

# **Crisis, the — Volume 01 eBook**

## **Crisis, the — Volume 01 by Winston Churchill**

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## THE CRISIS

### BOOK I

#### CHAPTER I

##### WHICH DEALS WITH ORIGINS

Faithfully to relate how Eliphalet Hopper came try St. Louis is to betray no secret. Mr. Hopper is wont to tell the story now, when his daughter-in-law is not by; and sometimes he tells it in her presence, for he is a shameless and determined old party who denies the divine right of Boston, and has taken again to chewing tobacco.

When Eliphalet came to town, his son's wife, Mrs: Samuel D. (or S. Dwyer as she is beginning to call herself), was not born. Gentlemen of Cavalier and Puritan descent had not yet begun to arrive at the Planters' House, to buy hunting shirts and broad rims, belts and bowies, and depart quietly for Kansas, there to indulge in that; most pleasurable of Anglo-Saxon pastimes, a free fight. Mr. Douglas had not thrown his bone of Local Sovereignty to the sleeping dogs of war.

To return to Eliphalet's arrival,—a picture which has much that is interesting in it. Behold the friendless boy he stands in the prow of the great steamboat 'Louisiana' of a scorching summer morning, and looks with something of a nameless disquiet on the chocolate waters of the Mississippi. There have been other sights, since passing Louisville, which might have disgusted a Massachusetts lad more.

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A certain deck on the 'Paducah', which took him as far as Cairo, was devoted to cattle—black cattle. Eliphalet possessed a fortunate temperament. The deck was dark, and the smell of the wretches confined there was worse than it should have been. And the incessant weeping of some of the women was annoying, inasmuch as it drowned many of the profane communications of the overseer who was showing Eliphalet the sights. Then a fine-lined planter from down river had come in during the conversation, and paying no attention to the overseer's salute cursed them all into silence, and left.

Eliphalet had ambition, which is not a wholly undesirable quality. He began to wonder how it would feel to own a few of these valuable fellow-creatures. He reached out and touched lightly a young mulatto woman who sat beside him with an infant in her arms. The peculiar dumb expression on her face was lost on Eliphalet. The overseer had laughed coarsely.

"What, skeered on 'em?" said he. And seizing the girl by the cheek, gave it a cruel twinge that brought a cry out of her.

Eliphalet had reflected upon this incident after he had bid the overseer good-by at Cairo, and had seen that pitiful coffer piled aboard a steamer for New Orleans. And the result of his reflections was, that some day he would like to own slaves.

A dome of smoke like a mushroom hung over the city, visible from far down the river, motionless in the summer air. A long line of steamboats—white, patient animals—was tethered along the levee, and the Louisiana presently swung in her bow toward a gap in this line, where a mass of people was awaiting her arrival. Some invisible force lifted Eliphalet's eyes to the upper deck, where they rested, as if by appointment, on the trim figure of the young man in command of the Louisiana. He was very young for the captain of a large New Orleans packet. When his lips moved, something happened. Once he raised his voice, and a negro stevedore rushed frantically aft, as if he had received the end of a lightning-bolt. Admiration burst from the passengers, and one man cried out Captain Brent's age—it was thirty-two.

Eliphalet snapped his teeth together. He was twenty-seven, and his ambition actually hurt him at such times. After the boat was fast to the landing stage he remained watching the captain, who was speaking a few parting words to some passengers of fashion. The body-servants were taking their luggage to the carriages. Mr. Hopper envied the captain his free and vigorous speech, his ready jokes, and his hearty laugh. All the rest he knew for his own—in times to come. The carriages, the trained servants, the obsequiousness of the humbler passengers. For of such is the Republic.

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Then Eliphalet picked his way across the hot stones of the levee, pushing hither and thither in the rough crowd of river men; dodging the mules on the heavy drays, or making way for the carriages of the few people of importance who arrived on the boat. If any recollections of a cool, white farmhouse amongst barren New England hills disturbed his thoughts, this is not recorded. He gained the mouth of a street between the low houses which crowded on the broad river front. The black mud was thick under his feet from an overnight shower, and already steaming in the sun. The brick pavement was lumpy from much travel and near as dirty as the street. Here, too, were drays blocking the way, and sweaty negro teamsters swinging cowhides over the mules. The smell of many wares poured through the open doors, mingling with the perspiration of the porters. On every side of him were busy clerks, with their suspenders much in evidence, and Eliphalet paused once or twice to listen to their talk. It was tinged with that dialect he had heard, since leaving Cincinnati.

Turning a corner, Eliphalet came abruptly upon a prophecy. A great drove of mules was charging down the gorge of the street, and straight at him. He dived into an entrance, and stood looking at the animals in startled wonder as they thundered by, flinging the mud over the pavements. A cursing lot of drovers on ragged horses made the rear guard.

Eliphalet mopped his brow. The mules seemed to have aroused in him some sense of his atomity, where the sight of the pillar of smoke and of the black cattle had failed. The feeling of a stranger in a strange land was upon him at last. A strange land, indeed! Could it be one with his native New England? Did Congress assemble from the Antipodes? Wasn't the great, ugly river and dirty city at the end of the earth, to be written about in Boston journals?

Turning in the doorway, he saw to his astonishment a great store, with high ceilings supported by columns. The door was stacked high with bales of dry goods. Beside him was a sign in gold lettering, "Carvel and Company, Wholesale Dry Goods." And lastly, looking down upon him with a quizzical expression, was a gentleman. There was no mistaking the gentleman. He was cool, which Eliphalet was not. And the fact is the more remarkable because the gentleman was attired according to the fashion of the day for men of his age, in a black coat with a teal of ruffled shirt showing, and a heavy black stock around his collar. He had a white mustache, and a goatee, and white hair under his black felt hat. His face was long, his nose straight, and the sweetness of its smile had a strange effect upon Eliphalet, who stood on one foot.

"Well, sonny, scared of mules, are you?" The speech is a stately drawl very different from the nasal twang of Eliphalet's bringing up. "Reckon you don't come from anywhere round here?"

"No, sir," said Eliphalet. "From Willesden, Massachusetts."



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"Come in on the 'Louisiana'?"

"Yes, sir." But why this politeness?

The elderly gentleman lighted a cigar. The noise of the rushing mules had now become a distant roar, like a whirlwind which has swept by. But Eliphalet did not stir.

"Friends in town?" inquired the gentleman at length.

"No, sir," sighed Mr. Hopper.

At this point of the conversation a crisp step sounded from behind and wonderful smile came again on the surface.

"Mornin', Colonel," said a voice which made Eliphalet jump. And he swung around to perceive the young captain of the Louisiana.

"Why, Captain Lige," cried the Colonel, without ceremony, "and how do you find yourself to-day, suh? A good trip from Orleans? We did not look for you so soon."

"Tolluble, Colonel, tolluble," said the young man, grasping the Colonel's hand. "Well, Colonel, I just called to say that I got the seventy bales of goods you wanted."

"Ephum" cried the Colonel, diving toward a counter where glasses were set out,—a custom new to Eliphalet,—"Ephum, some of that very particular Colonel Crittenden sent me over from Kentucky last week."

An old darkey, with hair as white as the Colonel's, appeared from behind the partition.

"I 'lowed you'd want it, Marse Comyn, when I seed de Cap'n comin'," said he, with the privilege of an old servant. Indeed, the bottle was beneath his arm.

The Colonel smiled.

"Hope you'se well, Cap'n," said Ephum, as he drew the cork.

"Tolluble, Ephum," replied the Captain. "But, Ephum—say, Ephum!"

"Yes, sah."

"How's my little sweetheart, Ephum?"

"Bress your soul, sah," said Ephum, his face falling perceptibly, "bress your soul, sah, Miss Jinny's done gone to Halcyondale, in Kaintuck, to see her grandma. Ole Ephum ain't de same nigger when she's away."

The young Captain's face showed as much disappointment as the darkey's.

"Cuss it!" said he, strongly, "if that ain't too bad! I brought her a Creole doll from New Orleans, which Madame Claire said was dressed finer than any one she'd ever seen. All lace and French gewgaws, Colonel. But you'll send it to her?"

"That I will, Lige," said the Colonel, heartily. "And she shall write you the prettiest note of thanks you ever got."

"Bless her pretty face," cried the Captain. "Her health, Colonel! Here's a long life to Miss Virginia Carvel, and may she rule forever! How old did you say this was?" he asked, looking into the glass.

"Over half a century," said Colonel Carvel.

"If it came from the ruins of Pompeii," cried Captain Brent, "it might be worthy of her!"

"What an idiot you are about that child, Lige," said the Colonel, who was not hiding his pleasure. The Colonel could hide nothing. "You ruin her!"

The bluff young Captain put down his glass to laugh.

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"Ruin her!" he exclaimed. "Her pa don't ruin her I eh, Ephum? Her pa don't ruin her!"

"Lawsy, Marse Lige, I reckon he's wuss'n any."

"Ephum," said the Colonel, pulling his goatee thoughtfully, "you're a damned impertinent nigger. I vow I'll sell you South one of these days. Have you taken that letter to Mr. Renault?" He winked at his friend as the old darkey faded into the darkness of the store, and continued: "Did I ever tell you about Wilson Peale's portrait of my grandmother, Dorothy Carvel, that I saw this summer at my brother Daniel's, in Pennsylvania? Jinny's going to look something like her, sir. Um! She was a fine woman. Black hair, though. Jinny's is brown, like her Ma's." The Colonel handed a cigar to Captain Brent, and lit one himself. "Daniel has a book my grandfather wrote, mostly about her. Lord, I remember her! She was the queen-bee of the family while she lived. I wish some of us had her spirit."

"Colonel," remarked Captain Lige, "what's this I heard on the levee just now about your shootin' at a man named Babcock on the steps here?"

The Colonel became very grave. His face seemed to grow longer as he pulled his goatee.

"He was standing right where you are, sir," he replied (Captain Lige moved), "and he proposed that I should buy his influence."

"What did you do?"

Colonel Carvel laughed quietly at the recollection

"Shucks," said he, "I just pushed him into the streets gave him a little start, and put a bullet past his ear, just to let the trash know the sound of it. Then Russell went down and bailed me out."

The Captain shook with laughter. But Mr. Eliphalet Hopper's eyes were glued to the mild-mannered man who told the story, and his hair rose under his hat.

"By the way, Lige, how's that boy, Tato? Somehow after I let you have him on the 'Louisiana', I thought I'd made a mistake to let him run the river. Easter's afraid he'll lose the little religion she taught him."

It was the Captain's turn to be grave.

"I tell you what, Colonel," said he; "we have to have hands, of course. But somehow I wish this business of slavery had never been started!"

“Sir,” said the Colonel, with some force, “God made the sons of Ham the servants of Japheth’s sons forever and forever.”

“Well, well, we won’t quarrel about that, sir,” said Brent, quickly. “If they all treated slaves as you do, there wouldn’t be any cry from Boston-way. And as for me, I need hands. I shall see you again, Colonel.”

“Take supper with me to-night, Lige,” said Mr. Carvel. “I reckon you’ll find it rather lonesome without Jinny.”

“Awful lonesome,” said the Captain. “But you’ll show me her letters, won’t you?”

He started out, and ran against Eliphalet.

“Hello!” he cried. “Who’s this?”

“A young Yankee you landed here this morning, Lige,” said the Colonel. “What do you think of him?”

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"Humph!" exclaimed the Captain.

"He has no friends in town, and he is looking for employment. Isn't that so, sonny?" asked the Colonels kindly.

"Yes."

"Come, Lige, would you take him?" said Mr. Carvel.

The young Captain looked into Eliphalet's face. The dart that shot from his eyes was of an aggressive honesty; and Mr. Hopper's, after an attempt at defiance, were dropped.

"No," said the Captain.

"Why not, Lige?"

"Well, for one thing, he's been listening," said Captain Lige, as he departed.

Colonel Carvel began to hum softly to himself:—

"One said it was an owl, and the other he said nay,  
One said it was a church with the steeple torn away,  
Look a' there now!"

"I reckon you're a rank abolitionist," said he to Eliphalet, abruptly.

"I don't see any particular harm in keepin' slaves," Mr. Hopper replied, shifting to the other foot.

Whereupon the Colonel stretched his legs apart, seized his goatee, pulled his head down, and gazed at him for some time from under his eyebrows, so searchingly that the blood flew to Mr. Hopper's fleshy face. He mopped it with a dark-red handkerchief, stared at everything in the place save the gentleman in front of him, and wondered whether he had ever in his life been so uncomfortable. Then he smiled sheepishly, hated himself, and began to hate the Colonel.

"Ever hear of the Liberator?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Hopper.

"Where do you come from?" This was downright directness, from which there was no escape.

"Willesden, Massachusetts."

"Umph! And never heard of Mr. Garrison?"

"I've had to work all my life."

"What can you do, sonny?"

"I cal'late to sweep out a store. I have kept books," Mr. Hopper vouchsafed.

"Would you like work here?" asked the Colonel, kindly. The green eyes looked up swiftly, and down again.

"What'll you give me?"

The good man was surprised. "Well," said he, "seven dollars a week."

Many a time in after life had the Colonel reason to think over this scene. He was a man the singleness of whose motives could not be questioned. The one and sufficient reason for giving work to a homeless boy, from the hated state of the Liberator, was charity. The Colonel had his moods, like many another worthy man.

The small specks on the horizon sometimes grow into the hugest of thunder clouds. And an act of charity, out of the wisdom of God, may produce on this earth either good or evil.

Eliphalet closed with the bargain. Ephum was called and told to lead the recruit to the presence of Mr. Hood, the manager. And he spent the remainder of a hot day checking invoices in the shipping entrance on Second Street.

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It is not our place here to chronicle Eliphalet's faults. Whatever he may have been, he was not lazy. But he was an anomaly to the rest of the young men in the store, for those were days when political sentiments decided fervent loves or hatreds. In two days was Eliphalet's reputation for wisdom made. During that period he opened his mouth to speak but twice. The first was in answer to a pointless question of Mr. Barbo's (aetat 25), to the effect that he, Eliphalet Hopper, was a Pierce Democrat, who looked with complacency on the extension of slavery. This was wholly satisfactory, and saved the owner of these sentiments a broken head. The other time Eliphalet spoke was to ask Mr. Barbo to direct him to a boardinghouse.

"I reckon," Mr. Barbo reflected, "that you'll want one of them Congregational boarding-houses. We've got a heap of Yankees in the town, and they all flock together and pray together. I reckon you'd ruther go to Miss Crane's nor anywhere."

Forthwith to Miss Crane's Eliphalet went. And that lady, being a Greek herself, knew a Greek when she saw one. The kind-hearted Barbo lingered in the gathering darkness to witness the game which ensued, a game dear to all New Englanders, comical to Barbo. The two contestants calculated. Barbo reckoned, and put his money on his new-found fellow-clerk. Eliphalet, indeed, never showed to better advantage. The shyness he had used with the Colonel, and the taciturnity practised on his fellow-clerks, he slipped off like coat and waistcoat for the battle. The scene was in the front yard of the third house in Dorcas Row. Everybody knows where Dorcas Row was. Miss Crane, tall, with all the severity of side curls and bombazine, stood like a stone lioness at the gate. In the background, by the steps, the boarders sat, an interested group. Eliphalet girded up his loins, and sharpened his nasal twang to cope with hers. The preliminary sparring was an exchange of compliments, and deceived neither party. It seemed rather to heighten mutual respect.

"You be from Willesden, eh?" said Crane. "I calculate you know the Salters."

If the truth were known, this evidence of an apparent omniscience rather staggered Eliphalet. But training stood by him, and he showed no dismay. Yes, he knew the Salters, and had drawn many a load out of Hiram Salters' wood-lot to help pay for his schooling.

"Let me see," said Miss Crane, innocently; "who was it one of them Salters girls married, and lived across the way from the meetin'-house?"

"Spauldin'," was the prompt reply.

"Wal, I want t' know!" cried the spinster: "not Ezra Spauldin'?"

Eliphalet nodded. That nod was one of infinite shrewdness which commended itself to Miss Crane. These courtesies, far from making awkward the material discussion which followed; did not affect it in the least.

“So you want me to board you?” said she, as if in consternation.



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Eliphalet calculated, if they could come to terms. And Mr. Barbo keyed himself to enjoyment.

“Single gentlemen,” said she, “pay as high as twelve dollars.” And she added that they had no cause to complain of her table.

Eliphalet said he guessed he’d have to go somewhere else. Upon this the lady vouchsafed the explanation that those gentlemen had high positions and rented her large rooms. Since Mr. Hopper was from Willesden and knew the Salters, she would be willing to take him for less. Eliphalet said bluntly he would give three and a half. Barbo gasped. This particular kind of courage was wholly beyond him.

Half an hour later Eliphalet carried his carpet-bag up three flights and put it down in a tiny bedroom under the eaves, still pulsing with heat waves. Here he was to live, and eat at Miss Crane’s table for the consideration of four dollars a week.

Such is the story of the humble beginning of one substantial prop of the American Nation. And what a hackneyed story it is! How many other young men from the East have travelled across the mountains and floated down the rivers to enter those strange cities of the West, the growth of which was like Jonah’s gourd.

Two centuries before, when Charles Stuart walked out of a window in Whitehall Palace to die; when the great English race was in the throes of a Civil War; when the Stern and the Gay slew each other at Naseby and Marston Moor, two currents flowed across the Atlantic to the New World. Then the Stern men found the stern climate, and the Gay found the smiling climate.

After many years the streams began to move again, westward, ever westward. Over the ever blue mountains from the wonderland of Virginia into the greater wonderland of Kentucky. And through the marvels of the Inland Seas, and by white conestogas threading flat forests and floating over wide prairies, until the two tides met in a maelstrom as fierce as any in the great tawny torrent of the strange Father of Waters. A city founded by Pierre Laclède, a certain adventurous subject of Louis who dealt in furs, and who knew not Marly or Versailles, was to be the place of the mingling of the tides. After cycles of separation, Puritan and Cavalier united on this clay-bank in the Louisiana Purchase, and swept westward together—like the struggle of two great rivers when they meet the waters for a while were dangerous.

So Eliphalet was established, among the Puritans, at Miss Crane’s. The dishes were to his taste. Brown bread and beans and pies were plentiful, for it was a land of plenty. All kinds of Puritans were there, and they attended Mr. Davitt’s Congregational Church. And may it be added in justice to Mr. Hopper, that he became not the least devout of the boarders.

## **CHAPTER. II**

### **THE MOLE**

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For some years, while Stephen A. Douglas and Franklin Pierce and other gentlemen of prominence were playing at bowls on the United States of America; while Kansas was furnishing excitement free of charge to any citizen who loved sport, Mr. Eliphalet Hopper was at work like the industrious mole, underground. It is safe to affirm that Colonel Carvel forgot his new hand as soon as he had turned him over to Mr. Hood, the manager. As for Mr. Hopper, he was content. We can ill afford to dissect motives. Genius is willing to lay the foundations of her structure unobserved.

At first it was Mr. Barbo alone who perceived Eliphalet's greatness,—Mr. Barbo, whose opinions were so easily had that they counted for nothing. The other clerks, to say the least, found the newcomer uncompanionable. He had no time for skylarking, the heat of the day meant nothing to him, and he was never sleepy. He learned the stock as if by intuition, and such was his strict attention to business that Mr. Hood was heard to say, privately, he did not like the looks of it. A young man should have other interests. And then, although he would not hold it against him, he had heard that Mr. Hopper was a teacher in Mr. Davitt's Sunday School.

Because he did not discuss his ambitions at dinner with the other clerks in the side entry, it must not be thought that Eliphalet was without other interests. He was likewise too shrewd to be dragged into political discussions at the boarding-house table. He listened imperturbably to the outbursts against the Border Ruffian, and smiled when Mr. Abner Reed, in an angry passion, asked him to declare whether or not he was a friend of the Divine Institution. After a while they forgot about him (all save Miss Crane), which was what Mr. Hopper of all things desired.

One other friend besides Miss Crane did Eliphalet take unto himself, wherein he showed much discrimination. This friend was none other than Mr. Davitt, minister for many years of the Congregational Church. For Mr. Davitt was a good man, zealous in his work, unpretentious, and kindly. More than once Eliphalet went to his home to tea, and was pressed to talk about himself and his home life. The minister and his wife were invariably astonished, after their guest was gone, at the meagre result of their inquiries.

If Love had ever entered such a discreet soul as that into which we are prying, he used a back entrance. Even Mr. Barbo's inquiries failed in the discovery of any young person with whom Eliphalet "kept company." Whatever the notions abroad concerning him, he was admittedly a model. There are many kinds of models. With some young ladies at the Sunday School, indeed, he had a distant bowing acquaintance. They spoke of him as the young man who knew the Bible as thoroughly as Mr. Davitt himself. The only time that Mr. Hopper was discovered showing embarrassment was when Mr. Davitt held his hand before them longer than necessary on the church steps. Mr. Hopper was not sentimental.

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However fascinating the subject, I do not propose to make a whole book about Eliphalet. Yet sidelights on the life of every great man are interesting. And there are a few incidents in his early career which have not gotten into the subscription biographical Encyclopaedias. In several of these volumes, to be sure, we may see steel engravings of him, true likenesses all. His was the type of face which is the glory of the steel engraving,—square and solid, as a corner-stone should be. The very clothes he wore were made for the steel engraving, stiff and wiry in texture, with sharp angles at the shoulders, and sombre in hue, as befit such grave creations.

Let us go back to a certain fine morning in the September of the year 1857, when Mr. Hopper had arrived, all unnoticed, at the age of two and thirty. Industry had told. He was now the manager's assistant; and, be it said in passing, knew more about the stock than Mr. Hood himself. On this particular morning, about nine o'clock, he was stacking bolts of woollen goods near that delectable counter where the Colonel was wont to regale his principal customers, when a vision appeared in the door. Visions were rare at Carvel & Company's. This one was followed by an old negress with leathery wrinkles, whose smile was joy incarnate. They entered the store, paused at the entrance to the Colonel's private office, and surveyed it with dismay.

"Clar t' goodness, Miss Jinny, yo' pa ain't heah! An' whah's Ephum, dat black good-fo'-nuthin'!"

Miracle number one,—Mr. Hopper stopped work and stared. The vision was searching the store with her eyes, and pouting.

"How mean of Pa!" she exclaimed, "when I took all this trouble to surprise him, not to be here! Where are they all? Where's Ephum? Where's Mr. Hood?"

The eyes lighted on Eliphalet. His blood was sluggish, but it could be made to beat faster. The ladies he had met at Miss Crane's were not of this description. As he came forward, embarrassment made him shamle, and for the first time in his life he was angrily conscious of a poor figure. Her first question dashed out the spark of his zeal.

"Oh," said she, "are you employed here?"

Thoughtless Virginia! You little know the man you have insulted by your haughty drawl.

"Yes."

Then find Mr. Carvel, won't you, please? And tell him that his daughter has come from Kentucky, and is waiting for him."

"I callate Mr. Carvel won't be here this morning," said Eliphalet. He went back to the pile of dry goods, and began to work. But he was unable to meet the displeasure in her face.

“What is your name?” Miss Carvel demanded.

“Hopper.”

“Then, Mr. Hopper, please find Ephum, or Mr. Hood.”

Two more bolts were taken off the truck. Out of the corner of his eye he watched her, and she seemed very tall, like her father. She was taller than he, in fact.

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"I ain't a servant, Miss Carvel," he said, with a meaning glance at the negress.

"Laws, Miss Jinny," cried she, "I may's 'ell find Ephum. I knows he's loafin' somewhar hereabouts. An' I ain't seed him dese five month." And she started for the back of the store.

"Mammy!"

The old woman stopped short. Eliphalet, electrified, looked up and instantly down again.

"You say you are employed by Mr. Carvel, and refuse to do what I ask?"

"I ain't a servant," Mr. Hopper repeated doggedly. He felt that he was in the right,—and perhaps he was.

It was at this critical juncture in the proceedings that a young man stepped lightly into the store behind Miss Jinny. Mr. Hopper's eye was on him, and had taken in the details of his costume before realizing the import of his presence. He was perhaps twenty, and wore a coat that sprung in at the waist, and trousers of a light buff-color that gathered at the ankle and were very copious above. His features were of the straight type which has been called from time immemorial patrician. He had dark hair which escaped in waves from under his hat, and black eyes that snapped when they perceived Miss Virginia Carvel. At sight of her, indeed, the gold-headed cane stopped in its gyrations in midair.

"Why, Jinny!" he cried—"Jinny!"

Mr. Hopper would have sold his soul to have been in the young man's polished boots, to have worn his clothes, and to have been able to cry out to the young lady, "Why, Jinny!"

To Mr. Hopper's surprise, the young lady did not turn around. She stood perfectly still. But a red flush stole upon her cheek, and laughter was dancing in her eyes yet she did not move. The young man took a step forward, and then stood staring at her with such a comical expression of injury on his face as was too much for Miss Jinny's serenity. She laughed. That laugh also struck minor chords upon Mr. Hopper's heart-strings.

But the young gentleman very properly grew angry.

"You've no right to treat me the way you do, Virginia," he cried. "Why didn't you let me know that you were coming home?" His tone was one of authority. You didn't come from Kentucky alone!"

"I had plenty of attendance, I assure you," said Miss Carvel. "A governor, and a senator, and two charming young gentlemen from New Orleans as far as Cairo, where I found

Captain Lige's boat. And Mr. Brinsmade brought me here to the store. I wanted to surprise Pa," she continued rapidly, to head off the young gentleman's expostulations. "How mean of him not to be here!"

"Allow me to escort you home," said he, with ceremony:

"Allow me to decline the honah, Mr. Colfax," she cried, imitating him. "I intend to wait here until Pa comes in."

Then Eliphalet knew that the young gentleman was Miss Virginia's first cousin. And it seemed to him that he had heard a rumor, amongst the clerks in the store; that she was to marry him one day.

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"Where is Uncle Comyn?" demanded Mr. Colfax, swinging his cane with impatience.

Virginia looked hard at Mr. Hopper.

"I don't know," she said.

"Ephum!" shouted Mr. Colfax. "Ephum! Easters where the deuce is that good-for-nothing husband of yours?"

"I dunno, Marse Clarence. 'Spec he whah he oughtn't ter be."

Mr. Colfax spied the stooping figure of Eliphalet.

"Do you work here?" he demanded.

"I callate."

"What?"

"I callate to," responded Mr. Hopper again, without rising.

"Please find Mr. Hood," directed Mr. Colfax, with a wave of his cane, "and say that Miss Carvel is here—"

Whereupon Miss Carvel seated herself upon the edge of a bale and giggled, which did not have a soothing effect upon either of the young men. How abominably you were wont to behave in those days, Virginia.

"Just say that Mr. Colfax sent you," Clarence continued, with a note of irritation. "There's a good fellow."

Virginia laughed outright. Her cousin did not deign to look at her. His temper was slipping its leash.

"I wonder whether you hear me," he remarked.

No answer.

"Colonel Carvel hires you, doesn't he? He pays you wages, and the first time his daughter comes in here you refuse to do her a favor. By thunder, I'll see that you are dismissed."

Still Eliphalet gave him no manner of attention, but began marking the tags at the bottom of the pile.



It was at this unpropitious moment that Colonel Carvel walked into the store, and his daughter flew into his arms.

"Well, well," he said, kissing her, "thought you'd surprise me, eh, Jinny?"

"Oh, Pa," she cried, looking reproachfully up at his Face. "You knew —how mean of you!"

"I've been down on the Louisiana, where some inconsiderate man told me, or I should not have seen you today. I was off to Alton. But what are these goings-on?" said the Colonel, staring at young Mr. Colfax, rigid as one of his own gamecocks. He was standing defiantly over the stooping figure of the assistant manager.

"Oh," said Virginia, indifferently, "it's only Clarence. He's so tiresome. He's always wanting to fight with somebody."

"What's the matter, Clarence?" asked the Colonel, with the mild unconcern which deceived so many of the undiscerning.

"This person, sir, refused to do a favor for your daughter. She told him, and I told him, to notify Mr. Hood that Miss Carvel was here, and he refused."

Mr. Hopper continued his occupation, which was absorbing. But he was listening.

Colonel Carvel pulled his goatee, and smiled.

"Clarence," said he, "I reckon I can run this establishment without any help from you and Jinny. I've been at it now for a good many years."

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If Mr. Barbo had not been constitutionally unlucky, he might have perceived Mr. Hopper, before dark that evening, in conversation with Mr. Hood about a certain customer who lived up town, and presently leave the store by the side entrance. He walked as rapidly as his legs would carry him, for they were a trifle short for his body; and in due time, as the lamps were flickering, he arrived near Colonel Carvel's large double residence, on Tenth and Locust streets. Then he walked slowly along Tenth, his eyes lifted to the tall, curtained windows. Now and anon they scanned passers-by for a chance acquaintance.

Mr. Hopper walked around the block, arriving again opposite the Carvel house, and beside Mr. Renault's, which was across from it. Eliphalet had inherited the principle of mathematical chances. It is a fact that the discreet sometimes take chances. Towards the back of Mr. Renault's residence, a wide area was sunk to the depth of a tall man, which was apparently used for the purpose of getting coal and wood into the cellar. Mr. Hopper swept the neighborhood with a glance. The coast was clear, and he dropped into the area.

Although the evening was chill, at first Mr. Hopper perspired very freely. He crouched in the area while the steps of pedestrians beat above his head, and took no thought but of escape. At last, however, he grew cooler, removed his hat, and peeped over the stone coping. Colonel Carvel's house—her house—was now ablaze with lights, and the shades not yet drawn. There was the dining room, where the negro butler was moving about the table; and the pantry, where the butler went occasionally; and the kitchen, with black figures moving about. But upstairs on the two streets was the sitting room. The straight figure of the Colonel passed across the light. He held a newspaper in his hand. Suddenly, full in the window, he stopped and flung away the paper. A graceful shadow slipped across the wall. Virginia laid her hands on his shoulders, and he stooped to kiss her. Now they sat between the curtains, she on the arm of his chair and leaning on him, together looking out of the window.

How long this lasted Mr. Hopper could not say. Even the wise forget themselves. But all at once a wagon backed and bumped against the curb in front of him, and Eliphalet's head dropped as if it had been struck by the wheel. Above him a sash screamed as it opened, and he heard Mr. Renault's voice say, to some person below:

"Is that you, Capitaine Grant?"

"The same," was the brief reply.

"I am charmed that you have brought the wood. I thought that you had forgotten me."

"I try to do what I say, Mr. Renault."

"Attendez—wait!" cried Mr. Renault, and closed the window.



Now was Eliphalet's chance to bolt. The perspiration had come again, and it was cold. But directly the excitable little man, Renault, had appeared on the pavement above him. He had been running.

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"It is a long voyage from Gravois with a load of wood, Capitaine—I am very grateful."

"Business is business, Mr. Renault," was the self-contained reply.

"Alphonse!" cried Mr. Renault, "Alphonse!" A door opened in the back wall. "Du vin pour Monsieur le Capitaine."

"Oui, M'sieu."

Eliphalet was too frightened to wonder why this taciturn handler of wood was called Captain, and treated with such respect.

"Guess I won't take any wine to-night, Mr. Renault," said he. "You go inside, or you'll take cold."

Mr. Renault protested, asked about all the residents of Gravois way, and finally obeyed. Eliphalet's heart was in his mouth. A bolder spirit would have dashed for liberty. Eliphalet did not possess that kind of bravery. He was waiting for the Captain to turn toward his wagon.

He looked down the area instead, with the light from the street lamp on his face. Fear etched an ineffaceable portrait of him on Mr. Hopper's mind, so that he knew him instantly when he saw him years afterward. Little did he reckon that the fourth time he was to see him this man was to be President of the United States. He wore a close-cropped beard, an old blue army overcoat, and his trousers were tucked into a pair of muddy cowhide boots.

Swiftly but silently the man reached down and hauled Eliphalet to the sidewalk by the nape of the neck.

"What were you doing there?" demanded he of the blue overcoat, sternly.

Eliphalet did not answer. With one frantic wrench he freed himself, and ran down Locust Street. At the corner, turning fearfully, he perceived the man in the overcoat calmly preparing to unload his wood.

## CHAPTER III

### THE UNATTAINABLE SIMPLICITY

To Mr. Hopper the being caught was the unpardonable crime. And indeed, with many of us, it is humiliation and not conscience which makes the sting. He walked out to the end of the city's growth westward, where the new houses were going up. He had reflected coolly on consequences, and found there were none to speak of. Many a

moralist, Mr. Davitt included, would have shaken his head at this. Miss Crane's whole Puritan household would have raised their hands in horror at such a doctrine.

Some novelists I know of, who are in reality celebrated surgeons in disguise, would have shown a good part of Mr. Eliphalet Hopper's mental insides in as many words as I have taken to chronicle his arrival in St. Louis. They invite us to attend a clinic, and the horrible skill with which they wield the scalpel holds us spellbound. For God has made all of us, rogue and saint, burglar and burgomaster, marvellously alike. We read a patent medicine circular and shudder with seven diseases. We peruse one of Mr. So and So's intellectual tonics and are sure we are complicated scandals, fearfully and wonderfully made.

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Alas, I have neither the skill nor the scalpel to show the diseases of Mr. Hopper's mind; if, indeed, he had any. Conscience, when contracted, is just as troublesome as croup. Mr. Hopper was thoroughly healthy. He had ambition, as I have said. But he was not morbidly sensitive. He was calm enough when he got back to the boarding-house, which he found in as high a pitch of excitement as New Englanders ever reach.

And over what?

Over the prospective arrival that evening of the Brices, mother and son, from Boston. Miss Crane had received the message in the morning. Palpitating with the news; she had hurried rustling to Mrs. Abner Reed, with the paper in her hand.

"I guess you don't mean Mrs. Appleton Brice," said Mrs. Reed.

"That's just who I mean," answered Miss Crane, triumphantly,—nay, aggressively.

Mrs. Abner shook her curls in a way that made people overwhelm her with proofs.

"Mirandy, you're cracked," said she. "Ain't you never been to Boston?"

Miss Crane bridled. This was an uncalled-for insult.

"I guess I visited down Boston-way oftener than you, Eliza Reed. You never had any clothes."

Mrs. Reed's strength was her imperturbability.

"And you never set eyes on the Brice house, opposite the Common, with the swelled front? I'd like to find out where you were a-visitin'. And you've never heard tell of the Brice homestead, at Westbury, that was Colonel Wilton Brice's, who fought in the Revolution? I'm astonished at you, Mirandy. When I used to be at the Dales', in Mount Vernon Street, in thirty-seven, Mrs. Charles Atterbury Brice used to come there in her carriage, a-callin'. She was Appleton's mother. Severe! Save us," exclaimed Mrs. Reed, "but she was stiff as starched crepe. His father was minister to France. The Brices were in the India trade, and they had money enough to buy the whole of St. Louis."

Miss Crane rattled the letter in her hand. She brought forth her reserves.

"Yes, and Appleton Brice lost it all, in the panic. And then he died, and left the widow and son without a cent."

Mrs. Reed took off her spectacles.

"I want to know!" she exclaimed. "The durned fool! Well, Appleton Brice didn't have the family brains, and he was kind of soft-hearted. I've heard Mehitabel Dale say that." She paused to reflect. "So they're coming here?" she added. "I wonder why."

Miss Crane's triumph was not over.

"Because Silas Whipple was some kin to Appleton Brice, and he has offered the boy a place in his law office."

Miss Reed laid down her knitting.

"Save us!" she said. "This is a day of wonders, Mirandy. Now Lord help the boy if he's gain' to work for the Judge."

"The Judge has a soft heart, if he is crabbed," declared the spinster. "I've heard say of a good bit of charity he's done. He's a soft heart."

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"Soft as a green quince!" said Mrs. Abner, scornfully. "How many friends has he?"

"Those he has are warm enough," Miss Crane retorted. "Look at Colonel Carvel, who has him to dinner every Sunday."

"That's plain as your nose, Mirandy Crane. They both like quarrellin' better than anything in this world."

"Well," said Miss Crane, "I must go make ready for the Brices."

Such was the importance of the occasion, however, that she could not resist calling at Mrs. Merrill's room, and she knocked at Mrs. Chandler's door to tell that lady and her daughter.

No Burke has as yet arisen in this country of ours to write a Peerage. Fame awaits him. Indeed, it was even then awaiting him, at the time of the panic of 1857. With what infinite pains were the pedigree and possessions of the Brice family pieced together that day by the scattered residents from Puritan-land in the City of St. Louis. And few buildings would have borne the wear and tear of many house-cleanings of the kind Miss Crane indulged in throughout the morning and afternoon.

Mr. Eliphalet Hopper, on his return from business, was met on the steps and requested to wear his Sunday clothes. Like the good republican that he was, Mr. Hopper refused. He had ascertained that the golden charm which made the Brices worthy of tribute had been lost. Commercial supremacy,—that was Mr. Hopper's creed. Family is a good thing, but of what use is a crest without the panels on which to paint it? Can a diamond brooch shine on a calico gown? Mr. Hopper deemed church the place for worship. He likewise had his own idol in his closet.

Eliphalet at Willesden had heard a great deal of Boston airs and graces and intellectuality, of the favored few of that city who lived in mysterious houses, and who crossed the sea in ships. He pictured Mrs. Brice asking for a spoon, and young Stephen sniffing at Mrs. Crane's boarding-house. And he resolved with democratic spirit that he would teach Stephen a lesson, if opportunity offered. His own discrepancy between the real and the imagined was no greater than that of the rest of his fellow-boarders.

Barring Eliphalet, there was a dress parade that evening,—silks and bombazines and broadcloths, and Miss Crane's special preserves on the tea-table. Alas, that most of the deserved honors of this world should fall upon barren ground!

The quality which baffled Mr. Hopper, and some other boarders, was simplicity. None save the truly great possess it (but this is not generally known). Mrs. Brice was so natural, that first evening at tea, that all were disappointed. The hero upon the



reviewing stand with the halo of the Unknown behind his head is one thing; the lady of Family who sits beside you at a boarding-house and discusses the weather and the journey is quite another. They were prepared to hear Mrs. Brice rail at the dirt of St. Louis and the crudity of the West. They pictured her referring with sighs to her Connections, and bewailing that Stephen could not have finished his course at Harvard.

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She did nothing of the sort.

The first shock was so great that Mrs. Abner Reed cried in the privacy of her chamber, and the Widow Crane confessed her disappointment to the confiding ear of her bosom friend, Mrs. Merrill. Not many years later a man named Grant was to be in Springfield, with a carpet bag, despised as a vagabond. A very homely man named Lincoln went to Cincinnati to try a case before the Supreme Court, and was snubbed by a man named Stanton.

When we meet the truly great, several things may happen. In the first place, we begin to believe in their luck, or fate, or whatever we choose to call it, and to curse our own. We begin to respect ourselves the more, and to realize that they are merely clay like us, that we are great men without Opportunity. Sometimes, if we live long enough near the Great, we begin to have misgivings. Then there is hope for us.

Mrs. Brice, with her simple black gowns, quiet manner, and serene face, with her interest in others and none in herself, had a wonderful effect upon the boarders. They were nearly all prepared to be humble. They grew arrogant and pretentious. They asked Mrs. Brice if she knew this and that person of consequence in Boston, with whom they claimed relationship or intimacy. Her answers were amiable and self-contained.

But what shall we say of Stephen Brice? Let us confess at once that it is he who is the hero of this story, and not Eliphalet Hopper. It would be so easy to paint Stephen in shining colors, and to make him a first-class prig (the horror of all novelists), that we must begin with the drawbacks. First and worst, it must be confessed that Stephen had at that time what has been called "the Boston manner." This was not Stephen's fault, but Boston's. Young Mr. Brice possessed that wonderful power of expressing distance in other terms besides ells and furlongs,—and yet he was simple enough with it all.

Many a furtive stare he drew from the table that evening. There were one or two of discernment present, and they noted that his were the generous features of a marked man,—if he chose to become marked. He inherited his mother's look; hers was the face of a strong woman, wide of sympathy, broad of experience, showing peace of mind amid troubles—the touch of femininity was there to soften it.

Her son had the air of the college-bred. In these surroundings he escaped arrogance by the wonderful kindness of his eye, which lighted when his mother spoke to him. But he was not at home at Miss Crane's table, and he made no attempt to appear at his ease.

This was an unexpected pleasure for Mr. Eliphalet Hopper. Let it not be thought that he was the only one at that table to indulge in a little secret rejoicing. But it was a peculiar satisfaction to him to reflect that these people, who had held up their heads for so many generations, were humbled at last. To be humbled meant, in Mr. Hopper's philosophy,

to lose one's money. It was thus he gauged the importance of his acquaintances; it was thus he hoped some day to be gauged. And he trusted and believed that the time would come when he could give his fillip to the upper rim of fortune's wheel, and send it spinning downward.

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Mr. Hopper was drinking his tea and silently forming an estimate. He concluded that young Brice was not the type to acquire the money which his father had lost. And he reflected that Stephen must feel as strange in St. Louis as a cod might amongst the catfish in the Mississippi. So the assistant manager of Carvel & Company resolved to indulge in the pleasure of patronizing the Bostonian.

"Callatin' to go to work?" he asked him, as the boarders walked into the best room.

"Yes," replied Stephen, taken aback. And it may be said here that, if Mr. Hopper underestimated him, certainly he underestimated Mr. Hopper.

"It ain't easy to get a job this Fall," said Eliphalet, "St. Louis houses have felt the panic."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"What business was you callatin' to grapple with?"

"Law," said Stephen.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Mr. Hopper, "I want to know." In reality he was a bit chagrined, having pictured with some pleasure the Boston aristocrat going from store to store for a situation. "You didn't come here figurin' on makin' a pile, I guess."

"A what?"

"A pile."

Stephen looked down and over Mr. Hopper attentively. He took in the blocky shoulders and the square head, and he pictured the little eyes at a vanishing-point in lines of a bargain. Then humor blessed humor—came to his rescue. He had entered the race in the West, where all start equal. He had come here, like this man who was succeeding, to make his living. Would he succeed?

Mr. Hopper drew something out of his pocket, eyed Miss Crane, and bit off a corner.

"What office was you going into?" he asked genially. Mr. Brice decided to answer that.

"Judge Whipple's—unless he has changed his mind." Eliphalet gave him a look more eloquent than words.

"Know the Judge?"

Silent laughter.



"If all the Fourth of Julys we've had was piled into one," said Mr. Hopper, slowly and with conviction, "they wouldn't be a circumstance to Silas Whipple when he gets mad. My boss, Colonel Carvel, is the only man in town who'll stand up to him. I've seen 'em begin a quarrel in the store and carry it all the way up the street. I callate you won't stay with him a great while."

## CHAPTER IV

### BLACK CATTLE

Later that evening Stephen Brice was sitting by the open windows in his mother's room, looking on the street-lights below.

"Well, my dear," asked the lady, at length, "what do you think of it all?"

"They are kind people," he said.

"Yes, they are kind," she assented, with a sigh. "But they are not—they are not from among our friends, Stephen."

"I thought that one of our reasons for coming West, mother," answered Stephen.

His mother looked pained.

"Stephen, how can you! We came West in order that you might have more chance for the career to which you are entitled. Our friends in Boston were more than good."

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He left the window and came and stood behind her chair, his hands clasped playfully beneath her chin.

“Have you the exact date about you, mother?”

“What date, Stephen?”

“When I shall leave St. Louis for the United States Senate. And you must not forget that there is a youth limit in our Constitution for senators.”

Then the widow smiled,—a little sadly, perhaps. But still a wonderfully sweet smile. And it made her strong face akin to all that was human and helpful.

“I believe that you have the subject of my first speech in that august assembly. And, by the way, what was it?”

“It was on ‘The Status of the Emigrant,’” she responded instantly, thereby proving that she was his mother.

“And it touched the Rights of Privacy,” he added, laughing, “which do not seem to exist in St. Louis boarding-houses.”

“In the eyes of your misguided profession, statesmen and authors and emigrants and other public charges have no Rights of Privacy,” said she. “Mr. Longfellow told me once that they were to name a brand of flour for him, and that he had no redress.”

“Have you, too, been up before Miss Crane’s Commission?” he asked, with amused interest.

His mother laughed.

“Yes,” she said quietly.

“They have some expert members,” he continued. “This Mrs. Abner Reed could be a shining light in any bar. I overheard a part of her cross-examination. She—she had evidently studied our case—”

“My dear,” answered Mrs. Brice, “I suppose they know all about us.” She was silent a moment, I had so hoped that they wouldn’t. They lead the same narrow life in this house that they did in their little New England towns. They—they pity us, Stephen.”

“Mother!”

“I did not expect to find so many New Englanders here—I wish that Mr. Whipple had directed us elsewhere—”

“He probably thought that we should feel at home among New Englanders. I hope the Southerners will be more considerate. I believe they will,” he added.

“They are very proud,” said his mother. “A wonderful people,—born aristocrats. You don’t remember those Randolphs with whom we travelled through England. They were with us at Hollingdean, Lord Northwell’s place. You were too small at the time. There was a young girl, Eleanor Randolph, a beauty. I shall never forget the way she entered those English drawing-rooms. They visited us once in Beacon Street, afterwards. And I have heard that there are a great many good Southern families here in St. Louis.”

“You did not glean that from Judge Whipple’s letter, mother,” said Stephen, mischievously.

“He was very frank in his letter,” sighed Mrs. Brice.

“I imagine he is always frank, to put it delicately.”

“Your father always spoke in praise of Silas Whipple, my dear. I have heard him call him one of the ablest lawyers in the country. He won a remarkable case for Appleton here, and he once said that the Judge would have sat on the Supreme Bench if he had not been pursued with such relentlessness by rascally politicians.”

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"The Judge indulges in a little relentlessness now and then, himself. He is not precisely what might be termed a mild man, if what we hear is correct."

Mrs. Brice started.

"What have you heard?" she asked.

"Well, there was a gentleman on the steamboat who said that it took more courage to enter the Judge's private office than to fight a Border Ruffian. And another, a young lawyer, who declared that he would rather face a wild cat than ask Whipple a question on the new code. And yet he said that the Judge knew more law than any man in the West. And lastly, there is a polished gentleman named Hopper here from Massachusetts who enlightened me a little more."

Stephen paused and bit his tongue. He saw that she was distressed by these things. Heaven knows that she had borne enough trouble in the last few months.

"Come, mother," he said gently, "you should know how to take my jokes by this time. I didn't mean it. I am sure the Judge is a good man,—one of those aggressive good men who make enemies. I have but a single piece of guilt to accuse him of."

"And what is that?" asked the widow.

"The cunning forethought which he is showing in wishing to have it said that a certain Senator and Judge Brice was trained in his office."

"Stephen—you goose!" she said.

Her eye wandered around the room,—Widow Crane's best bedroom. It was dimly lighted by an extremely ugly lamp. The hideous stuffy bed curtains and the more hideous imitation marble mantel were the two objects that held her glance. There was no change in her calm demeanor. But Stephen, who knew his mother, felt that her little elation over her arrival had ebbed. Neither would confess dejection to the other.

"I—even I—" said Stephen, tapping his chest, "have at least made the acquaintance of one prominent citizen, Mr. Eliphalet D. Hopper. According to Mr. Dickens, he is a true American gentleman, for he chews tobacco. He has been in St. Louis five years, is now assistant manager of the largest dry goods house, and still lives in one of Miss Crane's four-dollar rooms. I think we may safely say that he will be a millionaire before I am a senator."

He paused.

"And mother?"



“Yes, dear.”

He put his hands in his pockets and walked over to the window.

“I think that it would be better if I did the same thing.”

“What do you mean, my son—”

“If I went to work,—started sweeping out a store, I mean. See here, mother, you’ve sacrificed enough for me already. After paying father’s debts, we’ve come out here with only a few thousand dollars, and the nine hundred I saved out of this year’s Law School allowance. What shall we do when that is gone? The honorable legal profession, as my friend reminded me to-night, is not the swiftest road to millions.”

With a mother’s discernment she guessed the agitation, he was striving to hide; she knew that he had been gathering courage for this moment for months. And she knew that he was renouncing thus lightly, for her sake an ambition he had had from his school days.

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Widow passed her hand over her brow. It was a space before she answered him.

“My son,” she said, let us never speak of this again:

“It was your father’s dearest wish that you should become a lawyer and —and his wishes are sacred God will take care of us.”

She rose and kissed him good-night.

“Remember, my dear, when you go to Judge Whipple in the morning, remember his kindness, and—.”

“And keep my temper. I shall, mother.”

A while later he stole gently back into her room again. She was on her knees by the walnut bedstead.

At nine the next morning Stephen left Miss Crane’s, girded for the struggle with the redoubtable Silas Whipple. He was not afraid, but a poor young man as an applicant to a notorious dragon is not likely to be bandied with velvet, even though the animal had been a friend of his father. Dragons as a rule have had a hard time in their youths, and believe in others having a hard time.

To a young man, who as his father’s heir in Boston had been the subject of marked consideration by his elders, the situation was keenly distasteful. But it had to be gone through. So presently, after inquiry, he came to the open square where the new Court House stood, the dome of which was indicated by a mass of staging, and one wing still to be completed. Across from the building, on Market Street, and in the middle of the block, what had once been a golden hand pointed up a narrow dusty stairway.

Here was a sign, “Law office of Silas Whipple.”

Stephen climbed the stairs, and arrived at a ground glass door, on which the sign was repeated. Behind that door was the future: so he opened it fearfully, with an impulse to throw his arm above his head. But he was struck dumb on beholding, instead of a dragon, a good-natured young man who smiled a broad welcome. The reaction was as great as though one entered a dragon’s den, armed to the teeth, to find a St. Bernard doing the honors.

Stephen’s heart went out to this young man,—after that organ had jumped back into its place. This keeper of the dragon looked the part. Even the long black coat which custom then decreed could not hide the bone and sinew under it. The young man had a broad forehead, placid Dresden-blue eyes, flaxen hair, and the German coloring. Across one of his high cheek-bones was a great jagged scar which seemed to add

distinction to his appearance. That caught Stephen's eye, and held it. He wondered whether it were the result of an encounter with the Judge.

"You wish to see Mr. Whipple?" he asked, in the accents of an educated German.

"Yes," said Stephen, "if he isn't busy."

"He is out," said the other, with just a suspicion of a 'd' in the word. "You know he is much occupied now, fighting election frauds. You read the papers?"

"I am a stranger here," said Stephen.

"Ach!" exclaimed the German, "now I know you, Mr. Brice. The young one from Boston the Judge spoke of. But you did not tell him of your arrival."

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"I did not wish to bother him," Stephen replied, smiling.

"My name is Richter—Carl Richter, sir."

The pressure of Mr. Richter's big hands warmed Stephen as nothing else had since he had come West. He was moved to return it with a little more fervor than he usually showed. And he felt, whatever the Judge might be, that he had a powerful friend near at hand—Mr. Richter's welcome came near being an embrace.

"Sit down, Mr. Brice," he said; "mild weather for November, eh? The Judge will be here in an hour."

Stephen looked around him: at the dusty books on the shelves, and the still dustier books heaped on Mr. Richter's big table; at the cuspidors; at the engravings of Washington and Webster; at the window in the jog which looked out on the court-house square; and finally at another ground-glass door on which was printed:

*Silas Whipple*

*Private*

This, then, was the den,—the arena in which was to take place a memorable interview. But the thought of waiting an hour for the dragon to appear was disquieting. Stephen remembered that he had something over nine hundred dollars in his pocket (which he had saved out of his last year's allowance at the Law School). So he asked Mr. Richter, who was dusting off a chair, to direct him to the nearest bank.

"Why, certainly," said he; "Mr. Brinsmade's bank on Chestnut Street." He took Stephen to the window and pointed across the square. "I am sorry I cannot go with you," he added, "but the Judge's negro, Shadrach, is out, and I must stay in the office. I will give you a note to Mr. Brinsmade."

"His negro!" exclaimed Stephen. "Why, I thought that Mr. Whipple was an Abolitionist."

Mr. Richter laughed.

"The man is free," said he. "The Judge pays him wages."

Stephen thanked his new friend for the note to the bank president, and went slowly down the stairs. To be keyed up to a battle-pitch, and then to have the battle deferred, is a trial of flesh and spirit.

As he reached the pavement, he saw people gathering in front of the wide entrance of the Court House opposite, and perched on the copings. He hesitated, curious. Then he walked slowly toward the place, and buttoning his coat, pushed through the loafers and

passers-by dallying on the outskirts of the crowd. There, in the bright November sunlight, a sight met his eyes which turned him sick and dizzy.

Against the walls and pillars of the building, already grimy with soot, crouched a score of miserable human beings waiting to be sold at auction. Mr. Lynch's slave pen had been disgorged that morning. Old and young, husband and wife,—the moment was come for all and each. How hard the stones and what more pitiless than the gaze of their fellow-creatures in the crowd below! O friends, we who live in peace and plenty amongst our families, how little do we realize the terror and the misery and the dumb heart-aches of those days! Stephen thought with agony of seeing his own mother sold before his eyes, and the building in front of him was lifted from its foundation and rocked even as shall the temples on the judgment day.

## Page 23

The oily auctioneer was inviting the people to pinch the wares. Men came forward to feel the creatures and look into their mouths, and one brute, unshaven and with filthy linen, snatched a child from its mother's lap. Stephen shuddered with the sharpest pain he had ever known. An ocean-wide tempest arose in his breast, Samson's strength to break the pillars of the temple to slay these men with his bare hands. Seven generations of stern life and thought had their focus here in him,—from Oliver Cromwell to John Brown.

Stephen was far from prepared for the storm that raged within him. He had not been brought up an Abolitionist—far from it. Nor had his father's friends—who were deemed at that time the best people in Boston—been Abolitionists. Only three years before, when Boston had been aflame over the delivery of the fugitive Anthony Burns, Stephen had gone out of curiosity to the meeting at Faneuil Hall. How well he remembered his father's indignation when he confessed it, and in his anger Mr. Brice had called Phillips and Parker "agitators." But his father, nor his father's friends in Boston had never been brought face to face with this hideous traffic.

Hark! Was that the sing-song voice of the auctioneer? He was selling the cattle. High and low, caressing and menacing, he teased and exhorted them to buy. They were bidding, yes, for the possession of souls, bidding in the currency of the Great Republic. And between the eager shouts came a moan of sheer despair. What was the attendant doing now? He was tearing two of them from a last embrace.

Three—four were sold while Stephen was in a dream.

Then came a lull, a hitch, and the crowd began to chatter gayly. But the misery in front of him held Stephen in a spell. Figures stood out from the group. A white-haired patriarch, with eyes raised to the sky; a flat-breasted woman whose child was gone, whose weakness made her valueless. Then two girls were pushed forth, one a quadron of great beauty, to be fingered. Stephen turned his face away,—to behold Mr. Eliphalet Hopper looking calmly on.

"Wal, Mr. Brice, this is an interesting show now, ain't it? Something we don't have. I generally stop here to take a look when I'm passing." And he spat tobacco juice on the coping.

Stephen came to his senses.

"And you are from New England?" he said.

Mr. Hopper laughed.

“Tarnation!” said he, “you get used to it. When I came here, I was a sort of an Abolitionist. But after you’ve lived here awhile you get to know that niggers ain’t fit for freedom.”

Silence from Stephen.

“Likely gal, that beauty,” Eliphalet continued unrepressed. “There’s a well-known New Orleans dealer named Jenkins after her. I callate she’ll go down river.”

“I reckon you’re right, Mistah,” a man with a matted beard chimed in, and added with a wink: “She’ll find it pleasant enough—fer a while. Some of those other niggers will go too, and they’d rather go to hell. They do treat ’em nefarious down thah on the wholesale plantations. Household niggers! there ain’t none better off than them. But seven years in a cotton swamp,—seven years it takes, that’s all, Mistah.”

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Stephen moved away. He felt that to stay near the man was to be tempted to murder. He moved away, and just then the auctioneer yelled, "Attention!"

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I have heah two sisters, the prope'ty of the late Mistah Robe't Benbow, of St. Louis, as fine a pair of wenches as was ever offe'd to the public from these heah steps—"

"Speak for the handsome gal," cried a wag.

"Sell off the cart hoss fust," said another.

The auctioneer turned to the darker sister:

"Sal ain't much on looks, gentlemen," he said, "but she's the best nigger for work Mistah Benbow had." He seized her arm and squeezed it, while the girl flinched and drew back. "She's solid, gentlemen, and sound as a dollar, and she kin sew and cook. Twenty-two years old. What am I bid?"

Much to the auctioneer's disgust, Sal was bought in for four hundred dollars, the interest in the beautiful sister having made the crowd impatient. Stephen, sick at heart, turned to leave. Halfway to the corner he met a little elderly man who was the color of a dried gourd. And just as Stephen passed him, this man was overtaken by an old negress, with tears streaming down her face, who seized the threadbare hem of his coat. Stephen paused involuntarily.

"Well, Nancy," said the little man, "we had marvellous luck. I was able to buy your daughter for you with less than the amount of your savings."

"T'ank you, Mistah Cantah," wailed the poor woman, "t'ank you, suh. Praised be de name ob de Lawd. He gib me Sal again. Oh, Mistah Cantah" (the agony in that cry), "is you gwineter stan' heah an' see her sister Hester sol' to—to—oh, ma little Chile! De little Chile dat I nussed, dat I raised up in God's 'ligion. Mistah Cantah, save her, suh, f'om dat wicked life o' sin. De Lawd Jesus'll rewa'd you, suh. Dis ole woman'll wuk fo' you twell de flesh drops off'n her fingers, suh."

And had he not held her, she would have gone down on her knees on the stone flagging before him. Her suffering was stamped on the little man's face—and it seemed to Stephen that this was but one trial more which adversity had brought to Mr. Canter.

"Nancy," he answered (how often, and to how many, must he have had to say the same thing), "I haven't the money, Nancy. Would to God that I had, Nancy!"

She had sunk down on the bricks. But she had not fainted. It was not so merciful as that. It was Stephen who lifted her, and helped her to the coping, where she sat with her bandanna awry.



Stephen was not of a descent to do things upon impulse. But the tale was told in after days that one of his first actions in St. Louis was of this nature. The waters stored for ages in the four great lakes, given the opportunity, rush over Niagara Falls into Ontario.

“Take the woman away,” said Stephen, in a low voice, “and I will buy the girl,—if I can.”

The little man looked up, dazed.

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"Give me your card,—your address. I will buy the girl, if I can, and set her free."

He fumbled in his pocket and drew out a dirty piece of pasteboard. It read: "R. Canter, Second Hand Furniture, 20 Second Street." And still he stared at Stephen, as one who gazes upon a mystery. A few curious pedestrians had stopped in front of them.

"Get her away, if you can, for God's sake," said Stephen again. And he strode off toward the people at the auction. He was trembling. In his eagerness to reach a place of vantage before the girl was sold, he pushed roughly into the crowd.

But suddenly he was brought up short by the blocky body of Mr. Hopper, who grunted with the force of the impact.

"Gosh," said that gentleman, "but you are inters'ted. They ain't begun to sell her yet—he's waitin' for somebody. Callatin' to buy her?" asked Mr. Hopper, with genial humor.

Stephen took a deep breath. If he knocked Mr. Hopper down, he certainly could not buy her. And it was a relief to know that the sale had not begun.

As for Eliphalet, he was beginning to like young Brice. He approved of any man from Boston who was not too squeamish to take pleasure in a little affair of this kind.

As for Stephen, Mr. Hopper brought him back to earth. He ceased trembling, and began to think.

"Tarnation!" said Eliphalet. "There's my boss, Colonel Carvel across the street. Guess I'd better move on. But what d'ye think of him for a real Southern gentleman?"

"The young dandy is his nephew, Clarence Colfax. He callates to own this town." Eliphalet was speaking leisurely, as usual, while preparing to move. "That's Virginia Carvel, in red. Any gals down Boston-way to beat her? Guess you won't find many as proud."

He departed. And Stephen glanced absently at the group. They were picking their way over the muddy crossing toward him. Was it possible that these people were coming to a slave auction? Surely not. And yet here they were on the pavement at his very side.

She wore a long Talma of crimson cashmere, and her face was in that most seductive of frames, a scoop bonnet of dark green velvet. For a fleeting second her eyes met his, and then her lashes fell. But he was aware, when he had turned away, that she was looking at him again. He grew uneasy. He wondered whether his appearance betrayed his purpose, or made a question of his sanity.

Sanity! Yes, probably he was insane from her point of view. A sudden anger shook him that she should be there calmly watching such a scene.

Just then there was a hush among the crowd. The beautiful slave-girl was seized roughly by the man in charge and thrust forward, half fainting, into view. Stephen winced. But unconsciously he turned, to see the effect upon Virginia Carvel.

Thank God! There were tears upon her lashes.

Here was the rasp of the auctioneer's voice:— "Gentlemen, I reckon there ain't never been offered to bidders such an opportunity as this heah. Look at her well, gentlemen. I ask you, ain't she a splendid creature?"

## Page 26

Colonel Carvel, in annoyance, started to move on. "Come Jinny," he said, "I had no business to bring you aver."

But Virginia caught his arm. "Pa," she cried, "it's Mr. Benbow's Hester. Don't go, dear. Buy her for me You know that I always wanted her. Please!"

The Colonel halted, irresolute, and pulled his goatee Young Colfax stepped in between them.

"I'll buy her for you, Jinny. Mother promised you a present, you know, and you shall have her."

Virginia had calmed.

"Do buy her, one of you," was all she said

"You may do the bidding, Clarence," said the Colonel, "and we'll settle the ownership afterward." Taking Virginia's arm, he escorted her across the street.

Stephen was left in a quandary. Here was a home for the girl, and a good one. Why should me spend the money which meant so much to him. He saw the man Jenkin elbowing to the front. And yet—suppose Mr. Colfax did not get her? He had promised to buy her if he could, and to set her free:

Stephen had made up his mind: He shouldered his way after Jenkins.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FIRST SPARK PASSES

"Now, gentlemen," shouted the auctioneer when he had finished his oration upon the girl's attractions, "what 'tin I bid? Eight hundred?"

Stephen caught his breath. There was a long pause no one cared to start the bidding.

"Come, gentlemen, come! There's my friend Alf Jenkins. He knows what she's worth to a cent. What'll you give, Alf? Is it eight hundred?"

Mr. Jenkins winked at the auction joined in the laugh.

"Three hundred!" he said.

The auctioneer was mortally offended. Then some one cried:—"Three hundred and fifty!"

It was young Colfax. He was recognized at once, by name, evidently as a person of importance.

"Thank you, Mistah Colfax, suh," said the auctioneer, with a servile wave of the hand in his direction, while the crowd twisted their necks to see him. He stood very straight, very haughty, as if entirely oblivious to his conspicuous position.

"Three seventy-five!"

"That's better, Mistah Jenkins," said the auctioneer, sarcastically. He turned to the girl, who might have stood to a sculptor for a figure of despair. Her hands were folded in front of her, her head bowed down. The auctioneer put his hand under her chin and raised it roughly. "Cheer up, my gal," he said, "you ain't got nothing to blubber about now."

Hester's breast heaved and from her black eyes there shot a magnificent look of defiance. He laughed. That was the white blood.

The white blood!

Clarence Colfax had his bid taken from his lips. Above the heads of the people he had a quick vision of a young man with a determined face, whose voice rang clear and strong,— "Four hundred!"

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Even the auctioneer, braced two ways, was thrown off his balance by the sudden appearance of this new force. Stephen grew red over the sensation he made. Apparently the others present had deemed competition with such as Jenkins and young Colfax the grossest folly. He was treated to much liberal staring before the oily salesman arranged his wits to grapple with the third factor.

Four hundred from—from—from that gentleman. And the chubby index seemed the finger of scorn.

"Four hundred and fifty!" said Mr. Colfax, defiantly.

Whereupon Mr. Jenkins, the New Orleans dealer, lighted a very long cigar and sat down on the coping. The auctioneer paid no attention to this manoeuvre. But Mr. Brice and Mr. Colfax, being very young, fondly imagined that they had the field to themselves, to fight to a finish.

Here wisdom suggested in a mild whisper to Stephen that there was a last chance to pull out. And let Colfax have the girl? Never. That was pride, and most reprehensible. But second he thought of Mr. Canter and of Nancy, and that was not pride.

"Four seventy-five!" he cried.

"Thank you, suh."

"Now fur it, young uns!" said the wag, and the crowd howled with merriment.

"Five hundred!" snapped Mr. Colfax.

He was growing angry. But Stephen was from New England, and poor, and he thought of the size of his purse. A glance at his adversary showed that his blood was up. Money was plainly no consideration to him, and young Colfax did not seem to be the kind who would relish returning to a young lady and acknowledge a defeat.

Stephen raised the bid by ten dollars. The Southerner shot up fifty. Again Stephen raised it ten. He was in full possession of himself now, and proof against the thinly veiled irony of the oily man's remarks in favor of Mr. Colfax. In an incredibly short time the latter's impetuosity had brought them to eight hundred and ten dollars.

Then several things happened very quickly.

Mr. Jenkins got up from the curb and said, "Eight hundred and twenty-five," with his cigar in his mouth. Scarcely had the hum of excitement died when Stephen, glancing at Colfax for the next move, saw that young gentleman seized from the rear by his uncle, the tall Colonel. And across the street was bliss Virginia Carvel, tapping her foot on the pavement.

“What are you about, sir?” the Colonel cried. “The wench isn’t worth it.”

“Mr. Colfax shook himself free.

“I’ve got to buy her now, sir,” he cried.

“I reckon not,” said the Colonel. “You come along with me.”

Naturally Mr. Colfax was very angry. He struggled but he went. And so, protesting, he passed Stephen, at whom he did not deign to glance. The humiliation of it must have been great for Mr. Colfax. “Jinny wants her; sir,” he said, “and I have a right to buy her.”

“Jinny wants everything,” was the Colonel’s reply. And in a single look of curiosity and amusement his own gray eyes met Stephen’s. They seemed to regret that this young man, too, had not a guardian. Then uncle and nephew recrossed the street, and as they walked off the Colonel was seen to laugh. Virginia had her chin in the air, and Clarence’s was in his collar.

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The crowd, of course, indulged in roars of laughter, and even Stephen could not repress a smile, a smile not without bitterness. Then he wheeled to face Mr. Jerkins. Out of respect for the personages involved, the auctioneer had been considerably silent during the event. It was Mr. Brice who was now the centre of observation.

Come, gentlemen, come, this here's a joke—eight twenty-five. She's worth two thousand. I've been in the business twenty yea's, and I neve' seen her equal. Give me a bid, Mr.—Mr.—you have the advantage of me, suh."

"Eight hundred and thirty-five!" said Stephen.

"Now, Mr. Jerkins, now, suh! we've got twenty me' to sell."

"Eight fifty!" said Mr. Jerkins.

"Eight sixty!" said Stephen, and they cheered him.

Mr. Jenkins took his cigar out of his teeth, and stared.

"Eight seventy-five!" said he.

"Eight eighty-five!" said Stephen.

There was a breathless pause.

"Nine hundred!" said the trader.

"Nine hundred and ten!" cried Stephen.

At that Mr. Jerkins whipped his hat from off his head, and made Stephen a derisive bow.

"She's youahs, suh," he said. "These here are panic times. I've struck my limit. I can do bettah in Louisville fo' less. Congratulate you, suh —reckon you want her wuss'n I do."

At which sally Stephen grew scarlet, and the crowd howled with joy.

"What!" yelled the auctioneer. "Why, gentlemen, this heah's a joke. Nine hundred and ten dollars, gents, nine hundred and ten. We've just begun, gents. Come, Mr. Jerkins, that's giving her away."

The trader shook his head, and puffed at his cigar.

"Well," cried the oily man, "this is a slaughter. Going at nine hundred an' ten—nine ten—going—going—" down came the hammer—"gone at nine hundred and ten to Mr.—Mr.—you have the advantage of me, suh."



An attendant had seized the girl, who was on the verge of fainting, and was dragging her back. Stephen did not heed the auctioneer, but thrust forward regardless of stares.

"Handle her gently, you blackguard," he cried.

The man took his hands off.

"Suttinly, sah," he said.

Hester lifted her eyes, and they were filled with such gratitude and trust that suddenly he was overcome with embarrassment.

"Can you walk?" he demanded, somewhat harshly.

"Yes, massa."

"Then get up," he said, "and follow me."

She rose obediently. Then a fat man came out of the Court House, with a quill in his hand, and a merry twinkle in his eye that Stephen resented.

"This way, please, sah," and he led him to a desk, from the drawer of which he drew forth a blank deed.

"Name, please!"

"Stephen Atterbury Brice."

"Residence, Mr. Brice!"

Stephen gave the number. But instead of writing it down, the man merely stared at him, while the fat creases in his face deepened and deepened. Finally he put down his quill, and indulged in a gale of laughter, hugely to Mr. Brice's discomfiture.

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“Shucks!” said the fat man, as soon as he could.

“What are you givin’ us? That the’s a Yankee boa’din’ house.”

“And I suppose that that is part of your business, too,” said Stephen, acidly.

The fat man looked at him, pressed his lips, wrote down the number, shaken all the while with a disturbance which promised to lead to another explosion. Finally, after a deal of pantomime, and whispering and laughter with the notary behind the wire screen, the deed was made out, signed, attested, and delivered. Stephen counted out the money grimly, in gold and Boston drafts.

Out in the sunlight on Chestnut Street, with the girl by his side, it all seemed a nightmare. The son of Appleton Brice of Boston the owner of a beautiful quadroon girl! And he had bought her with his last cent.

Miss Crane herself opened the door in answer to his ring. Her keen eyes instantly darted over his shoulder and dilated, But Stephen, summoning all his courage, pushed past her to the stairs, and beckoned Hester to follow.

“I have brought this—this person to see my mother,” he said

The spinster bowed from the back of her neck. She stood transfixed on a great rose in the hall carpet until she heard Mrs. Brice’s door open and slam, and then she strode up the stairs and into the apartment of Mrs. Abner Reed. As she passed the first landing, the quadroon girl was waiting in the hall.

## CHAPTER VI

### SILAS WHIPPLE

The trouble with many narratives is that they tell too much. Stephen’s interview with his mother was a quiet affair, and not historic. Miss Crane’s boarding-house is not an interesting place, and the tempest in that teapot is better imagined than described. Out of consideration for Mr. Stephen Brice, we shall skip likewise a most affecting scene at Mr. Canter’s second-hand furniture store.

That afternoon Stephen came again to the dirty flight of steps which led to Judge Whipple’s office. He paused a moment to gather courage, and then, gripping the rail, he ascended. The ascent required courage now, certainly. He halted again before the door at the top. But even as he stood there came to him, in low, rich tones, the notes of a German song. He entered And Mr. Richter rose in shirt-sleeves from his desk to greet him, all smiling.

“Ach, my friend!” said he, “but you are late. The Judge has been awaiting you.”

“Has he?” inquired Stephen, with ill-concealed anxiety.

The big young German patted him on the shoulder.

Suddenly a voice roared from out the open transom of the private office, like a cyclone through a gap.

“Mr. Richter!”

“Sir!”

“Who is that?”

“Mr. Brice, sir.”

“Then why in thunder doesn’t he come in?”

Mr. Richter opened the private door, and in Stephen walked. The door closed again, and there he was in the dragon’s dens face to face with the dragon, who was staring him through and through. The first objects that caught Stephen’s attention were the grizzly gray eye brows, which seemed as so much brush to mark the fire of the deep-set battery of the eyes. And that battery, when in action, must have been truly terrible.

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The Judge was shaven, save for a shaggy fringe of gray beard around his chin, and the size of his nose was apparent even in the full face.

Stephen felt that no part of him escaped the search of Mr. Whipple's glance. But it was no code or course of conduct that kept him silent. Nor was it fear entirely.

"So you are Appleton Brice's son," said the Judge, at last. His tone was not quite so gruff as it might have been.

"Yes, sir," said Stephen.

"Humph!" said the Judge, with a look that scarcely expressed approval. "I guess you've been patted on the back too much by your father's friends." He leaned back in his wooden chair. "How I used to detest people who patted boys on the back and said with a smirk, 'I know your father.' I never had a father whom people could say that about. But, sir," cried the Judge, bringing down his fist on the litter of papers that covered his desk, "I made up my mind that one day people should know me. That was my spur. And you'll start fair here, Mr. Brice. They won't know your father here—"

If Stephen thought the Judge brutal, he did not say so. He glanced around the little room,—at the bed in the corner, in which the Judge slept, and which during the day did not escape the flood of books and papers; at the washstand, with a roll of legal cap beside the pitcher.

"I guess you think this town pretty crude after Boston, Mr. Brice," Mr. Whipple continued. "From time immemorial it has been the pleasant habit of old communities to be shocked at newer settlements, built by their own countrymen. Are you shocked, sir?"

Stephen flushed. Fortunately the Judge did not give him time to answer.

"Why didn't your mother let me know that she was coming?"

"She didn't wish to put you to any trouble, sir."

"Wasn't I a good friend of your father's? Didn't I ask you to come here and go into my office?"

"But there was a chance, Mr. Whipple—"

"A chance of what?"

"That you would not like me. And there is still a chance of it," added Stephen, smiling.

For a second it looked as if the Judge might smile, too. He rubbed his nose with a fearful violence.

“Mr. Richter tells me you were looking for a bank,” said he, presently.

Stephen quaked.

“Yes, sir, I was, but—”

But Mr. Whipple merely picked up the ‘Counterfeit Bank Note Detector’.

“Beware of Western State Currency as you would the devil,” said he. “That’s one thing we don’t equal the East in—yet. And so you want to become a lawyer?”

“I intend to become a lawyer, sir.”

“And so you shall, sir,” cried the Judge, bringing down his yellow fist upon the ‘Bank Note Detector’. “I’ll make you a lawyer, sir. But my methods ain’t Harvard methods, sir.”

“I am ready to do anything, Mr. Whipple.”

The Judge merely grunted. He scratched among his papers, and produced some legal cap and a bunch of notes.

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"Go out there," he said, "and take off your coat and copy this brief. Mr. Richter will help you to-day. And tell your mother I shall do myself the honor to call upon her this evening."

Stephen did as he was told, without a word. But Mr. Richter was not in the outer office when he returned to it. He tried to compose himself to write, although the recollection of each act of the morning hung like a cloud over the back of his head. Therefore the first sheet of legal cap was spoiled utterly. But Stephen had a deep sense of failure. He had gone through the ground glass door with the firm intention of making a clean breast of the ownership of Hester. Now, as he sat still, the trouble grew upon him. He started a new sheet, and ruined that: Once he got as far as his feet, and sat down again. But at length he had quieted to the extent of deciphering ten lines of Mr. Whipple's handwriting when the creak of a door shattered his nerves completely.

He glanced up from his work to behold—none other than Colonel Comyn Carvel.

Glancing at Mr. Richter's chair, and seeing it empty, the Colonel's eye roved about the room until it found Stephen. There it remained, and the Colonel remained in the middle of the floor, his soft hat on the back of his head, one hand planted firmly on the gold head of his stick, and the other tugging at his goatee, pulling down his chin to the quizzical angle.

"Whoopee!" he cried.

The effect of this was to make one perspire freely. Stephen perspired. And as there seemed no logical answer, he made none.

Suddenly Mr. Carvel turned, shaking with a laughter he could not control, and strode into the private office the door slammed behind him. Mr. Brice's impulse was flight. But he controlled himself.

First of all there was an eloquent silence. Then a ripple of guffaws. Then the scratch-scratch of a quill pen, and finally the Judge's voice.

"Carvel, what the devil's the matter with you, sir?"

A squall of guffaws blew through the transom, and the Colonel was heard slapping his knee.

"Judge Whipple," said he, his voice vibrating from suppressed explosions, "I am happy to see that you have overcome some of your ridiculous prejudices, sir."

"What prejudices, sir?" the Judge was heard to shout.

“Toward slavery, Judge,” said Mr. Carvel, seeming to recover his gravity. “You are a broader man than I thought, sir.”

An unintelligible gurgle came from the Judge. Then he said.

“Carvel, haven’t you and I quarrelled enough on that subject?”

“You didn’t happen to attend the nigger auction this morning when you were at the court?” asked the Colonel, blandly.

“Colonel,” said the Judge, “I’ve warned you a hundred times against the stuff you lay out on your counter for customers.”

“You weren’t at the auction, then,” continued the Colonel, undisturbed. “You missed it, sir. You missed seeing this young man you’ve just employed buy the prettiest quadroon wench I ever set eyes on.”

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Now indeed was poor Stephen on his feet. But whether to fly in at the one entrance or out at the other, he was undecided.

"Colonel," said Mr. Whipple, "is that true?"

"Sir!"

"*Mr. Brice!*"

It did not seem to Stephen as if he was walking when he went toward the ground glass door. He opened it. There was Colonel Carvel seated on the bed, his goatee in his hand. And there was the Judge leaning forward from his hips, straight as a ramrod. Fire was darting from beneath his bushy eyebrows. "Mr. Brice," said he, "there is one question I always ask of those whom I employ. I omitted it in your case because I have known your father and your grandfather before you. What is your opinion, sir, on the subject of holding human beings in bondage?"

The answer was immediate,—likewise simple.

"I do not believe in it, Mr. Whipple."

The Judge shot out of his chair like a long jack-in-the box, and towered to his full height.

"Mr. Brice, did you, or did you not, buy a woman at auction to-day?"

"I did, sir."

Mr. Whipple literally staggered. But Stephen caught a glimpse of the Colonel's hand slipping from his chin cover his mouth.

"Good God, sir!" cried the Judge, and he sat down heavily. "You say that you are an Abolitionist?"

"No, sir, I do not say that. But it does not need an Abolitionist to condemn what I saw this morning."

"Are you a slave-owner, sir?" said Mr. Whipple.

"Yes, sir."

"Then get your coat and hat and leave my office, Mr. Brice."

Stephen's coat was on his arm. He slipped it on, and turned to go. He was, if the truth were told, more amused than angry. It was Colonel Carvel's voice that stopped him.

"Hold on, Judge," he drawled, "I reckon you haven't got all the packing out of that case."





Mr. Whipple looked at him in a sort of stupefaction. Then he glanced at Stephen.

"Come back here, sir," he cried. "I'll give you hearing. No man shall say that I am not just."

Stephen looked gratefully at the Colonel.

"I did not expect one, sir," he said..

"And you don't deserve one, sir," cried the Judge.

"I think I do," replied Stephen, quietly.

The Judge suppressed something.

"What did you do with this person?" he demanded

"I took her to Miss Crane's boarding-house," said Stephen.

It was the Colonel's turn to explode. The guffaw which came from him drowned every other sound.

"Good God!" said the Judge, helplessly. Again he looked at the Colonel, and this time something very like mirth shivered his lean frame. "And what do you intend to do with her?" he asked in strange tones.

"To give her freedom, sir, as soon as I can find somebody to go on her bond."

Again silence. Mr. Whipple rubbed his nose with more than customary violence, and looked very hard at Mr. Carvel, whose face was inscrutable. It was a solemn moment.

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"Mr. Brice," said the Judge, at length, "take off your coat, sir I will go her bond."

It was Stephen's turn to be taken aback. He stood regarding the Judge curiously, wondering what manner of man he was. He did not know that this question had puzzled many before him.

"Thank you, sir," he said.

His hand was on the knob of the door, when Mr. Whipple called him back abruptly. His voice had lost some of its gruffness.

"What were your father's ideas about slavery, Mr. Brice?"

The young man thought a moment, as if seeking to be exact.

"I suppose he would have put slavery among the necessary evils, sir," he said, at length. "But he never could bear to have the liberator mentioned in his presence. He was not at all in sympathy with Phillips, or Parker, or Summer. And such was the general feeling among his friends."

"Then," said the Judge, "contrary to popular opinion in the West and South, Boston is not all Abolition."

Stephen smiled.

"The conservative classes are not at all Abolitionists, sir."

"The conservative classes!" growled the Judge, "the conservative classes! I am tired of hearing about the conservative classes. Why not come out with it, sir, and say the moneyed classes, who would rather see souls held in bondage than risk their worldly goods in an attempt to liberate them?"

Stephen flushed. It was not at all clear to him then how he was to get along with Judge Whipple. But he kept his temper.

"I am sure that you do them an injustice, sir," he said, with more feeling than he had yet shown. "I am not speaking of the rich alone, and I think that if you knew Boston you would not say that the conservative class there is wholly composed of wealthy people. Many of my father's friends were by no means wealthy. And I know that if he had been poor he would have held the same views."

Stephen did not mark the quick look of approval which Colonel Carvel gave him. Judge Whipple merely rubbed his nose.

"Well, sir," he said, "what were his views, then?"

“My father regarded slaves as property, sir. And conservative people” (Stephen stuck to the word) “respect property the world over. My father’s argument was this: If men are deprived by violence of one kind of property which they hold under the law, all other kinds of property will be endangered. The result will be anarchy. Furthermore, he recognized that the economic conditions in the South make slavery necessary to prosperity. And he regarded the covenant made between the states of the two sections as sacred.”

There was a brief silence, during which the uncompromising expression of the Judge did not change.

“And do you, sir?” he demanded.

“I am not sure, sir, after what I saw yesterday. I—I must have time to see more of it.”

“Good Lord,” said Colonel Carvel, “if the conservative people of the North act this way when they see a slave sale, what will the Abolitionists do? Whipple,” he added slowly, but with conviction, “this means war.”



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Then the Colonel got to his feet, and bowed to Stephen with ceremony.

"Whatever you believe, sir," he said, "permit me to shake your hand. You are a brave man, sir. And although my own belief is that the black race is held in subjection by a divine decree, I can admire what you have done, Mr. Brice. It was a noble act, sir,—a right noble act. And I have more respect for the people of Boston, now, sir, than I ever had before, sir."

Having delivered himself of this somewhat dubious compliment (which he meant well), the Colonel departed.

Judge Whipple said nothing.

## CHAPTER VII

### CALLERS

If the Brices had created an excitement upon their arrival, it was as nothing to the mad delirium which raged at Miss Crane's boarding-house. during the second afternoon of their stay. Twenty times was Miss Crane on the point of requesting Mrs. Brice to leave, and twenty times, by the advice of Mrs. Abner Deed, she desisted. The culmination came when the news leaked out that Mr. Stephen Brice had bought the young woman in order to give her freedom. Like those who have done noble acts since the world began, Stephen that night was both a hero and a fool. The cream from which heroes is made is very apt to turn.

"Phew!" cried Stephen, when they had reached their room after tea, "wasn't that meal a fearful experience? Let's find a hovel, mother, and go and live in it. We can't stand it here any longer."

"Not if you persist in your career of reforming an Institution, my son," answered the widow, smiling.

"It was beastly hard luck," said he, "that I should have been shouldered with that experience the first day. But I have tried to think it over calmly since, and I can see nothing else to have done." He paused in his pacing up and down, a smile struggling with his serious look. "It was quite a hot-headed business for one of the staid Brices, wasn't it?"

"The family has never been called impetuous," replied his mother. "It must be the Western air."

He began his pacing again. His mother had not said one word about the money. Neither had he. Once more he stopped before her.

“We are at least a year nearer the poor-house,” he said; “you haven’t scolded me for that. I should feel so much better if you would.”

“Oh, Stephen, don’t say that!” she exclaimed. “God has given me no greater happiness in this life than the sight of the gratitude of that poor creature, Nancy. I shall never forget the old woman’s joy at the sight of her daughter. It made a palace out of that dingy furniture shop. Hand me my handkerchief, dear.”

Stephen noticed with a pang that the lace of it was frayed and torn at the corner.

There was a knock at the door.

“Come in,” said Mrs. Brice, hastily putting the handkerchief down.

Hester stood on the threshold, and old Nancy beside her.

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"Evenin', Mis' Brice. De good Lawd bless you, lady, an' Miste' Brice," said the old negress.

"Well, Nancy?"

Nancy pressed into the room. "Mis' Brice!"

"Yes?"

"Ain' you gwineter' low Hester an' me to wuk fo' you?"

"Indeed I should be glad to, Nancy. But we are boarding."

"Yassm, yassm," said Nancy, and relapsed into awkward silence. Then again, "Mis' Brice!"

"Yes, Nancy?"

"Ef you 'lows us t' come heah an' straighten out you' close, an' mend 'em —you dunno how happy you mek me an' Hester—des to do dat much, Mis' Brice."

The note of appeal was irresistible. Mrs. Brice rose and unlocked the trunks.

"You may unpack them, Nancy," she said.

With what alacrity did the old woman take off her black bonnet and shawl! "Whaffor you stannin' dere, Hester?" she cried.

"Hester is tired," said Mrs. Brice, compassionately, and tears came to her eyes again at the thought of what they had both been through that day.

"Tired!" said Nancy, holding up her hands. "No'm, she ain' tired. She des kinder stupefied by you' goodness, Mis' Brice."

A scene was saved by the appearance of Miss Crane's hired girl.

"Mr. and Mrs. Cluyme, in the parlor, mum," she said.

If Mr. Jacob Cluyme sniffed a little as he was ushered into Miss Crane's best parlor, it was perhaps because of the stuffy dampness of that room. Mr. Cluyme was one of those persons the effusiveness of whose greeting does not tally with the limpness of their grasp. He was attempting, when Stephen appeared, to get a little heat into his hands by rubbing them, as a man who kindles a stick of wood for a visitor. The gentleman had red chop-whiskers,—to continue to put his worst side foremost, which

demanded a ruddy face. He welcomed Stephen to St. Louis with neighborly effusion; while his wife, a round little woman, bubbled over to Mrs. Brice.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Cluyme, "I used often to go to Boston in the forties. In fact—ahem—I may claim to be a New Englander. Alas, no, I never met your father. But when I heard of the sad circumstances of his death, I felt as if I had lost a personal friend. His probity, sir, and his religious principles were an honor to the Athens of America. I have listened to my friend, Mr. Atterbury,—Mr. Samuel Atterbury,—eulogize him by the hour."

Stephen was surprised.

"Why, yes," said he, "Mr. Atterbury was a friend."

"Of course," said Mr. Cluyme, "I knew it. Four years ago, the last business trip I made to Boston, I met Atterbury on the street. Absence makes no difference to some men, sir, nor the West, for that matter. They never change. Atterbury nearly took me in his arms. 'My dear fellow,' he cried, 'how long are you to be in town?' I was going the next day. 'Sorry I can't ask you to dinner,' says he, but step into the Tremont House and have a bite.'—Wasn't that like Atterbury?"

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Stephen thought it was. But Mr. Cluyme was evidently expecting no answer.

“Well,” said he, “what I was going to say was that we heard you were in town; ‘Friends of Samuel Atterbury, my dear,’ I said to my wife. We are neighbors, Mr. Brace. You must know the girls. You must come to supper. We live very plainly, sir, very simply. I am afraid that you will miss the luxury of the East, and some of the refinement, Stephen. I hope I may call you so, my boy. We have a few cultured citizens, Stephen, but all are not so. I miss the atmosphere. I seemed to live again when I got to Boston. But business, sir,—the making of money is a sordid occupation. You will come to supper?”

“I scarcely think that my mother will go out,” said Stephen.

“Oh, be friends! It will cheer her. Not a dinner-party, my boy, only a plain, comfortable meal, with plenty to eat. Of course she will. Of course she will. Not a Boston social function, you understand. Boston, Stephen, I have always looked upon as the centre of the universe. Our universe, I mean. America for Americans is a motto of mine. Oh, no,” he added quickly, “I don’t mean a Know Nothing. Religious freedom, my boy, is part of our great Constitution. By the way, Stephen—Atterbury always had such a respect for your father’s opinions—”

“My father was not an Abolitionist, sir,” said Stephen, smiling.

“Quite right, quite right,” said Mr. Cluyme.

“But I am not sure, since I have come here, that I have not some sympathy and respect for the Abolitionists.”

Mr. Cluyme gave a perceptible start. He glanced at the heavy hangings on the windows and then out of the open door into the hall. For a space his wife’s chatter to Mrs. Brace, on Boston fashions, filled the room.

“My dear Stephen,” said the gentleman, dropping his voice, “that is all very well in Boston. But take a little advice from one who is old enough to counsel you. You are young, and you must learn to temper yourself to the tone of the place which you have made your home. St. Louis is full of excellent people, but they are not precisely Abolitionists. We are gathering, it is true, a small party who are for gradual emancipation. But our New England population here is small yet compared to the Southerners. And they are very violent, sir.”

Stephen could not resist saying, “Judge Whipple does not seem to have tempered himself, sir.”

“Silas Whipple is a fanatic, sir,” cried Mr. Cluyme.



“His hand is against every man’s. He denounces Douglas on the slightest excuse, and would go to Washington when Congress opens to fight with Stephens and Toombs and Davis. But what good does it do him? He might have been in the Senate, or on the Supreme Bench, had he not stirred up so much hatred. And yet I can’t help liking Whipple. Do you know him?”

A resounding ring of the door-bell cut off Stephen’s reply, and Mrs. Cluyme’s small talk to Mrs. Brice. In the hall rumbled a familiar voice, and in stalked none other than Judge Whipple himself. Without noticing the other occupants of the parlor he strode up to Mrs. Brice, looked at her for an instant from under the grizzled brows, and held out his large hand.

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"Pray, ma'am," he said, "what have you done with your slave?"

Mrs. Cluyme emitted a muffled shriek, like that of a person frightened in a dream. Her husband grasped the curved back of his chair. But Stephen smiled. And his mother smiled a little, too.

"Are you Mr. Whipple?" she asked.

"I am, madam," was the reply.

"My slave is upstairs, I believe, unpacking my trunks," said Mrs. Brice.

Mr. and Mrs. Cluyme exchanged a glance of consternation. Then Mrs. Cluyme sat down again, rather heavily, as though her legs had refused to hold her.

"Well, well, ma'am!" The Judge looked again at Mrs. Brice, and a gleam of mirth lighted the severity of his face. He was plainly pleased with her —this serene lady in black, whose voice had the sweet ring of women who are well born and whose manner was so self-contained. To speak truth, the Judge was prepared to dislike her. He had never laid eyes upon her, and as he walked hither from his house he seemed to foresee a helpless little woman who, once he had called, would fling her Boston pride to the winds and dump her woes upon him. He looked again, and decidedly approved of Mrs. Brice, and was unaware that his glance embarrassed her.

"Mr. Whipple," she said,— "do you know Mr. and Mrs. Cluyme?"

The Judge looked behind him abruptly, nodded ferociously at Mr. Cluyme, and took the hand that fluttered out to him from Mrs. Cluyme.

"Know the Judge!" exclaimed that lady, "I reckon we do. And my Belle is so fond of him. She thinks there is no one equal to Mr. Whipple. Judge, you must come round to a family supper. Belle will surpass herself."

"Umph!" said the Judge, "I think I like Edith best of your girls, ma'am."

"Edith is a good daughter, if I do say it myself," said Mrs. Cluyme. "I have tried to do right by my children." She was still greatly flustered, and curiosity about the matter of the slave burned upon her face. Neither the Judge nor Mrs. Brice were people one could catechise. Stephen, scanning the Judge, was wondering how far he regarded the matter as a joke.

"Well, madam," said Mr. Whipple, as he seated himself on the other end of the horsehair sofa, "I'll warrant when you left Boston that you did not expect to own a slave the day after you arrived in St. Louis."

“But I do not own her,” said Mrs. Brice. “It is my son who owns her.”

This was too much for Mr. Cluyme.

“What!” he cried to Stephen. “You own a slave? You, a mere boy, have bought a negress?”

“And what is more, sir, I approve of it,” the Judge put in, severely. “I am going to take the young man into my office.”

Mr. Cluyme gradually retired into the back of his chair, looking at Mr. Whipple as though he expected him to touch a match to the window curtains. But Mr. Cluyme was elastic.

“Pardon me, Judge,” said he, “but I trust that I may be allowed to congratulate you upon the abandonment of principles which I have considered a clog to your career. They did you honor, sir, but they were Quixotic. I, sir, am for saving our glorious Union at any cost. And we have no right to deprive our brethren of their property of their very means of livelihood.”

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The Judge grinned diabolically. Mrs. Cluyme was as yet too stunned to speak. Only Stephen's mother sniffed gunpowder in the air.

"This, Mr. Cluyme," said the Judge, mildly, "is an age of shifting winds. It was not long ago," he added reflectively, "when you and I met in the Planters' House, and you declared that every drop of Northern blood spilled in Kansas was in a holy cause. Do you remember it, sir?"

Mr. Cluyme and Mr. Cluyme's wife alone knew whether he trembled.

"And I repeat that, sir," he cried, with far too much zeal. "I repeat it here and now. And yet I was for the Omnibus Bill, and I am with Mr. Douglas in his local sovereignty. I am willing to bury my abhorrence of a relic of barbarism, for the sake of union and peace."

"Well, sir, I am not," retorted the Judge, like lightning. He rubbed the red spat on his nose, and pointed a bony finger at Mr. Cluyme. Many a criminal had grovelled before that finger. "I, too, am for the Union. And the Union will never be safe until the greatest crime of modern times is wiped out in blood. Mind what I say, Mr. Cluyme, in blood, sir," he thundered.

Poor Mrs. Cluyme gasped.

"But the slave, sir? Did I not understand you to approve of Mr. Brice's ownership?"

"As I never approved of any other. Good night, sir. Good night, madam." But to Mrs. Brice he crossed over and took her hand. It has been further claimed that he bowed. This is not certain.

"Good night, madam," he said. "I shall call again to pay my respects when you are not occupied."