass possible. I had noticed the like, to be sure, ever since we left Washington; but to-night, in my weary, faint, and tired-out state of mind and body every unseemly sight or sound struck my nerves with a sense of pain that was hardly endurable. I wondered if the train would go on all night; it went very slowly. And I noticed that nobody seemed impatient or had the air of expecting that it would soon find its journey's end. I felt as if I could not bear it many half hours. My next neighbour was a fat, good-natured, old lady, who rather made matters worse by putting her arm round me and hugging me up, and begging me to make a pillow of her and go to sleep. My nerves were twitching with impatience and the desire for relief; when suddenly the thought came to me that I might please the Lord by being patient. I remember what a lull the thought of Him brought; and yet how difficult it was not to be impatient, till I fixed my mind on some Bible words – they were the words of the twenty-third Psalm – and began to think and pray them over. So good they were, that by and by they rested me. I dropped asleep and forgot my aches

and weariness until the train arrived at Baytown.

They took me to a hotel, then, and put me to bed, and I did not get up for several days. I must have been feverish, for my fancies wandered incessantly in unknown places with papa, in regions of the old world; and sometimes, I think, took both him and myself to rest and home where wanderings are over. After a few days this passed away. I was able to come downstairs, and both Preston and his mother did their best to take good care of me. Especially Preston. He brought me books, and fruit, and birds to tempt me to eat, and was my kind and constant companion when his mother was out, and indeed when she was in, too. So I got better by the help of oranges and rice-birds. I could have got better faster, but for my dread of a governess which was hanging over me. I heard nothing about her and could not bear to ask. One day Preston brought the matter up and asked if Daisy was going to have a school-mistress?

"Certainly," my Aunt Gary said. "She must be educated, you know."

"*I* don't know," said Preston; "but if they say so, I suppose she must. Who is it to be, mamma?"

"You do not know anything about it," said Aunt Gary. "If my son was going to marry the greatest heiress in the State; and she is very nearly that – goodness! I did not see you were there, Daisy, my dear; but it makes no difference; – I should think it proper that she should be educated."

"I can't see what her being an heiress should have to do with

it," said Preston, "except rather to make it unnecessary as well as a bore. Who is it, mamma?"

"I have recommended Miss Pinshon."

"Oh, then, it is not fixed yet."

"Yes, it is fixed. Miss Pinshon is coming as soon as we get to Magnolia."

"I'll be off before that," said Preston. "Who is Miss Pinshon?"

"How should *you* know? She has lived at Jessamine Bank, – educated the Dalzell girls."

"What sort of a person, mamma!"

"What sort of a person?" said my Aunt Gary; "why a governess sort of a person. What sort should she be."

"Any other sort in the world," said Preston, "for my money. That is just the sort to worry poor little Daisy out of her life."

"You are a foolish boy!" said Aunt Gary. "Of course if you fill Daisy's head with notions, she will not get them out again. If you have anything of that sort to say, you had better say it where she will not hear."

"Daisy has eyes – and a head," said Preston.

As soon as I was able for it Preston took me out for short walks; and as I grew stronger he made the walks longer. The city was a strange place to me; very unlike New York; there was much to see and many a story to hear; and Preston and I enjoyed ourselves. Aunt Gary was busy making visits, I think. There was a beautiful walk by the sea which I liked best of all; and when it was not too cold my greatest pleasure was to sit there looking over

the dark waters and sending my whole soul across them to that unknown spot where my father and mother were. "Home," that spot was to me. Preston did not know what I liked the Esplanade for; he sometimes laughed at me for being poetic and meditative; when I was only sending my heart over the water. But he was glad to please me in all that he could; and whenever it was not too cold, our walks always took me there.

One day, sitting there, I remember we had a great argument about studying. Preston began with saying that I must not mind this governess that was coming, nor do anything she bade me unless I liked it. As I gave him no answer, he repeated what he had said.

"You know, Daisy, you are not obliged to care what she thinks."

I said I thought I was.

"What for?" said Preston.

"I have a great deal to learn you know," I said, feeling it very gravely indeed in my little heart.

"What do you want to know so much?" said Preston.

I said, everything. I was very ignorant.

"You are no such thing," said Preston. "Your head is full this minute. I think you have about as much knowledge as is good for you. I mean to take care that you do not get too much."

"O Preston," said I, "that is very wrong. I have not any knowledge scarcely."

"There is no occasion," said Preston stoutly. "I hate learned

women."

"Don't you like to learn things?"

"That's another matter," said he. "A man must know things, or he can't get along. Women are different."

"But I think it is nice to know things too," said I. "I don't see how it is different."

"Why, a woman need not be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a professor," said Preston; "all she need do, is to have good sense and dress herself nicely."

"Is dressing so important?" said I, with a new light breaking over me.

"Certainly. Ribbons of the wrong colour will half kill a woman. And I have heard Aunt Randolph say that a particular lady was ruined by her gloves."

"Ruined by her gloves!" said I. "Did she buy so many?"

Preston went into such a laugh at that, I had to wait some time before I could go on. I saw I had made some mistake, and I would not renew that subject.

"Do *you* mean to be anything of that sort?" I said, with some want of connection.

"What sort? Ruined by my gloves? Not if I know it."

"No, no! I mean, a lawyer or a doctor or a professor?"

"I should think not!" said Preston, with a more emphatic denial.

"Then, what are you studying for?"

"Because, as I told you, Daisy, a man must know things, or he

cannot get on in the world."

I pondered the matter, and then I said, I should think good sense would make a woman study too. I did not see the difference. "Besides, Preston," I said, "if she didn't, they would not be equal."

"Equal!" cried Preston. "Equal! O Daisy, you ought to have lived in some old times. You are two hundred years old, at least. Now don't go to studying that, but come home. You have sat here long enough."

It was my last hour of freedom. Perhaps for that reason I remember every minute so distinctly. On our way home we met a negro funeral. I stopped to look at it. Something, I do not know what, in the long line of dark figures, orderly and even stately in their demeanour, the white dresses of the women, the peculiar faces of men and women both, fascinated my eyes. Preston exclaimed at me again. It was the commonest sight in the world, he said. It was their pride to have a grand funeral. I asked if *this* was a grand funeral. Preston said "pretty well; there must be several hundred of them and they were well dressed." And then he grew impatient and hurried me on. But I was thinking; and before we got to the hotel where we lodged, I asked Preston if there were many coloured people at Magnolia.

"Lots of them," he said. "There isn't anything else."

"Preston," I said presently, "I want to buy some candy somewhere."

Preston was very much pleased, I believe, thinking that my

thoughts had quite left the current of sober things. He took me to a famous confectioner's; and there I bought sweet things till my little stock of money was all gone.

"No more funds?" said Preston. "Never mind – go on, and I'll help you. Why I never knew you liked sugarplums so much. What next? burnt almonds? *this* is good, Daisy – this confection of roses. But you must take all this sugar in small doses, or I am afraid it wouldn't be just beneficial."

"O Preston!" I said – "I do not mean to eat all this myself."

"Are you going to propitiate Miss Pinshon with it? I have a presentiment that sweets won't sweeten her, Daisy."

"I don't know what 'propitiate' means," I said, sighing. "I will not take the almonds, Preston."

But he was determined I should; and to the almonds he added a quantity of the delicate confection he spoke of, which I had thought too delicate and costly for the uses I had purposed; and after the rose he ordered candied fruits; till a great packet of varieties was made up. Preston paid for them – I could not help it – and desired them sent home; but I was bent on taking the package myself. Preston would not let me do that, so he carried it; which was a much more serious token of kindness, in him, than footing the bill. It was but a little way, however, to the hotel. We were in the hall, and I was just taking my sugars from Preston to carry them upstairs, when I heard Aunt Gary call my name from the parlour. Instinctively, I cannot tell how, I knew from her tone what she wanted me for. I put back the package in Preston's

hands, and walked in; my play over.

How well I knew my play was over, when I saw my governess. She was sitting by my aunt on the sofa. Quite different from what I had expected, so different that I walked up to her in a maze, and yet seemed to recognize in that first view all that was coming after. Probably that is fancy; but it seems to me now that all I ever knew or felt about Miss Pinshon in the years that followed, was duly begun and betokened in those first five minutes. She was a young-looking lady, younger looking than she was. She had a dark, rich complexion, and a face that I suppose would have been called handsome; it was never handsome to me. Long black curls on each side of her face, and large black eyes, were the features that first struck one; but I immediately decided that Miss Pinshon was not born a lady. I do not mean that I think blood and breeding are unseverable; or that half a dozen lady ancestors in a direct line secure the character to the seventh in descent; though they *do* often secure the look of it; nevertheless, ladies are born who never know all their lives how to make a curtsey, and curtseys are made with infinite grace by those who have nothing of a lady beyond the trappings. I never saw Miss Pinshon do a rude or an awkward thing, that I remember; nor one which changed my first mind about her. She was handsomely dressed; but there again I felt the same want. Miss Pinshon's dresses made me think always of the mercer's counter and the dressmaker's shop. My mother's robes always seemed part of her own self; and so, in a certain true sense, they were.

My aunt introduced me. Miss Pinshon studied me. Her first remark was that I looked very young. My aunt excused that, on the ground of my having been always a delicate child. Miss Pinshon observed further that the way I wore my hair produced part of the effect. My aunt explained *that* to my father's and mother's fancy; and agreed that she thought cropped heads were always ungraceful. If my hair were allowed to fall in ringlets on my neck I would look very different. Miss Pinshon next inquired how much I knew? turning her great black eyes from me to Aunt Gary. My aunt declared she could not tell; delicate health had also here interfered; and she appealed to me to say what knowledge I was possessed of. I could not answer. I could not say. It seemed to me I had not learned anything. Then Preston spoke for me.

"Modesty is apt to be silent on its own merits," he said. "My cousin has learned the usual rudiments; and in addition to those the art of driving."

"Of *what*? What did you say?" inquired my governess.

"Of driving, ma'am. Daisy is an excellent whip for her years and strength."

Miss Pinshon turned to Preston's mother. My aunt confirmed and enlarged the statement, again throwing the blame on my father and mother. For herself, she always thought it very dangerous for a little girl like me to go about in the country in a pony-chaise all alone. Miss Pinshon's eyes could not be said to express anything, but to my fancy they concealed a good deal. She remarked that the roads were easy.

"Oh, it was not here," said my aunt; "it was at the North, where the roads are not like our pine forest. However the roads were not dangerous there, that I know of; not for anybody but a child. But horses and carriages are always dangerous."

Miss Pinshon next applied herself to me. What did I know? "beside this whip accomplishment," as she said. I was tongue-tied. It did not seem to me that I knew anything. At last I said so. Preston exclaimed. I looked at him to beg him to be still; and I remember how he smiled at me.

"You can read, I suppose?" my governess went on.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And write, I suppose?"

"I do not think you would say I know how to write," I answered. "I cannot do it at all well; and it takes me a long time."

"Come back to the driving, Daisy," said Preston. "That is one thing you do know. And English history, I will bear witness."

"What have you got there, Preston?" my aunt asked.

"Some horehound drops, mamma."

"You haven't a sore throat?" she asked, eagerly.

"No, ma'am – not just now, but I had yesterday; and I thought I would be provided."

"You seem provided for a long time," Miss Pinshon remarked.

"Can't get anything up at Magnolia, except rice," said Preston, after making the lady a bow which did not promise good fellowship. "You must take with you what you are likely to want there."

"You will not want all that," said his mother.

"No ma'am, I hope not," said Preston, looking at his package demurely. "Old Uncle Lot, you know, always has a cough; and I purpose delighting him with some of my purchases. I will go and put them away."

"Old Uncle Lot!" my aunt repeated. "What Uncle Lot? I did not know you had been enough at Magnolia to get the servants' names. But *I* don't remember any Uncle Lot."

Preston turned to leave the room with his candy, and in turning gave me a look of such supreme fun and mischief that at another time I could hardly have helped laughing. But Miss Pinshon was asking me if I understood arithmetic?

"I think – I know very little about it," I said hesitating. "I can do a sum."

"In what?"

"On the slate, ma'am."

"Yes, but in what?"

"I don't know, ma'am – it is adding up the columns."

"Oh, in *addition*, then. Do you know the multiplication and division tables?"

"No, ma'am."

"Go and get off your things, and then come back to me; and I will have some more talk with you."

I remember to this day how heavily my feet went up the stairs. I was not very strong yet in body, and now the strength seemed to have gone out of my heart.

"I declare," said Preston, who waited for me on the landing, "she falls into position easy! Does she think she is going to take *that* tone with you?"

I made no answer. Preston followed me into my room.

"I won't have it, little Daisy. Nobody shall be mistress at Magnolia but you. This woman shall not. See, Daisy – I am going to put these things in my trunk for you, until we get where you want them. That will be safe."

I thanked him.

"What are you going to do now?"

"I am going downstairs, as soon as I am ready."

"Do you expect to be under all the commands this High Mightiness may think proper to lay upon you?"

I begged him to be still and leave me.

"She will turn you into stone!" he exclaimed. "She is a regular Gorgon, with those heavy eyes of hers. I never saw such eyes. I believe she would petrify me if I had to bear them. Don't you give Medusa one of those sweet almonds, Daisy – not one, do you hear?"

I heard too well. I faced round upon him and begged him to remember that it was my *mother* I must obey in Miss Pinshon's orders: and said that he must not talk to me. Whereupon Preston threw down his candies, and pulled my cloak out of my unsteady hands, and locked his arms about me; kissing me and lamenting over me that it was "too bad." I tried to keep my self-command; but the end was a great burst of tears; and I went down to Miss

Pinshon with red eyes and at a disadvantage. I think Preston was pleased.

I had need of all my quiet and self-command. My governess stretched out her hand, drew me to her side and kissed me; then with the other hand went on to arrange the ruffle round my neck, stroking it and pulling it into order, and even taking out a little bit of a pin I wore, and putting it in again to suit herself. It annoyed me excessively. I knew all was right about my ruffle and pin; I never left them carelessly arranged; no fingers but mamma's had ever dared to meddle with them before. But Miss Pinshon arranged the ruffle and the pin, and still holding me, looked in my face with those eyes of hers. I began to feel that they were "heavy." They did not waver. They did not seem to wink, like other eyes. They bore down upon my face with a steady power, that was not bright but ponderous. Her first question was, whether I was a good girl.

I could not tell how to answer. My aunt answered for me, that she believed Daisy meant to be a good girl, though she liked to have her own way.

Miss Pinshon ordered me to bring up a chair and sit down; and then asked if I knew anything about mathematics; told me it was the science of quantity; remarked to my aunt that it was the very best study for teaching children to think, and that she always gave them a great deal of it in the first year of their pupilage. "It puts the mind in order," the black-eyed lady went on; "and other things come so easily after it. Daisy, do you know what I mean

by 'quantity?'"

I knew what *I* meant by quantity; but whether the English language had anything in common for Miss Pinshon and me, I had great doubts. I hesitated.

"I always teach my little girls to answer promptly when they are asked anything. I notice that you do not answer promptly. You can always tell whether you know a thing or whether you do not."

I was not so sure of that. Miss Pinshon desired me now to repeat the multiplication table. Here at least there was certainty. I had never learned it.

"It appears to me," said my governess, "you have done very little with the first ten years of your life. It gives you a great deal to do for the next ten."

"Health has prevented her applying to her studies," said my aunt.

"The want of health. Yes, I suppose so. I hope Daisy will be very well now, for we must make up for lost time."

"I do not suppose so much time need have been lost," said my aunt; "but parents are easily alarmed, you know; they think of nothing but one thing."

So now there was nobody about me who would be easily alarmed. I took the full force of that.

"Of course," said Miss Pinshon, "I shall have a careful regard to her health. Nothing can be done without that. I shall take her out regularly to walk with me, and see that she does not expose herself in any way. Study is no hindrance to health; learning has

no malevolent effect upon the body. I think people often get sick for want of something to think of."

How sure I felt, as I went up to bed that night, that no such easy cause of sickness would be mine for long years to come!

CHAPTER II.
MY HOME

THE next day we were to go to Magnolia. It was a better day than I expected. Preston kept me with him, away from Aunt Gary and my governess; who seemed to have a very comfortable time together. Magnolia lay some miles inland, up a small stream or inlet called the Sands River; the banks of which were studded with gentlemen's houses. The houses were at large distances from one another, miles of plantation often lying between. We went by a small steamer which plied up and down the river; it paddled along slowly, made a good many landings, and kept us on board thus a great part of the day.

At last Preston pointed out to me a little wooden pier or jetty ahead, which he said was my landing; and the steamer soon drew up to it. I could see only a broken bank, fifteen feet high, stretching all along the shore. However a few steps brought us to a receding level bit of ground, where there was a break in the bank; the shore fell in a little, and a wooded dell sloped back from the river. A carriage and servants were waiting here.

Preston and I had arranged that we would walk up and let the ladies ride. But as soon as they had taken their places I heard myself called. We declared our purpose, Preston and I; but Miss Pinshon said the ground was damp and she preferred I should

ride; and ordered me in. I obeyed, bitterly disappointed; so much disappointed that I had the utmost trouble not to let it be seen. For a little while I did not know what we were passing. Then curiosity recovered itself. The carriage was slowly making its way up a rough road. On each side the wooded banks of the dell shut us in; and these banks seemed to slope upward as well as the road, for though we mounted and mounted, the sides of the dell grew no lower. After a little, then, the hollow of the dell began to grow wider, and its sides softly shelving down; and through the trees on our left we could see a house, standing high above us, but on ground which sloped towards the dell, which rose and widened and spread out to meet it. This sloping ground was studded with magnificent live oaks; each holding its place in independent majesty, making no interference with the growth of the rest. Some of these trees had a girth that half a dozen men with their arms outstretched in a circle could not span; they were green in spite of the winter; branching low, and spreading into stately, beautiful heads of verdure, while grey wreaths of moss hung drooping from some of them. The house was seen not very distinctly among these trees; it showed low, and in a long extent of building. I have never seen a prettier approach to a house than that at Magnolia. My heart was full of the beauty this first time.

"This is Magnolia, Daisy," said my aunt. "This is your house."

"It appears a fine place," said Miss Pinshon.

"It is one of the finest on the river. This is your property, Daisy."

"It is papa's," I answered.

"Well, it belongs to your mother, and so you may say it belongs to your father; but it is yours for all that. The arrangement was, as I know," my aunt went on, addressing Miss Pinshon – "the arrangement in the marriage settlements was, that the sons should have the father's property, and the daughters the mother's. There is one son and one daughter; so they will each have enough."

"But it is mamma's and papa's," I pleaded.

"Oh, well – it will be yours. That is what I mean. Ransom will have Melbourne and the Virginia estates; and Magnolia is yours. You ought to have a pretty good education."

I was so astonished at this way of looking at things, that again I lost part of what was before me. The carriage went gently along, passing the house, and coming up gradually to the same level; then making a turn we drove at a better pace back under some of those great evergreen oaks, till we drew up at the house door. This was at a corner of the building, which stretched in a long, low line towards the river. A verandah skirted all that long front. As soon as I was out of the carriage I ran to the farthest end. I found the verandah turned the corner; the lawn too. All along the front it sloped to the dell; at the end of the house it sloped more gently and to greater distance down to the banks of the river. I could not see the river itself. The view of the dell at my left hand was lovely. A little stream which ran in the bottom had been coaxed to form a clear pool in an open spot, where the sunlight fell upon it, surrounded by a soft wilderness of trees and climbers.

Sweet branches of jessamine waved there in their season; and a beautiful magnolia had been planted or cherished there, and carefully kept in view of the house windows. But the wide lawns, on one side and on the other, grew nothing but the oaks; the gentle slope was a play-ground for sunshine and shadow, as I first saw it; for then the shadows of the oaks were lengthening over the grass, and the waving grey wreaths of moss served sometimes as a foil, sometimes as an usher to the sunbeams. I stood in a trance of joy and sorrow; they were fighting so hard for the mastery; till I knew that my aunt and Miss Pinshon had come up behind me.

"This is a proud place!" my governess remarked.

I believe I looked at her. My aunt laughed; said she must not teach me that; and led the way back to the entrance of the house. All along the verandah I noticed that the green-blinded long windows made other entrances for whoever chose them.

The door was open for us already, and within was a row of dark faces of men and women, and a show of white teeth that looked like a welcome. I wondered Aunt Gary did not say more to answer the welcome; she only dropped a few careless words as she went in, and asked if dinner was ready. I looked from one to another of the strange faces and gleaming rows of teeth. These were my mother's servants; that was something that came near to my heart. I heard inquiries after "Mis' Felissy" and "Mass' Randolph," and then the question, "Mis' 'Lizy, is this little missis?" It was asked by an old, respectable-looking, grey-haired negress. I did not hear my aunt's answer; but I stopped and turned

to the woman and laid my little hand in her withered palm. I don't know what there was in that minute; only I know that whereas I touched one hand, I touched a great many hearts. Then and there began my good understanding with all the coloured people on my mother's estate of Magnolia. There was a general outburst of satisfaction and welcome. Some of the voices blessed me; more than one remarked that I was "like Mass' Randolph;" and I went into the parlour with a warm spot in my heart, which had been very cold.

I was oddly at home at once. The room indeed was a room I had never seen before; yet according to the mystery of such things, the inanimate surroundings bore the mark of the tastes and habits I had grown up among all my life. A great splendid fire was blazing in the chimney; a rich carpet was on the floor; the furniture was luxurious though not showy, and there was plenty of it. So there was plenty of works of art, in home and foreign manufacture. Comfort, elegance, prettiness, all around; and through the clear glass of the long windows the evergreen oaks on the lawn showed like guardians of the place. I stood at one of them, with the pressure of that joy and sorrow filling my childish heart.

My aunt presently called me from the window, and bade me let Margaret take off my things. I got leave to go upstairs with Margaret and take them off there. So I ran up the low easy flight of stairs – they were wooden and uncarpeted – to a matted gallery lit from the roof, with here and there a window in a recess

looking upon the lawn. Many rooms opened into this gallery. I went from one to another. Here were great wood fires burning too; here were snowy white beds, with light muslin hangings; and dark cabinets and wardrobes; and mats on the floors, with thick carpets and rugs laid down here and there. And on one side and on the other side the windows looked out upon the wide lawn, with its giant oaks hung with grey wreaths of moss. My heart grew sore straitened. It was a hard evening, that first evening at Magnolia; with the loveliness and the brightness, the warm attraction, and the bitter cold sense of loneliness. I longed to throw myself down and cry. What I did, was to stand by one of the windows and fight myself not to let the tears come. If *they* were here, it would be so happy! If they were here – oh, if they were here!

I believe the girl spoke to me without my hearing her. But then came somebody whom I was obliged to hear, shouting "Daisy" along the gallery. I faced him with a great effort. He wanted to know what I was doing, and how I liked it, and where my room was.

"Not found it yet?" said Preston. "Is this it? Whose room is this, hey? – you somebody?"

"Maggie, massa," said the girl, dropping a curtsey.

"Maggie, where is your mistress's room?"

"This is Mis' 'Liza's room, sir."

"Nonsense! Miss 'Liza is only here on a visit —*this* is your mistress. Where is her room, hey?"

"Oh stop, Preston!" I begged him. "I am not mistress."

"Yes, you are. I'll roast anybody who says you ain't. Come along, and you shall choose which room you will have; and if it isn't ready they will get it ready. Come!"

I made him understand my choice might depend on where other people's rooms were; and sent him off. Then I sent the girl away – she was a pleasant-faced mulatto, very eager to help me – and left to myself I hurriedly turned the key in the lock. I *must* have some minutes to myself if I was to bear the burden of that afternoon; and I knelt down with as heavy a heart, almost, as I ever knew. In all my life I had never felt so castaway and desolate. When my father and mother first went from me, I was at least among the places where they had been; June was with me still, and I knew not Miss Pinshon. The journey had had its excitements and its interest. Now I was alone; for June had decided, with tears and woeful looks, that she would not come to Magnolia; and Preston would be soon on his way back to college. I knew of only one comfort in the world; that wonderful, "Lo, I am with you." Does anybody know what that means, who has not made it the single plank bridge over an abyss?

No one found out that anything was the matter with me, except Preston. His caresses were dangerous to my composure. I kept him off; and he ate his dinner with a thundercloud face which foretold war with all governesses. For me, it was hard work enough to maintain my quiet; everything made it hard. Each new room, every arrangement of furniture, every table appointment,

though certainly not what I had seen before, yet seemed so like home that I was constantly missing what would have made it home indeed. It was the shell without the kernel. The soup ladle seemed to be by mistake in the wrong hands; Preston seemed to have no business with my father's carving knife and fork; the sense of desolation pressed upon me everywhere.

After dinner the ladies went upstairs to choose their rooms, and Miss Pinshon avowed that she wished to have mine within hers; it would be proper and convenient, she said. Aunt Gary made no objection; but there was some difficulty, because all the rooms had independent openings into the gallery. Miss Pinshon hesitated a moment between one of two that opened into each other, and another that was pleasanter and larger but would give her less facility for overlooking my affairs. For one moment I drew a breath of hope; and then my hope was quashed. Miss Pinshon chose one of the two that opened into each other; and my only comfort was the fact that my own room had two doors and I was not obliged to go through Miss Pinshon's to get to it. Just as this business was settled, Preston called me out into the gallery and asked me to go for a walk. I questioned with myself a second whether I should ask leave; but I had an inward assurance that to ask leave would be not to go. I felt I must go. I ran back to the room where my things lay, and in two minutes I was out of the house.

My first introduction to Magnolia! How well I remember every minute and every foot of the way. It was delicious, the

instant I stepped out among the oaks and into the sunshine. Freedom was there, at all events.

"Now, Daisy, we'll go to the stables," Preston said, "and see if there is anything fit for you. I am afraid there isn't; though Edwards told me he thought there was."

"Who is Edwards?" I asked, as we sped joyfully away through the oaks, across shade and sunshine.

"Oh, he is the overseer."

"What is an overseer?"

"What is an overseer? – why, he is the man that looks after things."

"What things?" I asked.

"All the things – everything, Daisy; all the affairs of the plantation; the rice fields and the cotton fields and the people, and everything."

"Where are the stables? and where are we going?"

"Here – just here – a little way off. They are just in a dell over here – the other side of the house, where the quarters are."

"Quarters?" I repeated.

"Yes. Oh, you don't know anything down here, but you'll learn. The stables and quarters are in this dell we are coming to; nicely out of sight. Magnolia is one of the prettiest places on the river."

We had passed through the grove of oaks on the further side of the house, and then found the beginning of a dell which, like the one by which we had come up a few hours before, sloped gently down to the river. In its course it widened out to a little

low sheltered open ground, where a number of buildings stood.

"So the house is between two dells," I said.

"Yes; and on that height up there, beyond the quarters, is the cemetery; and from there you can see a great many fields and the river, and have a beautiful view. And there are capital rides all about the place, Daisy."

When we came to the stables, Preston sent a boy in search of "Darius." Darius, he told me, was the coachman, and chief in charge of the stable department. Darius came presently. He was a grey-headed, fine-looking, most respectable black man. He had driven my mother and my mother's mother; and being a trusted and important man on the place, and for other reasons, he had a manner and bearing that were a model of dignified propriety. Very grave "Uncle Darry" was; stately and almost courtly in his respectful courtesy; but he gave me a pleasant smile when Preston presented him.

"We's happy to see Miss Daisy at her own home. Hope de Lord bress her."

My heart warmed at these words like the ice-bound earth in a spring day. They were not carelessly spoken, nor was the welcome. My feet trod the greensward more firmly. Then all other thoughts were for the moment put to flight by Preston's calling for the pony and asking Darius what he thought of him, and Darry's answer.

"Very far, massa; very far. Him no good for not'ing."

While I pondered what this judgment might amount to, the

pony was brought out. He was larger than Loupe, and had not Loupe's peculiar symmetry of mane and tail: he was a fat dumpy little fellow, sleek and short, dapple grey, with a good long tail and a mild eye. Preston declared he had no shape at all and was a poor concern of a pony; but to my eyes he was beautiful. He took one or two sugarplums from my hand with as much amenity as if we had been old acquaintances. Then a boy was put on him, who rode him up and down with a halter.

"He'll do, Darius," said Preston.

"For little missis? Just big enough, massa. Got no tricks at all, only he no like work. Not much spring in him."

"Daisy must take the whip, then. Come and let us go look at some of the country where you will ride. Are you tired, Daisy?"

"Oh no," I said. "But wait a minute, Preston. Who lives in all those houses?"

"The people. The hands. They are away in the fields at work now."

"Does Darius live there?"

"Of course. They all live here."

"I should like to go nearer, and see the houses."

"Daisy, it is nothing on earth to see. They are all just alike, and you see them from here."

"I want to look in," I said, moving down the slope.

"Daisy," said Preston, "you are just as fond of having your way as – "

"As what? I do not think I am, Preston."

"I suppose nobody thinks he is," grumbled Preston, following me, "except the fellows who can't get it."

I had by this time almost forgotten Miss Pinshon. I had almost come to think that Magnolia might be a pleasant place. In the intervals when the pony was out of sight, I had improved my knowledge of the old coachman; and every look added to my liking. There was something I could not read that more and more drew me to him. A simplicity in his good manners, a placid expression in his gravity, a staid reserve in his humility, were all there; and more yet. Also the scene in the dell was charming to me. The ground about the negro cottages was kept neat; they were neatly built of stone and stood round the sides of a quadrangle; while on each side and below the wooded slopes of ground closed in the picture. Sunlight was streaming through and brightening up the cottages, and resting on Uncle Darry's swart face. Down through the sunlight I went to the cottages. The first door stood open, and I looked in. At the next I was about to knock, but Preston pushed open the door for me; and so he did for a third and a fourth. Nobody was in them. I was a good deal disappointed. They were empty, bare, dirty, and seemed to be very forlorn. What a set of people my mother's hands must be, I thought. Presently I came upon a ring of girls, a little larger than I was, huddled together behind one of the cottages. There was no manners about them. They were giggling and grinning, hopping on one foot, and going into other awkward antics; not the less that most of them had their arms filled with little black

babies. I had got enough for that day, and turning about, left the dell with Preston.

At the head of the dell, Preston led off in a new direction, along a wide avenue that ran through the woods. Perfectly level and smooth, with the woods closing in on both sides and making long vistas through their boles and under their boughs. By and by we took another path that led off from this one, wide enough for two horses to go abreast. The pine trees were sweet overhead and on each hand, making the light soft and the air fragrant. Preston and I wandered on in delightful roaming; leaving the house and all that it contained at an unremembered distance. Suddenly we came out upon a cleared field. It was many acres large; in the distance a number of people were at work. We turned back again.

"Preston," I said, after a silence of a few minutes, – "there seemed to be no women in those cottages. I did not see any."

"I suppose not," said Preston; "because there were not any to see."

"But had all those little babies no mothers?"

"Yes, of course, Daisy; but they were in the field."

"The mothers of those little babies?"

"Yes. What about it? Look here – are you getting tired?"

I said no; and he put his arm round me fondly, so as to hold me up a little; and we wandered gently on, back to the avenue, then down its smooth course further yet from the house, then off by another wood path through the pines on the other side. This was a narrower path, amidst sweeping pine branches and

hanging creepers, some of them prickly, which threw themselves all across the way. It was not easy getting along. I remarked that nobody seemed to come there much.

"I never came here myself," said Preston, "but I know it must lead out upon the river somewhere, and that's what I am after. Hollo! we are coming to something. There is something white through the trees. I declare, I believe – "

Preston had been out in his reckoning, and a second time had brought me where he did not wish to bring me. We came presently to an open place, or rather a place where the pines stood a little apart; and there in the midst was a small enclosure. A low brick wall surrounded a square bit of ground, with an iron gate on one side of the square; within, the grassy plot was spotted with the white marble of tombstones. There were large and small. Overhead, the great pine trees stood and waved their long branches gently in the wind. The place was lonely and lovely. We had come, as Preston guessed, to the river, and the shore was here high; so that we looked down upon the dark little stream far below us. The sunlight, getting low by this time, hardly touched it; but streamed through the pine trees and over the grass, and gilded the white marble with gold.

"I did not mean to bring you here," said Preston, "I did not know I was bringing you here. Come, Daisy – we'll go and try again."

"Oh stop!" I said – "I like it. I want to look at it."

"It is the cemetery," said Preston. "That tall column is the

monument of our great – no, of our great-great-grandfather; and this brown one is for mamma's father. Come, Daisy! – "

"Wait a little," I said. "Whose is that with the vase on top?"

"Vase?" said Preston – "it's an urn. It is an urn, Daisy. People do not put vases on tombstones."

I asked what the difference was.

"The difference? O Daisy, Daisy! Why vases are to put flowers in; and urns – I'll tell you, Daisy, – I believe it is because the Romans used to burn the bodies of their friends and gather up the ashes and keep them in a funeral urn. So an urn comes to be appropriate to a tombstone."

"I do not see how," I said.

"Why because an urn comes to be an emblem of mortality and all that. Come, Daisy; let us go."

"I think a vase of flowers would be a great deal nicer," I said. "We do not keep the ashes of our friends."

"We don't put signs of joy over their graves either," said Preston.

"I should think we might," I said meditatively. "When people have gone to Jesus – they must be very glad!"

Preston burst out with an expression of hope that Miss Pinshon would "do something" for me; and again would have led me away; but I was not ready to go. My eye, roving beyond the white marble and the low brick wall, had caught what seemed to be a number of meaner monuments, scattered among the pine trees and spreading down the slope of the ground on the further

side, where it fell off towards another dell. In one place a bit of board was set up; further on a cross; then I saw a great many bits of board and crosses; some more and some less carefully made; and still as my eye roved about over the ground they seemed to start up to view in every direction; too low and too humble and too near the colour of the fallen pine leaves to make much show unless they were looked for. I asked what they all were.

"Those? Oh, those are for the people, you know."

"The people?" I repeated.

"Yes, the people – the hands."

"There are a great many of them," I remarked.

"Of course," said Preston. "You see, Daisy, there have been I don't know how many hundreds of hands here for a great many years, ever since mother's grandfather's time."

"I should think," said I, looking at the little board slips and crosses among the pine cones on the ground, – "I should think they would like to have something nicer to put up over their graves."

"Nicer? those are good enough," said Preston. "Good enough for them."

"I should think they would like to have something better," I said. "Poor people at the North have nicer monuments, I know. I never saw such monuments in my life."

"Poor people!" cried Preston. "Why these are the *hands*, Daisy, – the coloured people. What do they want of monuments?"

"Don't they care?" said I, wondering.

"Who cares if they care? I don't know whether they care," said Preston, quite out of patience with me, I thought.

"Only, if they cared, I should think they would have something nicer," I said. "Where do they all go to church, Preston?"

"Who?" said Preston.

"These people?"

"What people? The families along the river do you mean?"

"No, no," said I; "I mean *our* people – these people; the hands. You say there are hundreds of them. Where do they go to church?"

I faced Preston now in my eagerness; for the little board crosses and the forlorn look of the whole burying-ground on the side of the hill had given me a strange feeling. "Where do they go to church, Preston!"

"Nowhere, I reckon."

I was shocked, and Preston was impatient. How should he know, he said; he did not live at Magnolia. And he carried me off. We went back to the avenue and slowly bent our steps again towards the house; slowly, for I was tired, and we both, I think, were busy with our thoughts. Presently I saw a man, a negro, come into the avenue a little before us with a bundle of tools on his back. He went as slowly as we, with an indescribable, purposeless gait. His figure had the same look too, from his lop-sided old white hat to every fold of his clothing, which seemed to hang about him just as it would as lieve be off as on. I begged

Preston to hail him and ask him the question about church going, which sorely troubled me. Preston was unwilling and resisted.

"What do you want me to do that for, Daisy?"

"Because Aunt Gary told Miss Pinshon that we have to drive six miles to go to church. Do ask him where they go!"

"They don't go *anywhere*, Daisy," said Preston, impatiently; "they don't care a straw about it, either. All the church they care about is when they get together in somebody's house and make a great muss."

"Make a muss!" said I.

"Yes; a regular muss; shouting and crying and having what they call a good time. That's what some of them do; but I'll wager if I were to ask him about going to church, this fellow here would not know what I mean."

This did by no means quiet me. I insisted that Preston should stop the man; and at last he did. The fellow turned and came back towards us, ducking his old white hat. His face was just like the rest of him; there was no expression in it but an expression of limp submissiveness.

"Sambo, your mistress wants to speak to you."

"Yes, massa. I's George, massa."

"George," said I, "I want to know where you go to church?"

"Yes, missis. What missis want to know?"

"Where do you and all the rest go to church?"

"Reckon don't go nowhar, missis."

"Don't you ever go to church?"

"Church for white folks, missis; bery far; long ways to ride."

"But you and the rest of the people – don't you go anywhere to church? to hear preaching?"

"Reckon not, missis. De preachin's don't come dis way, likely."

"Can you read the Bible, George?"

"Dunno read, missis. Never had no larnin'."

"Then don't you know anything about what is in the Bible? don't you know about Jesus?"

"Reckon don't know not'ing, missis."

"About Jesus?" said I again.

"'Clar, missis, dis nigger don't know not'ing, but de rice and de corn. Missis talk to Darry; he most knowin' nigger on plantation; knows a heap."

"There!" exclaimed Preston, "that will do. You go off to your supper, George – and Daisy, you had better come on if you want anything pleasant at home. What on earth have you got now by that? What is the use? Of course they do not know anything; and why should they? They have no time and no use for it."

"They have no time on Sundays?" I said.

"Time to sleep. That is what they do. That is the only thing a negro cares about, to go to sleep in the sun. It's all nonsense, Daisy."

"They would care about something else, I dare say," I answered, "if they could get it."

"Well, they can't get it. Now, Daisy, I want you to let these

fellows alone. You have nothing to do with them, and you did not come to Magnolia for such work. You have nothing on earth to do with them."

I had my own thoughts on the subject, but Preston was not a sympathising hearer. I said no more. The evergreen oaks about the house came presently in sight; then the low verandah that ran round three sides of it; then we came to the door, and my walk was over.

CHAPTER III.
THE MULTIPLICATION TABLE

MY life at Magnolia might be said to begin when I came downstairs that evening. My aunt and Miss Pinshon were sitting in the parlour, in the light of a glorious fire of light wood and oak sticks. Miss Pinshon called me to her at once; inquired where I had been; informed me I must not for the future take such diversion without her leave first asked and obtained; and then put me to reading aloud, that she might see how well I could do it. She gave me a philosophical article in a magazine for my proof piece; it was full of long words that I did not know and about matters that I did not understand. I read mechanically, of course; trying with all my might to speak the long words right, that there might be no room for correction; but Miss Pinshon's voice interrupted me again and again. I felt cast away in a foreign land; further and further from the home feeling every minute; and it seemed besides as if the climate had some power of petrifaction. I could not keep Medusa out of my head. It was a relief at last when the tea was brought in. Miss Pinshon took the magazine out of my hand.

"She has a good voice, but she wants expression," was her remark.

"I could not understand what she was reading," said my Aunt

Gary.

"Nor anybody else," said Preston. "How are you going to give expression, when there is nothing to express?"

"That is where you feel the difference between a good reader and one who is not trained," said my governess. "I presume Daisy has never been trained."

"No, not in anything," said my aunt. "I dare say she wants a good deal of it."

"We will try," said Miss Pinshon.

It all comes back to me as I write, that beginning of my Magnolia life. I remember how dazed and disheartened I sat at the tea-table, yet letting nobody see it; how Preston made violent efforts to change the character of the evening; and did keep up a stir that at another time would have amused me. And when I was dismissed to bed, Preston came after me to the upper gallery and almost broke up my power of keeping quiet. He gathered me in his arms, kissed me and lamented me, and denounced ferocious threats against "Medusa;" while I in vain tried to stop him. He would not be sent away, till he had come into my room and seen that the fire was burning and the room warm, and Margaret ready for me.

With Margaret there was also an old coloured woman, dark and wrinkled, my faithful old friend Mammy Theresa! but indeed I could scarcely see her just then, for my eyes were full of big tears when Preston left me; and I had to stand still before the fire for some minutes before I could fight down the fresh tears that

were welling up and let those which veiled my eyesight scatter away. I was conscious how silently the two women waited upon me. I had a sense even then of the sympathy they were giving. I knew they served me with a respect which would have done for an Eastern princess; but I said nothing hardly, nor they, that night.

If the tears came when I was alone, so did sleep too at last; and I waked up the next morning a little revived. It was a cool morning, and my eyes opened to see Margaret on her knees making my fire. Two good oak sticks were on the fire dogs, and a heap of light wood on the floor. I watched her piling and preparing, and then kindling the wood with a splinter of light wood which she lit in the candle. It was all very strange to me. The bare painted and varnished floor; the rugs laid down here and there; the old cupboards in the wall; the unwonted furniture. It did not feel like home. I lay still, until the fire blazed up and Margaret rose to her feet, and seeing my eyes open dropped her curtsey.

"Please, missis, may I be Miss Daisy's girl?"

"I will ask Aunt Gary," I answered, a good deal surprised.

"Miss Daisy is the mistress. We all belong to Miss Daisy. It will be as she say."

I thought to myself that very little was going to be "as I said." I got out of bed, feeling terribly slim-hearted, and stood in my nightgown before the fire, trying to let the blaze warm me. Margaret did her duties with a zeal of devotion that reminded

me of my old June.

"I will ask Aunt Gary," I said; "and I think she will let you build my fire, Margaret."

"Thank'e, ma'am. First-rate fires. I'll make, Miss Daisy. We'se all so glad Miss Daisy come to Magnoly."

Were they? I thought, and what did she mean by their all "belonging to me?" I was not accustomed to quite so much deference. However, I improved my opportunity by asking Margaret my question of the day before about church. The girl half laughed.

"Ain't any church big enough to hold all de people," she said. "Guess we coloured folks has to go widout."

"But where *is* the church?" I said.

"Ain't none, Miss Daisy. People enough to make a church full all himselves."

"And don't you want to go?"

"Reckon it's o' no consequence, missis. It's a right smart chance of a way to Bo'mbroke, where de white folks' church is. Guess they don't have none for poor folks nor niggers in dese parts."

"But Jesus died for poor people," I said, turning round upon my attendant. She met me with a gaze I did not understand, and said nothing. Margaret was not like my old June. She was a clear mulatto, with a fresh colour and rather a handsome face; and her eyes, unlike June's little anxious, restless, almond-shaped eyes, were liquid and full. She went on carefully with the toilet duties

which busied her; and I was puzzled.

"Did you never hear of Jesus?" I said presently. "Don't you know that He loves poor people?"

"Reckon He loves rich people de best, Miss Daisy," the girl said, in a dry tone.

I faced about to deny this, and to explain how the Lord had a special love and care for the poor. I saw that my hearer did not believe me. "She had heerd so," she said.

The dressing-bell sounded long and loud, and I was obliged to let Margaret go on with my dressing; but in the midst of my puzzled state of mind, I felt childishly sure of the power of that truth, of the Lord's love, to break down any hardness and overcome any coldness. Yet, "how shall they hear without a preacher?" and I had so little chance to speak.

"Then, Margaret," said I at last, "is there no place where you can go to hear about the things in the Bible?"

"No, missis; I never goes."

"And does not anybody, except Darry when he goes with the carriage?"

"Can't, Miss Daisy; it's miles and miles; and no place for niggers neither."

"Can you read the Bible, Margaret?"

"Guess not, missis; we's too stupid; ain't good for coloured folks to read."

"Does *nobody*, among all the people, read the Bible?" said I, once more stopping Margaret in my dismay.

"Uncle Darry – he does," said the girl; "and he do 'spoun some; but I don't make no count of his 'spoundations."

I did not know quite what she meant; but I had no time for anything more. I let her go, locked my door and kneeled down; with the burden on my heart of this new revelation; that there were hundreds of people under the care of my father and mother who were living without church and without Bible, in desperate ignorance of everything worth knowing. If papa had only been at Magnolia with me! I thought I could have persuaded him to build a church and let somebody come and teach the people. But now – what could I do? And I asked the Lord, what could I do? but I did not see the answer.

Feeling the question on my two shoulders, I went downstairs. To my astonishment, I found the family all gathered in solemn order; the house servants at one end of the room, my aunt, Miss Pinshon and Preston at the other, and before my aunt a little table with books. I got a seat as soon as I could, for it was plain that something was waiting for me. Then my aunt opened the Bible and read a chapter, and followed it with prayer read out of another book. I was greatly amazed at the whole proceeding. No such ceremony was ever gone through at Melbourne; and certainly nothing had ever given me the notion that my Aunt Gary was any more fond of sacred things than the rest of the family.

"An excellent plan," said Miss Pinshon, when we had risen from our knees and the servants had filed off.

"Yes," my aunt said, somewhat as if it needed an apology; –

"it was the custom in my father's and grandfather's time; and we always keep it up. I think old customs always should be kept up."

"And do you have the same sort of thing on Sundays, for the out-of-door hands?"

"What?" said my aunt. It was somewhat more abrupt than polite; but she probably felt that Miss Pinshon was a governess.

"There were only the house servants gathered this morning."

"Of course; part of them."

"Have you any similar system of teaching for those who are outside? I think you told me they have no church to go to."

"I should like to know what 'system' you would adopt," said my aunt, "to reach seven hundred people."

"A church and a minister would not be a bad thing."

"Or we might all turn missionaries," said Preston; "and go among them with bags of Bibles round our necks. We might all turn missionaries."

"Colporteurs," said Miss Pinshon.

Then I said in my heart, "I will be one." But I went on eating my breakfast and did not look at anybody; only I listened with all my might.

"I don't know about that," said my aunt. "I doubt whether a church and a minister would be beneficial."

"Then you have a nation of heathen at your doors," said Miss Pinshon.

"I don't know but they are just as well off," said my aunt. "I doubt if more light would do them any good. They would not

understand it."

"They must be very dark if they could not understand light," said my governess.

"Just as people that are very light cannot understand darkness," said Preston.

"I think so," my aunt went on. "Our neighbour Colonel Joram, down below here at Crofts, will not allow such a thing as preaching or teaching on his plantation. He says it is bad for them. We always allowed it; but I don't know."

"Colonel Joram is a heathen himself, you know, mother," said Preston. "Don't hold *him* up."

"I will hold him up for a gentleman, and a very successful planter," said Mrs. Gary. "No place is better worked or managed than Crofts. If the estate of Magnolia were worked and kept as well, it would be worth half as much again as it ever has been. But there is the difference of the master's eye. My brother-in-law never could be induced to settle at Magnolia, nor at his own estates either. He likes it better in the cold North."

Miss Pinshon made no remark whatever in answer to this statement; and the rest of the talk at the breakfast-table was about rice.

After breakfast my school life at Magnolia began. It seemed as if all the threads of my life there were in a hurry to get into my hand. Ah! I had a handful soon! But this was the fashion of my first day with my governess. All the days were not quite so bad; however, it gave the key of them all.

Miss Pinshon bade me come with her to the room she and my aunt had agreed should be the schoolroom. It was the back room of the house, though it had hardly books enough to be called a library. It had been the study or private room of my grandfather; there was a leather-covered table with an old bronze standish; some plain bookcases; a large escritoire; a terrestrial globe; a thermometer and a barometer; and the rest of the furniture was an abundance of chintz-covered chairs and lounges. These were very easy and pleasant for use; and long windows opening on the verandah looked off among the evergreen oaks and their floating grey drapery; the light in the room and the whole aspect of it was agreeable. If Miss Pinshon had not been there! But she was there, with a terrible air of business; setting one or two chairs in certain positions by a window, and handing one or two books on the table. I stood meek and helpless, expectant.

"Have you read any history, Daisy?"

I said no; then I said yes, I had; a little.

"What?"

"A little of the history of England last summer."

"Not of your own country?"

"No, ma'am."

"And no ancient history?"

"No, ma'am."

"You know nothing of the division of the nations, of course?"

I answered, nothing. I had no idea what she meant; except that England, and America, and France, were different, and of course

divided. Of Peleg the son of Eber and the brother of Joktan, I then knew nothing.

"And arithmetic is something you do not understand," pursued Miss Pinshon. "Come here, and let me see how you can write."

With trembling, stiff little fingers – I feel them yet – I wrote some lines under my governess's eye.

"Very unformed," was her comment. "And now, Daisy, you may sit down there in the window and study the multiplication table. See how much of it you can get this morning."

Was it to be a morning's work? My heart was heavy as lead. At this hour, at Melbourne, my task would have been to get my flat hat and rush out among the beds of flowers; and a little later, to have up Loupe and go driving whither I would, among the meadows and cornfields. Ah, yes; and there was Molly who might be taught, and Juanita who might be visited; and Dr. Sandford who might come like a pleasant gale of wind into the midst of whatever I was about. I did not stop to think of them now, though a waft of the sunny air through the open window brought a violent rush of such images. I tried to shut them out of my head and gave myself wistfully to "three times one is three; three times two is six." Miss Pinshon helped me by closing the window. I thought she might have let so much sweetness as that come into the multiplication table. However I studied its threes and fours steadily for some time; then my attention flagged. It was very uninteresting. I had never in all my life till then been obliged to

study what gave me no pleasure. My mind wandered, and then my eyes wandered, to where the sunlight lay so golden under the live oaks. The wreaths of grey moss stirred gently with the wind. I longed to be out there. Miss Pinshon's voice startled me.

"Daisy, where are your thoughts?"

I hastily brought my eyes and wits home and answered, "Out upon the lawn, ma'am."

"Do you find the multiplication table there?"

It was so needless to answer! I was mute. I would have come to the rash conclusion that nature and mathematics had nothing to do with each other.

"You must learn to command your attention," my governess went on. "You must not let it wander. That is the first lesson you have to learn. I shall give you mathematics till you have learnt it. You can do nothing without attention."

I bent myself to the threes and fours again. But I was soon weary; my mind escaped; and without turning my eyes off my book, it swept over the distance between Magnolia and Melbourne, and sat down by Molly Skelton to help her in getting her letters. It was done and I was there. I could hear the hesitating utterances; I could see the dull finger tracing its way along the lines. And then would come the reading *to* Molly, and the interested look of waiting attention, and once in a while the strange softening of the poor hard face. From there my mind went off to the people around me at Magnolia; were there some to be taught here perhaps? and could I get at them? and was there

no other way – could it be there was no other way but by my weak little voice – through which some of them were ever to learn about my dear Saviour? I had got very far from mathematics, and my book fell. I heard Miss Pinshon's voice.

"Daisy, come here."

I obeyed and came to the table, where my governess was installed in the leather chair of my grandfather. She always used it.

"I should like to know what you are doing."

"I was thinking," I said.

"Did I give you thinking to do?"

"No, ma'am; not of that kind."

"What kind was it?"

"I was thinking, and remembering – "

"Pray what were you remembering?"

"Things at home – and other things."

"Things and things," said Miss Pinshon. "That is not a very elegant way of speaking. Let me hear how much you have learned."

I began. About all of the "threes" was on my tongue; the rest had got mixed up hopelessly with Molly Skelton and teaching Bible reading. Miss Pinshon was not pleased.

"You must learn attention," she said. "I can do nothing with you until you have succeeded in that. You *must* attend. Now I shall give you a motive for minding what you are about. Go and sit down again and study this table till you know the threes and

the fours and the fives and the sixes, perfectly. Go and sit down."

I sat down, and the life was all out of me. Tears in the first place had a great mind to come, and would put themselves between me and the figures in the multiplication table. I governed them back after a while. But I could not study to purpose. I was tired and down-spirited; I had not energy left to spring to my task and accomplish it. Over and over again I tried to put the changes of the numbers in my head; it seemed like writing them in sand. My memory would not take hold of them; could not keep them; with all my trying I grew only more and more stupefied and fagged, and less capable of doing what I had to do. So dinner came, and Miss Pinshon said I might get myself ready for dinner and after dinner come back again to my lesson. The lesson must be finished before anything else was done.

I had no appetite. Preston was in a fume of vexation, partly aroused by my looks, partly by hearing that I was not yet free. He was enraged beyond prudent speaking, but Miss Pinshon never troubled herself about his words; and when the first and second courses were removed, told me I might go to my work. Preston called me to stay and have some fruit; but I went on to the study, not caring for fruit or for anything else. I felt very dull and miserable. Then I remembered that my governess probably did care for some fruit and would be delayed a little while; and then I tried what is the best preparation for study or anything else. I got down on my knees, to ask that help which is as willingly given to a child in her troubles as to the general of an army. I

prayed that I might be patient and obedient and take disagreeable things pleasantly and do my duty in the multiplication table. And a breath of rest came over my heart, and a sort of perfume of remembered things which I had forgotten; and it quite changed the multiplication table to think that God had given it to me to learn, and so that some good would certainly come of learning it; at least the good of pleasing Him. As long as I dared I stayed on my knees; then I was strong for the fives and sixes.

But it was not quick work; and though my patience did not flag again nor my attention fail, the afternoon was well on the way before I was dismissed. I had then permission to do what I liked. Miss Pinshon said she would not go to walk that day; I might follow my own pleasure.

I must have been very tired; for it seemed to me there was hardly any pleasure left to follow. I got my flat and went out. The sun was westing; the shadows stretched among the evergreen oaks; the outer air was sweet. I had tried to find Preston first, in the house; but he was not to be found; and all alone I went out into the sunshine. It wooed me on. Sunshine and I were always at home together. Without knowing that I wanted to go anywhere, some secret attraction drew my steps towards the dell where I had seen Darry. I followed one of several well-beaten paths that led towards the quarters through the trees, and presently came out upon the stables again. All along the dell the sunshine poured. The ground was kept like a pleasure ground, it was so neat; the grass was as clean as the grass of a park; the little stone

houses scattered away down towards the river, with shade trees among them, and oaks lining the sides of the dell. I thought surely Magnolia was a lovely place! if only my father and mother had been there. But then, seeing the many cottages, my trouble of the morning pressed upon me afresh. So many people, so many homes, and the light of the Bible not on them, nor in them? And, child as I was, and little as I knew, I knew the name of Christ too unspeakably precious, for me to think without a sore heart, and all these people were without what was the jewel of my life. And they my mother's servants! my father's dependants! What could I do?

The dell was alone in the yellow sunlight which poured over the slope from the west: and I went musing on till getting to the corner of the stables I saw Darry just round the corner grooming a black horse. He was working energetically, and humming to himself as he worked a refrain which I learned afterwards to know well. All I could make out was, "I'm going home" – several times repeated. I came near before he saw me, and he started; then bid me good evening and "hoped I found Magnolia a pleasant place."

Since I have grown older I have read that wonderful story of Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom; he reminded me of Darry then, and now I never think of the one without thinking of the other. But Darry, having served a different class of people from Uncle Tom's first owners, had a more polished style of manners, which I should almost call courtly; and he was besides a man of

higher natural parts, and somewhat more education. But much commerce in the Court which is above all earthly dignities, no doubt had more to do with his peculiarities than any other cause.

I asked him what he was singing about home? and where his home was? He turned his face full upon me, letting me see how grave and gentle his eye was, and at the same time there was a wistful expression in it that I felt.

"Home ain't nowheres here, missie," he said. "I'm 'spectin' to go by and by."

"Do you mean home up *there*?" said I, lifting my finger towards the sky. Darry fairly laughed.

"'Spect don't want no other home, missie. Heaven good enough."

I stood watching him as he rubbed down the black horse, feeling surely that he and I would be friends.

"Where is your home here, Darry?"

"I got a place down there, little missie – not fur."

"When you have done that horse, will you show me your place? I want to see where you live."

"Missie want to see Darry's house?" said he, showing his white teeth. "Missie shall see what she mind to. I allus keeps Sadler till the last, 'cause he's ontractable."

The black horse was put in the stable, and I followed my black groom down among the lines of stone huts to which the working parties had not yet returned. Darry's house was one of the lowest in the dell, out of the quadrangle, and had a glimpse of the river.

It stood alone in a pretty place, but something about it did not satisfy me. It looked square and bare. The stone walls within were rough as the stone-layer had left them; one little four-paned window, or rather casement, stood open; and the air was sweet; for Darry kept his place scrupulously neat and clean. But there was not much to be kept. A low bedstead; a wooden chest; an odd table made of a piece of board on three legs; a shelf with some kitchen ware; that was all the furniture. On the odd table there lay a Bible, that had, I saw, been turned over many a time.

"Then you can read, Uncle Darry?" I said, pitching on the only thing that pleased me.

"De good Lord, He give me dat happiness," the man answered gravely.

"And you love Jesus, Darry," I said, feeling that we had better come to an understanding as soon as possible. His answer was an energetic —

"Bress de Lord! Do Miss Daisy love Him, den?"

I would have said yes; I did say yes, I believe; but I did not know how or why, at this question there seemed a coming together of gladness and pain which took away my breath. My head dropped on Darry's little window-sill, and my tears rushed forth, like the head of water behind a broken mill-dam. Darry was startled and greatly concerned. He wanted to know if I was not well – if I would send him for "su'thing" – I could only shake my head and weep. I think Darry was the only creature at Magnolia before whom I would have so broken down. But

somehow I felt safe with Darry. The tears cleared away from my voice after a little; and I went on with my inquiries again. It was a good chance.

"Uncle Darry, does no one else but you read the Bible?"

He looked dark and troubled. "Missie sees – de folks for most part got no learning. Dey no read, sure."

"Do you read the Bible to them, Darry?"

"Miss Daisy knows, dere ain't no great time. Dey's in the field all day, most days, and dey hab no time for to hear."

"But Sundays?" I said.

"Do try," he said, looking graver yet. "Me do 'tempt su'thing. But missie knows, de Sabbat' be de only day de people hab, and dey tink mostly of oder tings."

"And there is no church for you all to go to?"

"No, missis; no church."

There was a sad tone in his answer. I did not know how to go on. I turned to something else.

"Uncle Darry, I don't think your home looks very comfortable."

Darry almost laughed at that. He said it was good enough; would last very well a little while longer. I insisted that it was not *comfortable*. It was cold.

"Sun warm, Miss Daisy. De good Lord, He make His sun warm. And dere be fires enough."

"But it is very empty," I said. "You want something more in it, to make it look nice."

"It never empty, Miss Daisy, when de Lord Hisself be here. And He not leave His chil'n alone. Miss Daisy know dat?"

I stretched forth my little hand and laid it in Darry's great black palm. There was an absolute confidence established between us.

"Uncle Darry," I said, "I *do* love Him – but sometimes, I want to see papa! – "

And therewith my self-command was almost gone. I stood with full eyes and quivering lips, my hand still in Darry's, who on his part was speechless with sympathy.

"De time pass quick, and Miss Daisy see her pa'," he said at last.

I did not think the time passed quick. I said so.

"Do little missie ask de Lord for help?" Darry said, his eyes by this time as watery as mine. "Do Miss Daisy know, it nebber lonesome where de Lord be? He so good."

I could not stand any more. I pulled away my hand and stood still, looking out of the window and seeing nothing, till I could make myself quiet. Then I changed the subject and told Darry I should like to go and see some of the other houses again. I know now, I can see, looking back, how my childish self-control and reserve made some of those impulsive natures around me regard me with something like worshipful reverence. I felt it then, without thinking of it or reasoning about it. From Darry, and from Margaret, and from Mammy Theresa, and from several others, I had a loving, tender reverence, which not only felt for me as a sorrowful child, but bowed before me as something of higher

and stronger nature than themselves. Darry silently attended me now from house to house of the quarters; introducing and explaining and doing all he could to make my progress interesting and amusing. Interested I was; but most certainly not amused. I did not like the look of things any better than I had done at first. The places were not "nice;" there was a coarse, uncared-for air of everything within, although the outside was in such well-dressed condition. No litter on the grass, no untidiness of walls or chimneys; and no seeming of comfortable homes when the door was opened. The village, for it amounted to that, was almost deserted at that hour; only a few crooning old women on the sunny side of a wall, and a few half-grown girls, and a quantity of little children, depending for all the care they got upon one or the other of these.

"Haven't all these little babies got mothers!" I asked.

"For sure, Miss Daisy – dey's got modders."

"Where *are* the mothers of all these babies, Darry?" I asked.

"Dey's in de field, Miss Daisy. Home d'rectly."

"Are they working like *men* in the fields!" I asked.

"Dey's all at work," said Darry.

"Do they do the same work as the men?"

"All alike, Miss Daisy." Darry's answers were not hearty.

"But don't their little babies want them?" said I, looking at a group of girls in whose hands were some very little babies indeed. I think Darry made me no answer.

"But if the men and women both work out," I went on, "papa

must give them a great deal of money; I should think they would have things more comfortable, Darry. Why don't they have little carpets, and tables and chairs, and cups and saucers? Hardly anybody has teacups and saucers. Have *you* got any, Uncle Darry?"

"'Spect I'se no good woman to brew de tea for her ole man," said Darry; but I thought he looked at me very oddly.

"Couldn't you make it for yourself, Uncle Darry?"

"Poor folks don't live just like de rich folks," he answered, quietly, after a minute's pause. "And I don't count fur to want no good t'ing, missie."

I went on with my observations; my questions I thought I would not push any further at that time. I grew more and more dissatisfied, that my father's work-people should live in no better style and in no better comfort. Even Molly Skelton had a furnished and appointed house, compared with these little bare stone huts; and mothers that would leave their babies for the sake of more wages, must, I thought, be very barbarous mothers. This was all because, no doubt, of having no church and no Bible. I grew weary. As we were going up the dell towards the stables, I suddenly remembered my pony; and I asked to see him.

Darry was much relieved, I fancy, to have me come back to a child's sphere of action. He had out the fat little grey pony, and talked it over to me with great zeal. It came into my head to ask for a saddle.

"Dere be a saddle," Darry said, doubtfully. "Massa Preston

he done got a saddle dis very day. Dunno where Massa Preston can be."

I did not heed this. I begged to have the saddle and be allowed to try the pony. Now Preston had laid a plan that nobody but himself should have the pleasure of first mounting me; but I did not know of this plan. Darry hesitated, I saw, but he had not the power to refuse me. The saddle was brought out, put on, and carefully arranged.

"Uncle Darry, I want to get on him – may I?"

"O' course – Miss Daisy do what she mind to. Him bery good, only some lazy."

So I was mounted. Preston, Miss Pinshon, the servants' quarters, the multiplication table, all were forgotten and lost in a misty distance. I was in the saddle for the first time, and delight held me by both hands. My first moment on horseback! If Darry had guessed it he would have been terribly concerned; but as it happened, I knew how to take my seat; I had watched my mother so often mounting her horse that every detail was familiar to me; and Darry naturally supposed I knew what I was about after I was in my seat. The reins were a little confusing; however, the pony walked off lazily with me to the head of the glen, and I thought he was an improvement upon the old pony chaise. Finding myself coming out upon the avenue, which I did not wish, it became necessary to get at the practical use of the bridle. I was at some pains to do it; finally I managed to turn the pony's head round, and we walked back in the same sober style we had

come up. Darry stood by the stables, smiling and watching me; down among the quarters the children and old people turned out to look after me; I walked down as far as Darry's house, turned and came back again. Darry stood ready to help me to dismount; but it was too pleasant. I went on to the avenue. Just as I turned there, I caught, as it seemed to me, a glimpse of two ladies, coming towards me from the house. Involuntarily I gave a sharper pull at the bridle, and I suppose touched the pony's shoulder with the switch Darry had put into my hand. The touch so woke him up, that he shook off his laziness and broke into a short galloping canter to go back to the stables. This was a new experience. I thought for the first minute that I certainly should be thrown off; I seemed to have no hold of anything, and I was tossed up and down on my saddle in the way that boded a landing on the ground every next time.

I was not timid with animals, whatever might be true of me in other relations. My first comfort was finding that I did *not* fall off; then I took heart and settled myself in the saddle more securely, gave myself to the motion, and began to think I should like it by and by. Nevertheless, for this time I was willing to stop at the stables; but the pony had only just found how good it was to be moving, and he went by at full canter. Down the dell, through the quarters, past the cottages, till I saw Darry's house ahead of me, and began to think how I *should* get round again. At that pace I could not. Could I stop the fellow? I tried, but there was not much strength in my arms; one or two pulls did no good, and

one or two pulls more did no good; pony cantered on, and I saw we were making straight for the river. I knew that I *must* stop him; I threw so much good-will into the handling of my reins that, to my joy, the pony paused, let himself be turned about placidly, and took up his leisurely walk again. But now I was in a hurry, wanting to be dismounted before anybody should come; and I was a little triumphant, having kept my seat and turned my horse. Moreover, the walk was not good after that stirring canter. I would try it again. But it took a little earnestness now and more than one touch of my whip before the pony would mind me. Then he obeyed in good style and we cantered quietly up to where Darry was waiting. The thing was done. The pony and I had come to an understanding. I was a rider from that time, without fear or uncertainty. The first gentle pull on the bridle was obeyed and I came to a stop in front of Darry and my cousin Preston.

I have spent a great deal of time to tell of my ride. Yet not more than its place in my life then deserved. It was my last half hour of pleasure for I think many a day. I had cantered up the slope, all fresh in mind and body, excited and glad with my achievement and with the pleasure of brisk motion; I had forgotten everybody and everything disagreeable, or what I did not forget I disregarded; but just before I stopped I saw what sent another thrill than that of pleasure tingling through all my veins. I saw Preston, who had but a moment before reached the stables, I saw him lift his hand with a light riding switch he carried, and drew the switch across Darry's mouth. I shall never forget

the coloured man's face, as he stepped back a pace or two. I understood it afterwards; I *felt* it then. There was no resentment; there was no fire of anger, which I should have expected; there was no manly and no stolid disregard of what had been done. There was instead a slight smile, which to this day I cannot bear to recall; it spoke so much of patient and helpless humiliation; as of one wincing at the galling of a sore and trying not to show he winced. Preston took me off my horse, and began to speak. I turned away from him to Darry, who now held two horses, Preston having just dismounted; and I thanked him for my pleasure, throwing into my manner all the studied courtesy I could. Then I walked up the dell beside Preston, without looking at him.

Preston scolded. He had prepared a surprise for me, and was excited by his disappointment at my mounting without him. Of course I had not known that; and Darry, who was in the secret, had not known how to refuse. I gave Preston no answer to his charges and reproaches. At last I said I was tired and I wished he would not talk.

"Tired! you are something besides tired," he said.

"I suppose I am," I answered with great deliberation.

He was eager to know what it was; but then we came out upon the avenue and were met flush by my aunt and Miss Pinshon. My aunt inquired, and Preston, who was by no means cool yet, accused me about the doings of the afternoon. I scarcely heeded one or the other; but I did feel Miss Pinshon's taking my hand

and leading me home all the rest of the way. It was not that I wanted to talk to Preston, for I was not ready to talk to him; but this holding me like a little child was excessively distasteful to my habit of freedom. My governess would not loose her clasp when we got to the house; but kept fast hold and led me upstairs to my own room.

CHAPTER IV.
SEVEN HUNDRED PEOPLE

DO you think that was a proper thing to do, Daisy?" my governess asked when she released me.

"What thing, ma'am?" I asked.

"To tear about on that great grey pony."

"Yes, ma'am," I said.

"You think it *was* proper?" said Miss Pinshon, coolly. "Whom had you with you?"

"Nobody was riding with me."

"Your cousin was there?"

"No, ma'am."

"Who then?"

"I had Uncle Darry. I was only riding up and down the dell."

"The coachman! And were you riding up and through the quarters all the afternoon?"

"No, ma'am."

"What were you doing the rest of the time?"

"I was going about – " I hesitated.

"About where?"

"Through the place there."

"The quarters? Well, you think it proper amusement for your mother's daughter? You are not to make companions of the

servants, Daisy. You are not to go to the quarters without my permission, and I shall not give it frequently. Now get yourself ready for tea."

I did feel as if Preston's prophecy were coming true and I in a way to be gradually petrified; some slow, chill work of that kind seemed already to be going on. But a little thing soon stirred all the life there was in me. Miss Pinshon stepped to the door which led from her room into mine, unlocked it, took out the key, and put it on her own side of the door. I sprang forward at that, with a word, I do not know what; and my governess turned her lustrous, unmoved eyes calmly upon me. I remember now how deadening their look was, in their very lustre and moveless calm. I begged however for a reversal of her last proceeding; I wanted my door locked sometimes, I said.

"You can lock the other door."

"But I want both locked."

"I do not. This door remains open, Daisy. I must come in here when I please. Now make haste and get ready."

I had no time for anything but to obey. I went downstairs, I think, like a machine; my body obeying certain laws, while my mind and spirit were scarcely present. I suppose I behaved myself as usual; save that I would have nothing to do with Preston, nor would I receive anything whatever at the table from his hand. This, however, was known only to him and me. I said nothing; not the less every word that others said fastened itself in my memory. I was like a person dreaming.

"You have just tired yourself with mounting that wild thing, Daisy," said my Aunt Gary.

"Wild!" said Preston. "About as wild as a tame sloth."

"I always heard that was very wild indeed," said Miss Pinshon. "The sloth cannot be tamed, can it?"

"Being stupid already, I suppose not," said Preston.

"Daisy looks pale at any rate," said my aunt.

"A little overdone," said Miss Pinshon. "She wants regular exercise; but irregular exercise is very trying to any but a strong person. I think Daisy will be stronger in a few weeks."

"What sort of exercise do you think will be good for her, ma'am?" Preston said, with an expression out of all keeping with his words, it was so fierce.

"I shall try different sorts," my governess answered, composedly. "Exercise of patience is a very good thing, Master Gary. I think gymnastics will be useful for Daisy too. I shall try them."

"That is what I have often said to my sister," said Aunt Gary. "I have no doubt that sort of training would establish Daisy's strength more than anything in the world. She just wants that to develop her and bring out the muscles."

Preston almost groaned; pushed his chair from the table, and I knew sat watching me. I would give him no opportunity, for *my* opportunity I could not have then. I kept quiet till the ladies moved; I moved with them; and sat all the evening abstracted in my own meditations, without paying Preston any attention;

feeling indeed very old and grey, as no doubt I looked. When I was ordered to bed Miss Pinshon desired I would hold no conversation with anybody. Whereupon Preston took my candle and boldly marched out of the room with me. When we were upstairs he tried to make me disobey my orders. He declared I was turning to stone already; he said a great many hard words against my governess; threatened he would write to my father; and when he could not prevail to make me talk, dashed off passionately and left me. I went trembling into my room. But my refuge there was gone. I had fallen upon evil times. My door must not be locked, and Miss Pinshon might come in any minute. I could not pray. I undressed and went to bed; and lay there, waiting, all things in order, till my governess looked in. Then the door was closed, and I heard her steps moving about in her room. I lay and listened. At last the door was softly set open again; and then after a few minutes the sound of regular slow breathing proclaimed that those wide-open black eyes were really closed for the night. I got up, went to my governess's door and listened. She was sleeping profoundly. I laid hold of the handle of the door and drew it towards me; pulled out the key softly, put it in my own side of the lock and shut the door. And after all I was afraid to turn the key. The wicked sound of the lock might enter those sleeping ears. But the door was closed; and I went to my old place, the open window. It was not my window at Melbourne, with balmy summer air, and the dewy scent of the honeysuckle coming up, and the moonlight flooding all the world

beneath me. But neither was it in the regions of the North. The night was still and mild, if not balmy; and the stars were brilliant; and the evergreen oaks were masses of dark shadow all over the lawn. I do not think I saw them at first; for my look was up to the sky, where the stars shone down to greet me, and where it was furthest from all the troubles on the surface of the earth; and with one thought of the Friend up there, who does not forget the troubles of even His little children, the barrier in my heart gave way, my tears gushed forth; my head lay on the window-sill at Magnolia, more hopelessly than in my childish sorrow it had ever lain at Melbourne. I kept my sobs quiet; I must; but they were deep, heartbreaking sobs, for a long time.

Prayer got its chance after a while. I had a great deal to pray for; it seemed to my child's heart now and then as if it could hardly bear its troubles. And very much I felt I wanted patience and wisdom. I thought there was a great deal to do, even for my little hands; and promise of great hindrance and opposition. And the only one pleasant thing I could think of in my new life at Magnolia, was that I might tell of the truth to those poor people who lived in the negro quarters.

Why I did not make myself immediately ill, with my night's vigils and sorrow, I cannot tell; unless it were that great excitement kept off the effects of chill air and damp. However, the excitement had its own effects, and my eyes were sadly heavy when they opened the next morning to look at Margaret lighting my fire.

"Margaret," I said, "shut Miss Pinshon's door, will you?"

She obeyed, and then turning to look at me, exclaimed that I was not well.

"Did you say you could not read, Margaret?" was my answer.

"Read! no, missis. Guess readin' ain't no good for servants. Seems like Miss Daisy ain't lookin' peart this mornin'."

"Would you *like* to read?"

"Reckon don't care about it, Miss Daisy. Where'd us get books, most likely?"

I said I would get the books; but Margaret turned to the fire and made me no answer. I heard her mutter some ejaculation.

"Because, Margaret, don't you know," I said, raising myself on my elbow, "God would like to have you learn to read, so that you might know the Bible and come to heaven."

"Reckon folks ain't a heap better that knows the Bible," said the girl. "'Pears as if it don't make no difference. Ain't nobody good in *this* place, 'cept Uncle Darry."

"In another minute I was out of bed and standing before the fire, my hand on her shoulder. I told her I wanted *her* to be good too, and that Jesus would make her good, if she would let Him. Margaret gave me a hasty look and then finished her fire making; but to my great astonishment, a few minutes after, I saw that the tears were running down the girl's face. It astonished me so much that I said no more; and Margaret was as silent, only dressed me with the greatest attention and tenderness.

"Ye want your breakfast bad, Miss Daisy," she remarked then

in a subdued tone; and I suppose my looks justified her words. They created some excitement when I went downstairs. My aunt exclaimed; Miss Pinshon inquired; Preston inveighed, at things in general. He wanted to get me by myself, I knew, but he had no chance. Immediately after breakfast Miss Pinshon took possession of me.

The day was less weary than the day before, only I think because I was tired beyond impatience or nervous excitement. Not much was done; for though I was very willing I had very little power. But the multiplication table, Miss Pinshon said, was easy work; and at that and reading and writing, the morning crept away. My hand was trembling, my voice was faint, my memory grasped nothing so clearly as Margaret's tears that morning, and Preston's behaviour the preceding day. My cheeks were pale, of course. Miss Pinshon said we would begin to set that right with a walk after dinner.

The walk was had; but with my hand clasped in Miss Pinshon's I only wished myself at home all the way. At home again, after a while of lying down to rest, I was tried with a beginning of calisthenics. A trial it was to me. The exercises, directed and overseen by Miss Pinshon, seemed to me simply intolerable, a weariness beyond all other weariness. Even the multiplication table I liked better. Miss Pinshon was tired perhaps herself at last. She let me go.

It was towards the end of the day. With no life left in me for anything, I strolled out into the sunshine: aimlessly at first;

then led by a secret inclination I hardly knew or questioned, my steps slowly made their way round by the avenue to the stables. Darry was busy there as I had found him yesterday. He looked hard at me as I came up; and asked me earnestly how I felt that afternoon? I told him I was tired; and then I sat down on a huge log which lay there and watched him at his work. By turns I watched the sunlight streaming along the turf and lighting the foliage of the trees on the other side of the dell; looking in a kind of dream, as if I were not Daisy nor this Magnolia in any reality. I suddenly started and awoke to realities as Darry began to sing, —

"My Father's house is built on high,
Far, far above the starry sky;
And though like Lazarus sick and poor,
My heavenly mansion is secure.
I'm going home, —
I'm going home, —
I'm going home
To die no more!
To die no more —
To die no more —
I'm going home
To die no more!"

The word "home" at the end of each line was dwelt upon in a prolonged sonorous note. It filled my ear with its melodious, plaintive breath of repose; it rested and soothed me. I was

listening in a sort of trance, when another sound at my side both stopped the song and quite broke up the effect. It was Preston's voice. Now for it. He was all ready for a fight, and I felt miserably battered and shaken and unfit to fight anything.

"What are you doing here, Daisy?"

"I am doing nothing," I said.

"It is almost tea-time. Hadn't you better be walking home, before Medusa comes looking out for you?"

I rose up, and bade Uncle Darry good-night.

"Good-night, missis," he said heartily, "and de morning dat hab no night, for my dear little missis, by'm by."

I gave him my hand, and walked on.

"Stuff!" muttered Preston, by my side.

"You will not think it 'stuff' when the time comes," I said, no doubt very gravely. Then Preston burst out.

"I only wish Aunt Felicia was here! You will spoil these people, Daisy, that's one thing, or you would if you were older. As it is, you are spoiling yourself."

I made no answer. He went on with other angry and excited words, wishing to draw me out, perhaps; but I was in no mood to talk to Preston in any tone but one. I went steadily and slowly on, without even turning my head to look at him. I had hardly life enough to talk to him in *that* tone.

"Will you tell me what is the matter with you?" he said, at last, very impatiently.

"I am tired, I think."

"Think? Medusa is stiffening the life out of you. *Think* you are tired! You are tired to death; but that is not all. What ails you?"

"I do not think anything ails me."

"What ails *me*, then? What is the matter? What makes you act so? Speak, Daisy – you must speak!"

I turned about and faced him, and I know I did not speak then as a child, but with a gravity befitting fifty years.

"Preston, did you strike Uncle Darry yesterday?"

"Pooh!" said Preston. But I stood and waited for his answer.

"Nonsense, Daisy!" he said again.

"What is nonsense?"

"Why, *you*. What are you talking about?"

"I asked you a question."

"A ridiculous question. You are just absurd."

"Will you please to answer it?"

"I don't know whether I will. What have you to do with it?"

"In the first place, Preston, Darry is not your servant."

"Upon my word!" said Preston. "But yes, he is; for mamma is regent here now. He must do what I order him anyhow."

"And then, Preston, Darry is better than you, and will not defend himself; and somebody ought to defend him; and there is nobody but me."

"Defend himself!" echoed Preston.

"Yes. You insulted him yesterday."

"Insulted him!"

"You know you did. You know, Preston, some men would not

have borne it. If Darry had been like some men, he would have knocked you down."

"Knocked me down!" cried Preston. "The sneaking old scoundrel! He knows that I would shoot him if he did."

"I am speaking seriously, Preston. It is no use to talk that way."

"I am speaking very seriously," said my cousin. "I would shoot him, upon my honour."

"Shoot him!"

"Certainly."

"What right have you to shoot a man for doing no worse than you do? I would *rather* somebody would knock me down, than do what you did yesterday." And my heart swelled within me.

"Come, Daisy, be a little sensible!" said Preston, who was in a fume of impatience. "Do you think there is no difference between me and an old nigger?"

"A great deal of difference," I said. "He is old and good; and you are young, and I wish you were as good as Darry. And then he can't help himself without perhaps losing his place, no matter how you insult him. I think it is cowardly."

"Insult!" said Preston. "Lose his place! Heavens and earth, Daisy! are you such a simpleton?"

"You insulted him badly yesterday. I wondered how he bore it of you; only Darry is a Christian."

"A fiddlestick!" said Preston impatiently. "He knows he must bear whatever I choose to give him; and therein he is wiser than you are."

"Because he is a Christian," said I.

"I don't know whether he is a Christian or not; and it is nothing to the purpose. I don't care what he is."

"Oh, Preston! he is a good man – he is a servant of God; he will wear a crown of gold in heaven; and you have dared to touch him."

"Why, hoity, toity!" said Preston, "what concern of mine is all that! All I know is, that he did not do what I ordered him."

"What did you order him?"

"I ordered him not to show you the saddle I had got for you, till I was here. I was going to surprise you. I am provoked at him!"

"I am surprised," I said. But feeling how little I prevailed with Preston, and being weak in body as well as mind, I could not keep back the tears. I began to walk on again, though they blinded me.

"Daisy, don't be foolish. If Darry is to wear two crowns in the other world, he is a servant in this, all the same; and he must do his duty."

"I asked for the saddle," I said.

"Why, Daisy, Daisy!" Preston exclaimed, "don't be such a child. You know nothing about it. I didn't touch Darry to hurt him."

"It was a sort of hurt that if he had not been a Christian he would have made you sorry for."

"He knows I would shoot him if he did," said Preston coolly.

"Preston, don't speak so!" I pleaded.

"It is the simple truth. Why shouldn't I speak it?"

"You do not mean that you would do it?" I said, scarce opening my eyes to the reality of what he said.

"I give you my word, I do. If one of these black fellows laid a hand on me I would put a bullet through him, as quick as a partridge."

"But then you would be a murderer," said I. The ground seemed taken away from under my feet. We were standing still now, and facing each other.

"No, I shouldn't," said Preston. "The law takes better care of us than that."

"The law would hang you," said I.

"I tell you, Daisy, it is no such thing! Gentlemen have a right to defend themselves against the insolence of these black fellows."

"And have not the black fellows a right to defend themselves against the insolence of gentlemen?" said I.

"Daisy, you are talking the most unspeakable nonsense," said Preston, quite put beyond himself now. "*Don't* you know any better than that? These people are our servants – they are our property – we are to do what we like with them; and of course the law must see that we are protected, or the blacks and the whites could not live together."

"A man may be your servant, but he cannot be your property," I said.

"Yes he can! They are our property, just as much as the land is; our goods to do as we like with. Didn't you know that?"

"Property is something that you can buy and sell," I answered.

"And we sell the people, and buy them too, as fast as we like."

"*Sell* them!" I echoed, thinking of Darry.

"Certainly."

"And who would buy them?"

"Why all the world; everybody. There has been nobody sold off the Magnolia estate, I believe, in a long time; but no thing is more common, Daisy; everybody is doing it everywhere, when he has got too many servants, or when he has got too few."

"And do you mean," said I, "that Darry and Margaret and Theresa and all the rest here, have been *bought*?"

"No; almost all of them have been born on the place."

"Then it is not true of these," I said.

"Yes, it is; for their mothers and fathers were bought. It is the same thing."

"Who bought them?" I asked, hastily.

"Why our mothers, and grandfather and great-grandfather."

"*Bought* the fathers and mothers of all these hundreds of people?" said I, a slow horror creeping into my veins, that yet held childish blood, and but half comprehended.

"Certainly – ages ago," said Preston. "Why, Daisy, I thought you knew all about it."

"But who sold them first?" said I, my mind in its utter rejection of what was told to me, seeking every refuge from accepting it. "Who sold them first?"

"Who first? Oh, the people that brought them over from Africa, I suppose; or the people in their own country that sold

them to *them*."

"They had no right to sell them," I said.

"Can't tell about that," said Preston. "We bought them. I suppose we had a right to do that."

"But if the fathers and mothers were bought," I insisted, "that gave us no right to have their children."

"I would like you to ask Aunt Felicia or my Uncle Randolph such a question," said Preston. "Just see how they would like the idea of giving up all their property! Why, you would be as poor as Job, Daisy."

"That land would be here all the same."

"Much good the land would do you, without people to work it."

"But other people could be hired as well as these," I said, "if any of these wanted to go away."

"No, they couldn't. White people cannot bear the climate nor do the work. The crops cannot be raised without coloured labour."

"I do not understand," said I, feeling my child's head puzzled. "Maybe none of our people would like to go away?"

"I dare say they wouldn't," said Preston, carelessly. "They are better off here than on most plantations. Uncle Randolph never forbids his hands to have meat; and some planters do."

"Forbid them to have meat!" I said, in utter bewilderment.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"They think it makes them fractious, and not so easy to manage. Don't you know, it makes a dog savage to feed him on raw meat! I suppose cooked meat has the same effect on men."

"But don't they get what they choose to eat?"

"Well, I should think not!" said Preston. "Fancy their asking to be fed on chickens and pound cake. That is what they would like."

"But cannot they spend their wages for what they like?"

"Wages!" said Preston.

"Yes," said I.

"My dear Daisy," said Preston, "you are talking of what you just utterly don't understand; and I am a fool for bothering you with it. Come! let us make it up and be friends."

He stooped to kiss me, but I stepped back.

"Stop," I said. "Tell me – can't they do what they like with their wages?"

"I don't think they have wages enough to 'do what they like' exactly," said Preston. "Why, they would 'like' to do nothing. These black fellows are the laziest things living. They would 'like' to lie in the sun all day long."

"What wages does Darry have?" I asked.

"Now, Daisy, this is none of your business. Come, let us go into the house and let it alone."

"I want to know, first," said I.

"Daisy, I never asked. What have I to do with Darry's wages?"

"I will ask himself," I said; and I turned about to go to the

stables.

"Stop, Daisy," cried Preston. "Daisy, Daisy! you are the most obstinate Daisy that ever was, when once you have taken a thing in your head. Daisy, what have you to do with all this? Look here – these people don't want wages."

"Don't want wages?" I repeated.

"No; they don't want them. What would they do with wages? they have everything they need given them already; their food and their clothing and their houses. They do not want anything more."

"You said they did not have the food they liked," I objected.

"Who does?" said Preston. "I am sure *I* don't – not more than one day in seven, on an average."

"But don't they have any wages at all?" I persisted. "Our coachman at Melbourne had thirty dollars a month; and Logan had forty dollars and his house and garden. Why shouldn't Darry have wages, too? Don't they have any wages at all, Preston?"

"Why, yes! they have plenty of corn, bread, and bacon, I tell you; and their clothes. Daisy, they *belong* to you, these people do."

Corn, bread, and bacon was not much like chickens and pound cake, I thought; and I remembered our servants at Melbourne were very, very differently dressed from the women I saw about me here, even in the house. I stood bewildered and pondering. Preston tried to get me to go on.

"Why shouldn't they have wages?" I asked at length, with lips

which I believe were growing old with my thoughts.

"Daisy, they are your servants; they *belong* to you. They have no right to wages. Suppose you had to pay all these creatures – seven hundred of them – as you pay people at Melbourne: how much do you suppose you would have left to live upon yourselves? What nonsense it is to talk!"

"But they work for us," I said.

"Certainly. There would not be anything for any of us if they didn't. Here, at Magnolia, they raise rice crops and corn, as well as cotton; at our place we grow nothing but cotton and corn."

"Well, what pays them for working?"

"I told you! they have their living and clothing and no care; and they are the happiest creatures the sun shines on."

"Are they willing to work for only that!" I asked.

"Willing!" said Preston.

"Yes," said I, feeling myself grow sick at heart.

"I fancy nobody asks them that question. They have to work, I reckon, whether they like it or no."

"You said they *like* to lie in the sun. What makes them work?"

"Makes them!" said Preston, who was getting irritated as well as impatient. "They get a good flogging if they do not work – that is all. They know, if they don't do their part, the lash will come down: and it don't come down easy."

I suppose I must have looked as if it had come down on me. Preston stopped talking and began to take care of me, putting his arm round me to support my steps homeward. In the verandah

my aunt met us. She immediately decided that I was ill, and ordered me to go to bed at once. It was the thing of all others I would have wished to do. It saved me from the exertion of trying to hold myself up and of speaking and moving and answering questions. I went to bed in dull misery, longing to go to sleep and forget all my troubles of mind and body together; but while the body rested, the mind would not. That kept the consciousness of its burden; and it was that, more than any physical ail, which took away my power of eating, and created instead a wretched sort of half nausea, which made even rest unrefreshing. As for rest in my mind and heart, it seemed at that time as if I should never know it again. Never again! I was a child – I had but vague ideas respecting even what troubled me; nevertheless I had been struck, where may few children be struck! in the very core and quick of my heart's reverence and affection. It had come home to me that papa was somehow doing wrong. My father was in my childish thought and belief, the ideal of chivalrous and high-bred excellence; – and *papa* was doing wrong. I could not turn my eyes from the truth; it was before me in too visible a form. It did not arrange itself in words, either; not at first; it only pressed upon my heart and brain that seven hundred people on my father's property were injured, and by his will, and for his interests. Dimly the consciousness came to me; slowly it found its way and spread out its details before me; bit by bit one point after another came into my mind to make the whole good; bit by bit one item after another came in to explain and be explained and

to add its quota of testimony; all making clear and distinct and dazzling before me the truth which at first it was so hard to grasp. And this is not the less true because my childish thought at first took everything vaguely and received it slowly. I was a child and a simple child; but once getting hold of a clue of truth, my mind never let it go. Step by step, as a child could, I followed it out. And the balance of the golden rule, to which I was accustomed, is an easy one to weigh things in; and even little hands can manage it.

For an hour after they put me to bed my heart seemed to grow chill from minute to minute; and my body, in curious sympathy, shook as if I had an ague. My aunt and Miss Pinshon came and went and were busy about me; making me drink negus and putting hot bricks to my feet. Preston stole in to look at me; but I gathered that neither then nor afterwards did he reveal to any one the matter of our conversation the hour before. "Wearied" – "homesick" – "feeble" – "with no sort of strength to bear anything" – they said I was. All true, no doubt; and yet I was not without powers of endurance, even bodily, if my mind gave a little help. Now the trouble was, that all such help was wanting. The dark figures of the servants came and went too, with the others; came and stayed; Margaret and Mammy Theresa took post in my room, and when they could do nothing for me, crouched by the fire and spent their cares and energies in keeping that in full blast. I could hardly bear to see them; but I had no heart to speak even to ask that they might be sent away, or for anything else; and I had a sense besides that it was a gratification

to them to be near me; and to gratify any one of the race I could have borne a good deal of pain.

It smites my heart now, to think of those hours. The image of them is sharp and fresh as if the time were but last night. I lay with shut eyes, taking in as it seemed to be, additional loads of trouble with each quarter of an hour; as I thought and thought, and put one and another thing together, of things past and present, to help my understanding. A child will carry on that process fast and to far-off results; give her but the key and set her off on the track of truth with a sufficient impetus. My happy childlike ignorance and childlike life was in a measure gone; I had come into the world of vexed questions, of the oppressor and the oppressed, the full and the empty, the rich and the poor. I could make nothing at all of Preston's arguments and reasonings. The logic of expediency and of consequences carried no weight with me, and as little the logic of self-interest. I sometimes think a child's vision is clearer, even in worldly matters, than the eyes of those can be who have lived among the fumes and vapours that rise in these low grounds, unless the eyes be washed day by day in the spring of truth, and anointed with unearthly ointment. The right and the wrong were the two things that presented themselves to my view; and oh, my sorrow and heartbreak was, that papa was in the wrong. I could not believe it, and yet I could not get rid of it. There were oppressors and oppressed in the world; and *he* was one of the oppressors. There is no sorrow that a child can bear, keener and more gnawingly bitter than this. It has a sting

of its own, for which there is neither salve nor remedy; and it had the aggravation, in my case, of the sense of personal dishonour. The wrong done and the oppression inflicted were not the whole; there was besides the intolerable sense of living upon other's gains. It was more than my heart could bear.

I could not write as I do – I could not recall these thoughts and that time – if I had not another thought to bring to bear upon them; a thought which at that time I was not able to comprehend. It came to me later with its healing, and I have seen and felt it more clearly as I grew older. I see it very clearly now. I had not been mistaken in my childish notions of the loftiness and generosity of my father's character. He was what I had thought him. Neither was I a whit wrong in my judgment of the things which it grieved me that he did and allowed. But I saw afterwards how he, and others, had grown up and been educated in a system and atmosphere of falsehood, till he failed to perceive that it was false. His eyes had lived in the darkness till it seemed quite comfortably light to him; while to a fresh vision, accustomed to the sun, it was pure and blank darkness, as thick as night. He followed what others did and his father had done before him, without any suspicion that it was an abnormal and morbid condition of things they were all living in; more especially without a tinge of misgiving that it might not be a noble, upright, dignified way of life. But I, his little unreasoning child, bringing the golden rule of the gospel only to judge of the doings of hell, shrank back and fell to the ground, in my heart, to find the one

I loved best in the world concerned in them.

So when I opened my eyes that night, and looked into the blaze of the firelight, the dark figures that were there before it stung me with pain every time; and every soft word and tender look on their faces – and I had many a one, both words and looks – racked my heart in a way that was strange for a child. The negus put me to sleep at last, or exhaustion did; I think the latter, for it was very late; and the rest of that night wore away.

When I awoke, the two women were there still, just as I had left them when I went to sleep. I do not know if they sat there all night, or if they had slept on the floor by my side; but there they were, and talking softly to one another about something that caught my attention. I bounced out of bed – though I was so weak, I remember I reeled as I went from my bed to the fire, and steadied myself by laying my hand on Mammy Theresa's shoulder. I demanded of Margaret *what* she had been saying. The women both started, with expressions of surprise, alarm, and tender affection, raised by my ghostly looks, and begged me to get back into bed again. I stood fast, bearing on Theresa's shoulder.

"What was it?" I asked.

"'Twarn't nothin', Miss Daisy, dear!" said the girl.

"Hush! don't tell me that," I said. "Tell me what it was – tell me what it was. Nobody shall know; you need not be afraid; nobody shall know." For I saw a cloud of hesitation in Margaret's face.

"'Twarn't nothin', Miss Daisy – only about Darry."

"What about Darry?" I said, trembling.

"He done went and had a praise-meetin'," said Theresa; "and he knowed it war agin the rules; he knowed that. 'Course he did. Rules mus' be kep'."

"Whose rules?" I asked.

"Laws, honey, 'taint 'cording to rules for we coloured folks to hold meetin's no how. 'Course, we's ought to 'bey de rules; dat's clar."

"Who made the rules?"

"Who make 'em? Mass' Ed'ards – he made de rules on dis plantation. Reckon Mass' Randolph, he make 'em a heap different."

"Does Mr. Edwards make it a rule that you are not to hold prayer-meetings?"

"Can't spec' for to have everyt'ing jus like de white folks," said the old woman. "We's no right to spect it. But Uncle Darry, he sot a sight by his praise-meetin'. He's cur'ous, he is. S'pose Darry's cur'ous."

"And does anybody say that you shall not have prayer-meetings?"

"Laws, honey! what's we got to do wid praise-meetin's or any sort of meetin's? We'se got to work. Mass' Ed'ards, he say dat de meetin's dey makes coloured folks onsettled; and dey don't hoe de corn good if dey has too much prayin' to do."

"And does he forbid them then? doesn't he let you have prayer-meetings?"

"'Tain't Mr. Edwards alone, Miss Daisy," said Margaret, speaking low. "It's agin the law for us to have meetin's anyhow, 'cept we get leave, and say what house it shall be, and who's a comin', and what we'se comin' for. And it's no use asking Mr. Edwards, 'cause he don't see no reason why black folks should have meetin's."

"Did Darry have a prayer-meeting without leave?" I asked.

"'Twarn't no count of a meetin'!" said Theresa, a little touch of scorn, or indignation, coming into her voice; "and Darry, he war in his own house prayin'. Dere warn't nobody dere, but Pete and ole 'Liza, and Maria, cook, and dem two Johns dat come from de lower plantation. Dey couldn't get a strong meetin' into Uncle Darry's house; 'tain't big enough to hold 'em."

"And what did the overseer do to Darry?" I asked.

"Laws, Miss Daisy," said Margaret, with a quick look at the other woman; "he didn't do nothing to hurt Darry; he only want to scare de folks."

"Dey's done scared," said Theresa, under her breath.

"What is it?" I said, steadying myself by my hold on Theresa's shoulder, and feeling that I must stand till I had finished my inquiry: "how did he know about the meeting? and what did he do to Darry? Tell me! I must know. I must know, Margaret."

"Spect he was goin' through the quarters, and he heard Darry at his prayin'," said Margaret. "Darry he don't mind to keep his prayers secret, he don't," she added, with a half laugh. "Spect nothin' but they'll bust the walls o' that little house some day."

"Dey's powerful!" added Theresa. "But he warn't prayin' no harm; he was just prayin', 'Dy will be done on de eart' as it be in de heaven' – Pete, he tell me. Darry warn't saying not'ing – he just pray 'Dy will be done.'"

"Well?" I said, for Margaret kept silent.

"And de oberseer, he say – leastways he swore, he did – dat *his* will should be done on dis plantation, and he wouldn't have no such work. He say, der's nobody to come togedder after it be dark, if it's two or t'ree, 'cept dey gets his leave, Mass' Ed'ards, he say; and dey won't get it."

"But what did he do to Darry?" I could scarcely hold myself on my feet by this time.

"He whipped him, I reckon," said Margaret, in a low tone, and with a dark shadow crossing her face, very different from its own brown duskiness.

"He don't have a light hand, Mass' Ed'ards," went on Theresa, "and he got a sharp, new whip. De second stripe – Pete, he tell me this evenin' – and it war wet; and it war wet enough before he got through. He war mad, I reckon; certain, Mass' Ed'ards, he war mad."

"*Wet?*" said I.

"Laws, Miss Daisy," said Margaret, "'tain't nothin'. Them whips, they draws the blood easy. Darry, he don't mind."

I have a recollection of the girl's terrified face, but I heard nothing more. Such a deadly sickness came over me that for a minute I must have been near fainting; happily it took another

turn amid the various confused feelings which oppressed me, and I burst into tears. My eyes had not been wet through all the hours of the evening and night; my heartache had been dry. I think I was never very easy to move to tears, even as a child. But now, well for me, perhaps, some element of the pain I was suffering found the unguarded point – or broke up the guard. I wept as I have done very few times in my life. I had thrown myself into Mammy Theresa's lap, in the weakness which could not support itself, and in an abandonment of grief which was careless of all the outside world; and there I lay, clasped in her arms and sobbing. Grief, horror, tender sympathy, and utter helplessness, striving together; there was nothing for me at that moment but the woman's refuge and the child's remedy of weeping. But the weeping was so bitter, so violent, and so uncontrollable, that the women were frightened. I believe they shut the doors, to keep the sound of my sobs from reaching other ears; for when I recovered the use of my senses I saw that they were closed.

The certain strange relief which tears do bring, they gave to me. I cannot tell why. My pain was not changed, my helplessness was not done away; yet at least I had washed my causes of sorrow in a flood of heart drops, and cleansed them so somehow from any personal stain. Rather I was perfectly exhausted. The women put me to bed, as soon as I would let them; and Margaret whispered an earnest "Do, don't, Miss Daisy, don't say nothin' about the prayer meetin'!" I shook my head; I knew better than to say anything about it.

All the better not to betray them, and myself, I shut my eyes, and tried to let my face grow quiet. I had succeeded, I believe, before my Aunt Gary and Miss Pinshon came in. The two stood looking at me; my aunt in some consternation, my governess reserving any expression of what she thought. I fancied she did not trust my honesty. Another time I might have made an effort to right myself in her opinion; but I was past that and everything now. It was decided by my aunt that I had better keep my bed as long as I felt like doing so.

So I lay there during the long hours of that day. I was glad to be still, to keep out of the way in a corner, to hear little and see nothing of what was going on; my own small world of thoughts was enough to keep me busy. I grew utterly weary at last of thinking, and gave it up, so far as I could; submitting passively, in a state of pain, sometimes dull and sometimes acute, to what I had no power to change or remedy. But my father *had*, I thought; and at those times my longing was unspeakable to see him. I was very quiet all that day, I believe, in spite of the rage of wishes and sorrows within me; but it was not to be expected I should gain strength. On the contrary, I think I grew feverish. If I could have laid down my troubles in prayer! but at first, these troubles, I could not. The core and root of them being my father's share in the rest. And I was not alone; and I had a certain consciousness that if I allowed myself to go to my little Bible for help, it would unbar my self-restraint, with its sweet and keen words, and I should give way again before Margaret and Theresa: and I did

not wish that.

"What shall we do with her?" said my Aunt Gary when she came to me towards the evening. "She looks like a mere shadow. I never saw such a change in a child in four weeks – never!"

"Try a different regimen to-morrow, I think," said my governess, whose lustrous black eyes looked at me sick, exactly as they looked at me well.

"I shall send for the doctor, if she isn't better," said my aunt. "She's feverish now."

"Keeping her bed all day," said Miss Pinshon.

"Do you think so?" said my aunt.

"I have no doubt of it. It is very weakening."

"Then we will let her get up to-morrow, and see how that will do."

They had been gone half an hour, when Preston stole in and came to the side of my bed, between me and the firelight.

"Come, Daisy, let us be friends!" he said. And he was stooping to kiss me; but I put out my hand to keep him back.

"Not till you have told Darry you are sorry," I said.

Preston was angry instantly, and stood upright.

"Ask pardon of a servant!" he said. "You would have the world upside down directly."

I thought it was upside down already; but I was too weak and downhearted to say so.

"Daisy, Daisy!" said Preston – "And there you lie, looking like a poor little wood flower that has hardly strength to hold up

its head; and with about as much colour in your cheeks. Come, Daisy, kiss me, and let us be friends."

"If you will do what is right," I said.

"I will – always," said Preston; "but this would be wrong, you know." And he stooped again to kiss me. And again I would not suffer him.

"Daisy, you are absurd," said Preston, vibrating between pity and anger, I think, as he looked at me. "Darry is a servant, and accustomed to a servant's place. What hurt you so much did not hurt him a bit. He knows where he belongs."

"You don't," said I.

"What?"

"Know anything about it." I remember I spoke very feebly. I had hardly energy left to speak at all. My words must have come with a curious contrast between the meaning and the manner.

"Know anything about what, Daisy? You are as oracular and as immovable as one of Egypt's monuments; only they are very hard, and you are very soft, my dear little Daisy! – and they are very brown, according to all I have heard, and you are as white as a wind-flower. One can almost see through you. What is it I don't know anything about?"

"I am so tired, Preston!"

"Yes; but what is it I don't know anything about?"

"Darry's place – and yours," I said.

"His place and mine! His place is a servant's, I take it, belonging to Rudolf Randolph, of Magnolia. I am the unworthy

representative of an old Southern family, and a gentleman. What have you to say about that?"

"He is a servant of the Lord of lords," I said; "and his Master loves him. And He has a house of glory preparing for him, and a crown of gold, and a white robe, such as the King's children wear. And he will sit on a throne himself by and by. Preston, where will *you* be?"

These words were said without the least heat of manner – almost languidly; but they put Preston in a fume. I could not catch his excitement in the least; but I saw it. He stood up again, hesitated, opened his mouth to speak and shut it without speaking, turned and walked away and came back to me. I did not wait for him then.

"You have offended one of the King's children," I said; "and the King is offended."

"Daisy," said Preston, in a sort of suppressed fury, "one would think you had turned Abolitionist; only you never heard of such a thing."

"What is it?" said I, shutting my eyes.

"It is just the meanest and most impudent shape a Northerner can take; it is the lowest end of creation, an Abolitionist is; and a Yankee is pretty much the same thing!"

"Dr. Sandford is a Yankee," I remarked.

"Did you get it from *him*?" Preston asked, fiercely.

"What?" said I, opening my eyes.

"Your nonsense. Has he taught you to turn Abolitionist?"

"I have not *turned* at all," I said. "I wish you would. It is only the people who are in the wrong that ought to turn."

"Daisy," said Preston, "you ought never to be away from Aunt Felicia and my uncle. Nobody else can manage you. I don't know what you will become or what you will do, before they get back."

I was silent; and Preston, I suppose, cooled down. He waited awhile, and then again begged that I would kiss and be friends. "You see, I am going away to-morrow morning, little Daisy."

"I wish you had gone two days ago," I said.

And my mind did not change, even when the morning came.

CHAPTER V.
IN THE KITCHEN

I WAS ill for days. It was not due to one thing, doubtless, nor one sorrow, but the whole together. My aunt sent to Baytown for the old family physician. He came up and looked at me, and decided that I ought to "play" as much as possible!

"She isn't a child that likes play," said my aunt.

"Find some play that she does like, then. Where are her father and mother?"

"Just sailed for Europe, a few weeks ago."

"The best thing would be for her to sail after them," said the old doctor. And he went.

"We shall have to let her do just as they did at Melbourne," said my aunt.

"How was that?" said Miss Pinshon.

"Let her have just her own way."

"And what was that?"

"Oh, queer," said my aunt. "She is not like other children. But anything is better than to have her mope to death."

"I shall try and not have her mope," said Miss Pinshon.

But she had little chance to adopt her reforming regimen for some time. It was plain I was not fit for anything but to be let alone, like a weak plant struggling for its existence. All you can

do with it is to put it in the sun; and my aunt and governess tacitly agreed upon the same plan of treatment for me. Now, the only thing wanting was sunshine; and it was long before that could be had. After a day or two I left my bed, and crept about the house, and out of the house under the great oaks, where the material sunshine was warm and bright enough, and caught itself in the grey wreaths of moss that waved over my head, and seemed to come bodily to woo me to life and cheer. It lay in the carpet under my feet, it lingered in the leaves of the thick oaks, it wantoned in the wind, as the long draperies of moss swung and moved gently to and fro; but the very sunshine is cold where the ice meets it; I could get no comfort. The thoughts that had so troubled me the evening after my long talk with Preston were always present with me; they went out and came in with me; I slept with them, and they met me when I woke. The sight of the servants was wearying. I shunned Darry and the stables. I had no heart for my pony. I would have liked to get away from Magnolia. Yet, be I where I might, it would not alter my father's position towards these seven hundred people. And towards how many more? There were his estates in Virginia.

One of the first things I did, as soon as I could command my fingers to do it, was to write to him. Not a remonstrance. I knew better than to touch that. All I ventured, was to implore that the people who desired it might be allowed to hold prayer-meetings whenever they liked, and Mr. Edwards be forbidden to interfere. Also I complained that the inside of the cabins were not

comfortable; that they were bare and empty. I pleaded for a little bettering of them. It was not a long letter that I wrote. My sorrow I could not tell, and my love and my longing were equally beyond the region of words. I fancy it would have been thought by Miss Pinshon a very cold little epistle, but Miss Pinshon did not see it. I wrote it with weak trembling fingers, and closed it and sealed it and sent it myself. Then I sank into a helpless, careless, listless state of body and mind, which was very bad for me; and there was no physician who could minister to me. I went wandering about, mostly out of doors, alone with myself and my sorrow. When I seemed a little stronger than usual, Miss Pinshon tried the multiplication table; and I tried, but the spring of my mind was for the time broken. All such trials came to an end in such weakness and weariness, that my governess herself was fain to take the book from my hands and send me out into the sunshine again.

It was Darry at last who found me one day, and, distressed at my looks, begged that I would let him bring up my pony. He was so earnest that I yielded. I got leave, and went to ride. Darry saddled another horse for himself and went with me. That first ride did not help me much; but the second time a little tide of life began to steal into my veins. Darry encouraged and instructed me; and when we came cantering up to the door of the house, my aunt, who was watching there, cried out that I had a bit of a tinge in my cheeks, and charged Darry to bring the horses up every day.

With a little bodily vigour a little strength of mind seemed to come; a little more power of bearing up against evils, or of quietly standing under them. After the third time I went to ride, having come home refreshed, I took my Bible and sat down on the rug before the fire in my room to read. I had not been able to get comfort in my Bible all those days; often I had not liked to try. Right and wrong never met me in more brilliant colours or startling shadows than within the covers of that book. But to-day, soothed somehow, I went along with the familiar words as one listens to old music, with the soothing process going on all along. Right *was* right, and glorious, and would prevail some time; and nothing could hinder it. And then I came to words which I knew, yet which had never taken such hold of me before.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"*That* is what I have to do!" I thought immediately. "That is my part. That is clear. What *I* have to do, is to let my light shine. And if the light shines, perhaps it will fall on something. But what *I* have to do, is to shine. God has given me nothing else."

It was a very simple child's thought; but it brought wonderful comfort with it. Doubtless, I would have liked another part to play. I would have liked – if I could – to have righted all the wrong in the world; to have broken every yoke; to have filled every empty house, and built up a fire on every cold hearth: but that was not what God had given me. All He had given me, that I could see at the minute, was to shine. What a little morsel of

a light mine was, to be sure!

It was a good deal of a puzzle to me for days after that, *how* I was to shine. What could I do? I was a little child: my only duties some lessons to learn: not much of that, seeing I had not strength for it. Certainly, I had sorrows to bear; but bearing them well did not seem to me to come within the sphere of *shining*. Who would know that I bore them well? And shining is meant to be seen. I pondered the matter.

"When's Christmas, Miss Daisy?"

Margaret asked this question one morning as she was on her knees making my fire. Christmas had been so shadowed a point to me in the distance, I had not looked at it. I stopped to calculate the days.

"It will be two weeks from Friday, Margaret."

"And Friday's to-morrow?" she asked.

"The day after to-morrow. What do you do at Christmas, Margaret? all the people?"

"There ain't no great doings, Miss Daisy. The people gets four days, most of 'em."

"Four days – for what?"

"For what they like; they don't do no work, those days."

"And is that all?"

"No, Miss Daisy, 'tain't just all; the women comes up to the house – it's to the overseer's house now – and every one gets a bowl o' flour, more or less, 'cordin' to size of family – and a quart of molasses, and a piece o' pork."

"And what do they do to make the time pleasant?" I asked.

"Some on 'em's raised eggs and chickens; and they brings 'em to the house and sells 'em; and they has the best dinner. Most times they gets leave to have a meetin'."

"A prayer-meeting?" I said.

"Laws, no, Miss Daisy! not 'cept it were Uncle Darry and *his* set. The others don't make no count of a prayer-meetin'. They likes to have a white-folks' meetin' and 'joy theirselves."

I thought very much over these statements; and for the next two weeks bowls of flour and quarts of molasses, as Christmas doings, were mixed up in my mind with the question, how I was to shine? or rather, alternated with it; and plans began to turn themselves over and take shape in my thoughts.

"Margaret," said I, a day or two before Christmas, "can't the people have those meetings you spoke of without getting leave of Mr. Edwards?"

"Can't have meetin's, no how!" Margaret replied decidedly.

"But if *I* wanted to see them, couldn't they, some of them, come together to see me?"

"To see Miss Daisy! Reckon Miss Daisy do what she like. 'Spect Mass' Ed'ards let Miss Daisy 'lone!"

I was silent, pondering.

"Maria cook wants to see Miss Daisy bad. She bid me tell Miss Daisy won't she come down in de kitchen, and see all the works she's a-doin' for Christmas, and de glorifications?"

"I? I'll come if I can," I answered.

I asked my aunt and got easy leave; and on Christmas eve I went down to the kitchen. That was the chosen time when Maria wished to see me. There was an assembly of servants gathered in the room, some from out of the house. Darry was there; and one or two other fine-looking men who were his prayer-meeting friends. I supposed they were gathered to make merry for Christmas eve; but, at any rate, they were all eager to see me, and looked at me with smiles as gentle as have ever fallen to my share. I felt it and enjoyed it. The effect was of entering a warm, genial atmosphere, where grace and good-will were on every side; a change very noticeable from the cold and careless habit of things upstairs. And *grace* is not a misapplied epithet; for these children of a luxurious and beauty-loving race, even in their bondage, had not forgotten all traces of their origin. As I went in, I could not help giving my hand to Darry; and then, in my childish feeling towards them, and in the tenderness of the Christmas-tide, I could not help doing the same by all the others who were present. And I remember now the dignity of mien in some, the frank ease in others, both graceful and gracious, with which my civility was met. If a few were a little shy, the rest more than made it up by their welcome of me, and a sort of politeness which had almost something courtly in it. Darry and Maria together gave me a seat, in the very centre and glow of the kitchen light and warmth; and the rest made a half circle around, leaving Maria's end of the room free for her operations.

The kitchen was all aglow with the most splendid fire of pine

knots it was ever my lot to see. The illumination was such as threw all gaslights into shade. We were in a great stone-flagged room, low-roofed, with dark cupboard door; not cheerful, I fancy, in the mere light of day: but nothing could resist the influence of those pine-knot flames. Maria herself was a portly fat woman, as far as possible from handsome; but she looked at me with a whole world of kindness in her dark face. Indeed, I saw the same kindness more or less shining out upon me in all the faces there. I cannot tell the mixed joy and pain that it, and they, gave me. I suppose I showed little of either, or of anything.

Maria entertained me with all she had. She brought out for my view her various rich and immense stores of cakes and pies and delicacies for the coming festival; told me what was good and what I must be sure and eat; and what would be good for me. And then, when that display was over, she began to be very busy with beating of eggs in a huge wooden bowl; and bade Darry see to the boiling of the kettle at the fire; and sent Jem, the waiter, for things he was to get upstairs; and all the while talked to me. She and Darry and one or two more talked, but especially she and Theresa and Jem; while all the rest listened and laughed and exclaimed, and seemed to find me as entertaining as a play. Maria was asking me about my own little life and experiences before I came to Magnolia; what sort of a place Melbourne was, and how things there differed from the things she and the rest knew and were accustomed to at the South; and about my old June, who had once been an acquaintance of hers. Smiling at

me the while, between the thrusts of her curiosity, and over my answers, as if for sheer pleasure she could not keep grave. The other faces were as interested and as gracious. There was Pete, tall and very black, and very grave, as Darry was also. There was Jem, full of life and waggishness, and bright for any exercise of his wits; and grave shadows used to come over his changeable face often enough too. There was Margaret, with her sombre beauty; and old Theresa with her worn old face. I think there was a certain indescribable reserve of gravity upon them all, but there was not one whose lips did not part in a white line when looking at me, nor whose eyes and ears did not watch me with an interest as benign as it was intent. I had been little while seated before the kitchen fire of pine knots before I felt that I was in the midst of a circle of personal friends; and I feel it now, as I look back and remember them. They would have done much for me, every one.

Meanwhile Maria beat and mixed and stirred the things in her wooden bowl; and by and by ladled out a glassful of rich-looking, yellow, creamy froth – I did not know what it was, only it looked beautiful – and presented it to me.

"Miss Daisy mus' tell Mis' Felissy Maria hain't forgot how to make it – 'spect she hain't, anyhow. Dat's for Miss Daisy's Christmas."

"It's very nice!" I said.

"Reckon it is," was the capable answer.

"Won't you give everybody some, Maria?" For Jem had gone upstairs with a tray and glasses, and Maria seemed to be resting

upon her labours.

"Dere'll come down orders for mo', chile; and 'spose I gives it to de company, what'll Mis' Lisa do wid Maria? I have de 'sponsibility of Christmas."

"But you can make some more," I said, holding my glass in waiting. "Do, Maria."

"'Spose hain't got de 'terials, hey?"

"What do you want? Aunt Gary will give it to you." And I begged Jem to go up again and prefer my request to her for the new filling of Maria's bowl. Jem shrugged his shoulders, but he went; and I suppose he made a good story of it; for he came down with whatever was wanted – my Aunt Gary was in a mood to refuse me nothing then – and Maria went anew about the business of beating and mixing and compounding.

There was great enjoyment in the kitchen. It was a time of high festival, what with me and the egg supper. Merriment and jocularity, a little tide-wave of social excitement, swelled and broke on all sides of me; making a soft ripply play of fun and repartee, difficult to describe, and which touched me as much as it amused. It was very unlike the enjoyment of a set of white people holding the same social and intellectual grade. It was the manifestation of another race, less coarse and animal in their original nature, more sensitive and more demonstrative, with a strange touch of the luxurious and refined for a people whose life has had nothing to do with luxury, and whom refinement leaves on one side as quite beyond its sphere. But blood is

a strange thing; and Ham's children will show luxurious and æsthetic tastes, take them where you will.

"Chillen, I hope you's enjoyed your supper," Maria said, when the last lingering drops had been secured, and mugs and glasses were coming back to the kitchen table.

Words and smiles answered her. "We's had a splendid time, Aunt Maria," said one young man as he set down his glass. He was a worker in the garden.

"Den I hope's we's all willin' to gib de Lord t'anks for His goodness. Dere ain't a night in de year when it's so proper to gib de Lord t'anks, as it be dis precious night."

"It's to-morrow night, Aunt Maria," said Pete. "To-morrow's Christmas night."

"I don't care! One night's jus' as good as another, you Pete. And now we's all together, you see, and comfortable together; and I feel like giving t'anks, I do, to de Lord, for all His mercies."

"What's Christmas, anyhow?" asked another.

"It's jus' de crown o' all the nights in de year. You Solomon, it's a night dat dey keeps up in heaven. You know nothin' about it, you poor critter. I done believe you never hearn no one tell about it. Maybe Miss Daisy wouldn't read us de story, and de angels, and de shepherds, and dat great light what come down, and make us feel good for Christmas; and Uncle Darry, he'll t'ank de Lord."

The last words were put in a half-questioning form to me, rather taking for granted that I would readily do what was requested. And hardly anything in the world, I suppose, could

have given me such deep gratification at the moment. Margaret was sent upstairs to fetch my Bible; the circle closed in around the fire and me; a circle of listening, waiting, eager, interested faces, some few of them shone with pleasure, or grew grave with reverent love, while I read slowly the chapters that tell of the first Christmas night. I read them from all the gospels, picking the story out first in one, then in another; answered sometimes by low words of praise that echoed but did not interrupt me – words that were but some dropped notes of the song that began that night in heaven, and has been running along the ages since, and is swelling and will swell into a great chorus of earth and heaven by and by. And how glad I was in the words of the story myself, as I went along. How heart-glad that here, in this region of riches and hopes not earthly, those around me had as good welcome, and as open entrance, and as free right as I. "There is neither bond nor free." "And base things of this world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

I finished my reading at last, amid the hush of my listening audience. Then Maria called upon Darry to pray, and we all kneeled down.

It comes back to me now as I write – the hush and the breathing of the fire, and Darry's low voice and imperfect English. Yes, and the incoming tide of rest and peace and gladness which began to fill the dry places in my heart, and rose and swelled till my heart was full. I lost my troubles and forgot

my difficulties. I forgot that my father and mother were away, for the sense of loneliness was gone. I forgot that those around me were in bonds, for I felt them free as I, and inheritors of the same kingdom. I have not often in my life listened to such a prayer, unless from the same lips. He was one of those that make you feel that the door is open to their knocking, and that they always find it so. His words were seconded – not interrupted, even to my feelings – by low-breathed echoes of praise and petition, too soft and deep to leave any doubt of the movement that called them forth.

There was a quiet gravity upon all when we rose to our feet again. I knew I must go; but the kitchen had been the pleasantest place to me in all Magnolia. I bade them good-night, answered with bows and curtseys and hearty wishes; and as I passed out of the circle, tall black Pete, looking down upon me with just a glimmer of white between his lips, added, "Hope you'll come again."

A thought darted into my head which brought sunshine with it. I seemed to see my way begin to open.

The hope was warm in my heart as soon as I was awake the next morning. With more comfort than for many days I had known, I lay and watched Margaret making my fire. Then suddenly I remembered it was Christmas, and what thanksgivings had been in heaven about it, and what should be on earth; and a lingering of the notes of praise I had heard last night made a sort of still music in the air. But I did not expect at all that any of the

ordinary Christmas festivities would come home to me, seeing that my father and mother were away. Where should Christmas festivities come from? So, when Margaret rose up and showed all her teeth at me, I only thought last night had given her pleasure, and I suspected nothing, even when she stepped into the next room and brought in a little table covered with a shawl, and set it close to my bedside. "Am I to have breakfast in bed?" I asked. "What is this for?"

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.