

# GARDENER HELEN HAMILTON

AN UNOFFICIAL PATRIOT

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# **Helen Gardener**

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### **CHAPTER I. – A SON OF VIRGINIA**

Griffith Davenport was a clergyman. I tell you this at the outset, so that you may be prepared to take sides with or against him, as is your trend and temperament. Perhaps, too, it is just as well for me to make another statement, which shall count in his favor or to his disadvantage, according to your own prejudices or convictions. He was a Southern man. He had been a slave-owner, and now he was neither the one nor the other. But in connection with, and in explanation of these last-mentioned facts, I may say that he had been a law-breaker in his native State, and was, at the very time of which I tell you, evading the law in the State of his adoption.

Both of these facts were the direct results of having been born to slave-ownership, and, at the same time, with a conscience which was of, and in harmony with, a different latitude and heredity. I trust that you will not infer from this last remark that I am of the opinion that the conscience of the Northern habitant is of more delicate fiber than is that of his Southern brother, who is of the same mental and social grade; for nothing could be farther from either the facts or my intentions herein. But that it is of a different type and trend is equally beyond controversy. The prickings of the one are as regular and as incessant, no doubt, as are those of the other; but the stimulating causes have different roots. Perhaps, too, it may sound strange to you to hear of one who can be spoken of as having a somewhat sensitive conscience and at the same time as being both a law-breaker and a law-evader. But certain it is, that with a less primitive conception of laws and of men, you will be able to adjust, to a nicety, the ideas therein conveyed, and also to realize how true it is that times, conditions, and environment sometimes determine the standard by which the rightfulness or wrongfulness of conduct is measured, and that it is quite within the possibilities for a man to be at once a law-breaker and a good man, or a law-keeper and a bad one.

But I am not intending to warp your judgment in advance, and you are to remember that whatever my opinion of the quality of the Rev. Griffith Davenport's conduct may be, there is another side to the matter, and that I shall not take it greatly to heart if you should find yourself on the other side.

But if, as I have sometimes heard readers say – who looked upon themselves as of a somewhat superior order – you do not take an interest in people who have placed themselves outside of the beaten pathway of legal regularity, it will be just as well for you to lay this little story aside now, for, as I have said, it is a story of a clergyman, a slave-holder, a law-breaker, and a law-evader, which, I admit, does not at the first blush present a picture to the mind of a person in whom you and I, my lofty and immaculate friend, would be greatly interested, or with whom we would care to associate for any protracted period. Still, I intend to tell the story, and in order to give you a perfectly clear idea of how all the more important events in this curiously complicated life came about, I shall be compelled to go back to the boyhood of young Davenport, so that you may catch a glimpse of the life and training, which were a prelude and a preparation – if you do not wish to look upon them as exactly a justification – of and for the later years of the life, which experienced such strange trials, complications and vicissitudes.

It was in the year eighteen hundred and twenty-four that the great sea of Methodism first began to beat with a force that was like that of a succession of mighty tidal waves upon the previously placid State of Virginia. Young Davenport had, at that time, just turned his fifteenth year, but it was not until nearly four years later, when the tide of interest and excitement had swept with a power and influence impossible to picture in these days of religious indifference and critical inquiry, into the

homes and over the barriers of long-established things, that young Griffith's home felt the invasion to be a thing which it behooved gentlemen to consider seriously, or even to recognize as existing, if one may so express it, in an official sense.

As I suggested before, it would be difficult, in these later and less emotional days, when every school-boy knows of doubts and questionings in the minds of his elders, to picture adequately the serene lack of all such doubts and questionings in Griffith Davenport's boyhood.

To be sure there were, and, I venture to assume, always had been, disagreement and disputes over forms, methods, and meanings; but these were not fundamental doubts of fundamental beliefs, of which it would be entirely safe to say that young Davenport had never in his whole life heard one little doubt expressed or intimated, or that a question existed that could tend to make any one suspect that there were or could be unsettled realms in the system and plan of salvation as laid down by Christianity. He supposed, of course, that Christianity was an incontrovertible, fixed, and final religion. Different sects he knew there were, but all of these accepted the basic principle of Christianity. All sprang from the same root. Some grew eastward, some westward, and some made straight for heaven like the center shaft of a great oak; but each and all were true limbs of the same healthful trunk whose roots found anchorage in the bed-rock of eternal truth. He did not know that there were other trees quite as vigorous and even more expansive, each of which had sprung from the seed of human longing to solve the unsolvable. The "heathen" he had heard of, of course, in a condemnatory or pitying way, but he did not know or think of their worship as "religion." It was "fetichism," idolatry, superstition. Of Deists, he had heard, if at all, but vaguely; for it must be remembered that in the year of our blessed Lord eighteen hundred and twenty-seven the name of that famous Deist, Thomas Paine, who had done so much for the liberty and dignity of the great new nation, was not honored as it is to-day, and, indeed, so dense was the philosophical ignorance of that time, that the mention of the name of the author-hero of the Revolution was seldom made except in execration and contumely. Even of the Jews, from whom his religion came, Griffith had heard no good. They had slain the Christ, had they not? Their own God condemned the act, did he not?

Young Davenport supposed that this was all true. He also supposed that because of a blunder, made in ignorance and passion, in an age long past, a whole race had ever since been under the chastising hand of a just Jehovah, who had decreed that their humiliation and the expiation of the fatal blunder should be eternal. That there were Jews who were to-day good, devout and religious who still approved the attitude of Pilate toward the Christ, he did not know. He counted this class, therefore, as in some sort, Christians also. Mistaken in method, no doubt; superstitious and blundering perhaps; but still secretly filled with sorrow and shame for the awful crime of their race, and accepting the verdict of God and the disciplining punishment of time, he had no doubt of their final acceptance of what he believed established as eternal Truth, and their consequent redemption and salvation. The easy-going, gentle Episcopalianism of his home-training, with its morning and evening, perfunctory, family prayers, its "table grace" and its Sunday service, where all the leading families of the county were to be seen, and where the Rector read with so much finish and the choir sang so divinely, the same old hymns, week after week, had so far been as much a part of his life, – and were accepted as mechanically, – as were the daily meals, the unpaid negro labor, and the fact that his father, the old "Squire," sat in the best pew, because he had built and endowed the finest church in the State.

All these things had come to Griffith as quite a matter of course; as some equally important things have come to you and to me – and not at all as matter of surprise or as questions for argument.

That his father, the old major, swore roundly, from time to time, at the slaves, did not appeal to the boy's mind as either strange or reprehensible; so true is it that those things which come to us gradually, and in the regular order of events, do not arouse within us doubts and questionings as do sudden or startling additions to our development or intellectual equipment, when thrust unexpectedly in upon our ordinary surroundings. Such moral or social questions as were involved in the ownership

of slaves had, up to that time, produced no more mental qualms in the boy than have the same questions as to ownership of lands or of horses upon you or me at the present time.

Jerry had been Griffith's own particular "boy" ever since he could remember, and, although Jerry was the older of the two, it would be wholly unfair to all parties concerned not to state clearly and fully that the righteousness and inevitability of the relationship of owned and owner, had no more sinister meaning for Jerry than it had for his young "Mos' Grif." So prone are we all to accept as a finality that to which custom has inured us.

Was Jerry an Episcopalian? Most assuredly! Were not all of the Davenports members of the established order in all things? And was not Jerry a Davenport? Not one negro on the whole plantation had ever for one little moment thought of himself as other than an Episcopalian, – in so far as the Almighty would permit one whose skin was black to be of the elect. They one and all felt a real and eager pride in the social and religious status of the Davenports, and had never even harbored a doubt that they would be permitted to polish the harps and hold the horses of that fortunate family when all should again be reunited in that better world, where all might be free but not equal – for "as one star differed from another," etc. No different dreams had ever, so far, visited master or slave.

"I could never be happy in heaven without Jerry," had settled the question in Griffith's mind, for of course his own destination was sure. And the negro felt equally secure when he thought, "Mos' Grif ain't gwine ter go nowhah widout me. Nobody else ain't gwine ter take cahr ob him. Nobody else know how."

But the unsettling times which brought Methodism, in a great and overwhelming wave, into the ranks of established things, brought also mutterings and perplexities and awakenings of another sort. Aroused energies, stimulated consciences, excited mentalities are ever likely to find varying outlets. Progressive movements seldom travel singly, and so it came about that, mingled with the new religious unrest, there were other and, perhaps you will say, graver questions so inextricably joined, in some minds that the one appeared to be the root and cause of the other.

"Is slavery right? If it is right for the laity, at least, is it not wrong for one who is an apostle of the Son of God, who had not where to lay His head? Should black men be free men?" and all the disturbing horde of questions which followed in the train of the new religion, began to float, at first in intangible ways, in the air. A little later they took form in scowl or hasty word, and at last crept into sermons, social discussions and legislative deliberations, as by degrees the echo of these latter floated down from Washington or filtered through other sources, from the Border States, where the irrepressible conflict had arisen in a new form to vex the souls and arouse the passions of men. The pressing question of free soil or slave extension had already begun to urge itself upon the public mind and to harass the Border States, finding utterance for or against that Congressional measure known as the Missouri Compromise Bill. Young Griffith Davenport had spent his seventeen years in an atmosphere of scholarly investigation and calm, where little of even the echoes of these disturbing influences had come. His home was a comfortable one – indeed, the finest in all that part of the valley; the library quite unusual in extent and quality for the time and place. Grif's tutor was a University man, his pleasures those of a country 'squire; for in Virginia, as in England, the office of "esquire," or justice of the peace, was wont to pass from father to eldest son, in families of consideration; and, indeed, at that early age Grif's father had, by degrees, turned the duties of the office over to the boy, until now no one expected to consult the "old 'squire" upon any ordinary topic. The "young 'squire" settled it, whether it were a dispute over dog-slain sheep or a misunderstanding about the road tax.

Upon this placid, "established" finality of existence it was, then, which descended a cyclone. Formalism in religion had run its course. The protest was swift, impassioned, sincere. Vigorous, earnest, but often unlearned men sprang into prominence at a single bound. Arguments arose. Men began to ask if the Almighty was pleased with forms in which the soul was dead – if mere words, and not sincere emotion of the heart, gratified God. Was it worship to simply read or repeat the words

of another? Must not one's own soul, mind and heart furnish the key, as well as the medium, to aid in real devotion? Had the letter killed the spirit?

Young Griffith heard. The ideas fascinated him. Oaths from his father's lips struck him with a new meaning and a different force. Whereas they had been mere vocal emphasis, now they were fearful maledictions – and from a leading Christian, *the* leading Christian of the county!

Griffith pondered, trembled, listened again to the new religious teachers – to whose meetings he had, at first, gone in a spirit of mild fun, not in the least reprobated by his father – and had, at last, tremblingly, passionately believed.



## CHAPTER II

*"I paint him in character."*

– *Shakespeare*

That a Davenport should seriously contemplate leaving the "Mother Church." as the devotees of the Anglican establishment were given to calling their branch of the real Roman mother, was a proposition too absurd to be considered; and the old Major met his son's first suggestions, wherein this tendency was indicated, as the mere vaporings of a restless, unformed boy. He laughed loudly, geyed his son openly, and inquired jocosely which one of the pretty Methodist girls had struck his fancy.

"If it turns out to be serious, Grif, and you marry her, she will, as a matter of course, transfer her membership to the Mother Church. A true wife always follows her husband in all things. 'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,' you know, Grif. Good old saying. Bible truth, my son. But who is the happy girl, you young scamp? There is rather a paucity of thoroughbreds among the Methodists, as they call this new craze. Don't make *that* kind of a mistake, my boy, whatever else you do. Better keep inside the paddock."

The old Major chuckled, and, turning on his heel, left his son covered with confusion, and with a sense of impotent zeal and conviction to which he could not or dared not give voice.

That this question of a truer, warmer, more personally stirring religious life did not touch a single responsive chord in the Major's nature, filled the son, anew, with misgivings. At first, these questionings led him to doubt himself, and to wonder if it could, after all, be possible that his own youth, inexperience and provincialism might really not lie at the root of his new unrest. He went to the Methodist meetings with a fresh determination to be serenely critical, and not to yield to the onrush of emotion which had grown so strong within him as he had listened, in the past, to the passionate and often ruggedly-eloquent appeals of the pioneers of the new faith – or, perhaps, it were better to say, to the new expression of the old faith. He gave up his extra Latin lessons, which had been his delight and the pride of his tutor and of his family, that he might have these hours for the study of the Bible and the few other books carried by the colporteurs or the circuit riders, who were beginning to overrun the State.

The old Major disapproved, but it was not his way to discuss matters with his family; and it may be doubted, indeed, if the Major grasped the significance and force of the tide which had overtaken his son, as it had rushed with the power of a flood over his beloved Virginia and left in its wake a tremendous unrest, and carried before it many of the most sincere and forceful characters and questions. Beyond a few twittings and an occasional growl, therefore, the old Major had ignored his son's gradual withdrawal from the ancient forms and functions and the fact that almost every Sunday morning, of late, had found the boy absent from the family pew and present two miles up the valley at the little log meeting-house of the Methodists. He was unprepared, therefore, to face the question seriously, when finally told by the boy's mother that Grif had decided that on his nineteenth birthday he would be baptized, and that he intended to enter the ministry as a circuit rider.

The joke struck the Major as good above the average. He laughed long and loud. He chuckled within himself all day. When evening came and Griffith appeared at the table the Major was too full of mirth and derision to content himself with his usual banter.

"Your mothah inforhms me," he began with the ironical touch in his tone held well under the sparkle of humor. "Your mothah inforhms me that to-morrow is your nineteenth birthday, you long-legged young gosling, and that you contemplate celebrating it by transmuting yourself into a Methodist ass with leather lungs and the manners, sir, – and the habits, sir, of – of – of a damned Yankee!"

As the Major had halted for words and the picture of his son as a circuit rider arose before him as a reality and not as a joke, his ire had gotten the better of his humor. The picture he had conjured up in his own mind of this son of his in the new social relations sure to result from the contemplated change of faith swamped the old Major's sense of the absurdity of the situation in a sudden feeling of indignation and chagrin, and the sound of his own unusual words did the rest.

Griffith looked up at his father in blank surprise. His mother said, gently, "Majah! Majah!" But the old 'squire's sudden plunge into anger had him in its grip. He grew more and more excited as his own words stirred him.

"Yes, sir, like a damned northern tackey that comes down here amongst respectable people to talk to niggers, and preach, as they call their ranting, to the white trash that never owned a nigger in their whole worthless lives, and tell'em about the 'unrighteousness' of slavery! Why don't they read their Bibles if they know enough to read? *It* teaches slavery plain enough – 'Servants obey your masters in all things,' and 'If a man sell his servant,' and 'His servant is his money,' and a good many more! Why don't they read their Bibles, I say, and shout if they want to, and attend to their own business? Nobody wants their long noses down here amongst reputable people, sowing seeds of riot and rebellion among the niggers!" The Major had forgotten his original point but it came back to him as Grif began to speak.

"But, sir–"

"But, sir!" he said, rising from his chair in his excitement, "don't 'but, sir,' me! I'm disgusted and ashamed, sir! Ashamed from the bottom of my hawt, that a son of mine – a Davenport – could for one moment contemplate this infernal piece of folly! A circuit rider, indeed! A damned disturber of niggers! A man with, no traditions! Shouting and having fits and leading weak-minded women and girls, and weaker-minded boys and niggers into unpardonable, disgraceful antics and calling it religion! Actually having the effrontery to call it religion! It's nothing but infernal rascality in half the cases and pitiable insanity in the other half, and if I'd been doing my duty as a 'squire I'd have taken the whole pestiferous lot up and put one set in jail and the other set in an asylum, long ago! Look at'em! Ducking 'converts,' as they call their dupes, in the creek! Perfectly disgraceful, sir! I forbid you to go about their meetings again, sir! Yes, sir, once and for all, I forbid it!"

The Major brought his fist down on the table with a bang that set the fine china rattling and added the last straw of astonishment and discomfort to the unusual family jar; for few indeed had ever been the occasions upon which even a mild degree of paternal authority had not been so quickly followed by ready and willing compliance that an outbreak of anything like real temper or authoritative command – other than at or toward the slaves – had been hardly within Grif's memory.

The boy arose, trembling and pale, and leaving his untouched plate of choice food before him turned to leave the room.

"Come back here, sir!" commanded the old Major. "Take your seat, sir, and eat your supper, sir, and –"

Mrs. Davenport burst into tears. The boy hesitated, parted his lips as if to speak, looked at his mother, and with a sudden movement of his hand toward a little book which he always carried these later days in his breast-pocket, he stepped to his mother's side. There was a great lump in his throat. He was straggling for mastery of himself but his voice broke into a sob as he said:

"'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.'" He kissed his mother's forehead and passed swiftly out of the room. His horse stood at the front gate waiting the usual evening canter. Griffith threw his long leg over the saddle, and said to Jerry, who stood holding the bridle of his own horse, ready to follow as was his custom: "I don't want you to-night, Jerry. Stay at home. Good-night," and rode away into the twilight.

It would be difficult to say just what Griffith's plan was. Indeed, it had all been so sudden and so out of the ordinary trend of his life, that there was a numb whirl of excitement, of pain and of

blind impulse too fresh within him to permit of anything like consecutive thought. But, with Grif, as with most of us when the crises of our lives come, fate or chance or conditions have taken the reins to drive us. We are fond of saying – and while we are young we believe – that we decided thus or thus; that we converted that condition or this disaster into an opportunity and formed our lives upon such and such a model. All of which is – as a rule – mere fond self-gratulation. The fact is, although it may wound our pride to acknowledge it, that we followed the line of least resistance (all things being considered, our own natures included) and events did the rest. And so when Grif turned an angle in the road, two miles from home, and came suddenly upon the circuit rider, who was to baptize the new converts on the following day, and when Brother Prout took it for granted that Grif was on his way to the place of gathering in order to be present at the preliminary meeting, it seemed to Grif that he had originally started from home with that object in view. His thoughts began to center around that idea. The pain and shock of the home-quarrel, which he had simply started out to ride off, to think over, to prepare to meet on the morrow, gradually faded into a dull hurt, which made the phrases and quotations and exhortations of Brother Prout sound like friendly and personal utterances of soothing and of paternal advice, and so the two miles stretched into ten and the camp-ground was reached, and for Griffith, the die was cast.

## CHAPTER III. – THE IRONY OF FATE

It has been well said that the heresies of one generation are the orthodox standards of the next; and it is equally true that the great convulsive waves of emotion, belief, patriotic aspiration or progressive emulation of the leaders of thought of one age, for which they are martyred by the conventionally stupid majority, become the watchwords and uncontrovertible basis of belief for the succeeding generation of the respectably unthinking, and furnish afresh, alas! the means, the motives and the power for the crucifixion of the prophets and thinkers of the new cycle. Mediocrity is forever sure that nothing better or loftier is in store. Genius sees eternal progress in perpetual change.

Much of the doings and many of the sayings of the new religious sect seemed to the people about them full of heresy, dangerous in tendency, and, indeed, blasphemous in its enthusiasms and its belief in and effort for an intimate personal relationship with a prayer-answering and a praise-loving God. To Grif, Brother Prout's fervor and enthusiasm of expression, his prayers which seemed the friendly communications of one who in deed and in truth walked with his God, instead of the old, perfunctory, formal reading of set phrases arranged for special days, which had to be hunted up in a book and responded to by all in exactly the same words, and with the same utter want of personal feeling, to Grif, these fervid, passionate, sincere and simple appeals of the kind old enthusiast seemed like the very acme and climax of a faith which might, indeed, move mountains.

"Amen! amen!"

"Praise the Lord, O my soul!"

"Thanks be to Almighty God!" echoed along the banks of the river, the loved Opquan, that had been to Grif a friend and companion from his earliest boyhood. He had never stood by its banks without an onrush of feeling that had tended to burst into a song of joy! From his grandfather's front porch and from the windows of his own room at home he could see it winding through the rocky hills and struggling for its right to reach the sea. He had skipped pebbles on it and waded across it at low tide, and had stood in awe at its angry and impetuous swirl when the spring rains had swollen it to a torrent of irresistible force. It seemed to Grif now that its waters smiled at him, and his eyes filled with tears that were of happiness not unmingled with a tender pain and regret – regret for he knew not what.

"Joy to the world, the Lord has come!" rang out with a volume and an impassioned sincerity which gave no room for the critical ear of the musician nor for the carping brain of the skeptic, had either been there to hear. "Let earth receive her King!" The hills in the distance took up the melody, and it seemed to the overwrought nerves of the boy that nothing so beautiful in all the world had ever been seen or heard before. "Let every heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing!" Ah, was not heaven and nature, indeed, singing the most glorious song the earth had ever heard or seen when she made this valley? When she built these mountains, and threaded that little river over the stones? Griffith was lost in an intoxication of soul and sense. He was looking across the valley to the old home. His hands were clenched until the nails were marking the palms, and his voice rang out so clear and true that the neighborhood boys touched each other and motioned toward the young fellow with almost a sense of envy. Neither cultured musician nor cynic was there, and the softness of the air lent charm to the simple exercises which some of the youths had come in a spirit of fun to deride. It was restful to the weary, stimulating to the sluggish and soothing to the unhappy. They were carried out of their narrow and monotonous lives. If Griffith's heart had been sore and in a condition to be soothed by the words and prayers of Father Prout, how much more were his nerves and emotions in that unstrung and vaguely wounded and impressionable state where physical change and reaction is easily mistaken for religious fervor or exaltation, how much more was he in that state where melody joined to nature's most profligate mood of beauty in scene leads captive the soul!

During the meeting which had followed his arrival at the camp-ground Grif had passed through that phase of physical reaction which meant to him a "leading of the spirit" and, as he stood now on

the banks of his beloved river pouring out his young heart in the hymn of his boyish fancy, he no longer doubted that he had, indeed, been "called" to be a circuit rider and to cast his lot with the new order of religions enthusiasts. He looked now upon his previous doubts as temptations of the devil and put, once and for all, their whisperings behind him and accepted the new lot as heaven and God-sent and intended.

Father Prout gave to all of his converts a choice in the form of their baptism. Leaning, himself, toward immersion, he still held that sprinkling was sufficient and with a lingering memory of his father's fling at "ducking converts in the creek," Griffith had determined to be sprinkled; but, as the last echoes of the old hymn died away, he stepped to the bank and indicated that he would be immersed. As he arose from the water his face was radiant, and when he had removed his immersion robe his eyes filled with happy tears as his father rode up to the edge of the grounds and held out his arms to the boy.

"My son," he said tremulously, "my son, forgive me. I have been unhappy all night. I did not realize that I was swearing at you until your mothah told me. Come home, my boy, and your new friends will be welcome at Rock Hall. God bless you, my son, come home, your mothah is unhappy."

Mr. Lengthy Patterson, a long-legged, cadaverous mountaineer who had wended his way from the distant fastnesses of the high perched log cabin which he called home and wherein he ate and slept when he was not engaged in those same occupations out under the stars where night – during his hunting and fishing expeditions – chanced to overtake him, had been watching Grif all day. The boy's radiant face the past hour had fascinated him. In his absorption he had stepped so close to the old Major as he and Grif stood making ready for the homeward ride, that Mr. Davenport made an instinctive gesture of impatient disapproval which called the naturally deferential woodsman back to his normal mental state.

"It is Lengthy Patterson, father," said Griffith, with his ever-ready impulse to cover the confusion of the unlucky or ignorant who were intrusive without a knowledge of the fact until a recognition of disapproval made self-consciousness painful.

Mr. Davenport moved as if to make amends for his previous manner by an offer to shake hands with the mountaineer – an unheard-of proceeding on the 'Squire's part.

"Oh, it's Lengthy Patterson, is it? I beg your pahrdon, Mr. a – Lengthy. I did not recognize you at –"

The long legs had moved slowly away. He turned around, tilted his half rimless hat further on to the back of his head, in lieu of lifting it, and in a voice as evenly graded to one single note as is that of a flying loon, remarked, as he kept on his way:

"No excuse. Say nothin'. Few words comprehends the whole."

"What did that fellow say, Grif?" asked his father, as they mounted.

Griffith laughed rather hysterically. The reaction was coming.

"It's just a phrase he has, father. They say he never was known to say anything else; but I expect that is a joke. He's an honest fellow and a splendid woodsman. He knows every crack in the mountains, and is a perfect terror to rattlesnakes. Don't you remember? He is the fellow who saved the old Randolph house that time it took fire, and got the children out. They say when Mrs. Randolph went away up to his cabin to thank him, he remarked that 'a few words comprehended the whole,' and fled the mountain until he was sure she had gone. He appears to be afraid of the English language and of nothing else on earth."

There was a long silence. The old Major was turned half out of his saddle, as was a habit of his, to rest himself. The horses were taking their own gait. Presently they turned a curve in the road and Grif suddenly threw his arm across his father's shoulder and leaned far over toward him. "Kiss me, father," he said, and before the moisture had dried out of their eyes and the great lump left their throats, both laughed a little in that shame-faced fashion men have when, with each other, they have

yielded to their natural and tender emotions. But both horses understood and broke into a steady lope, and the chasm was bridged.

"Dars Mos' Grif! Dars Mos' Grif an' ole Mos'!" exclaimed Jerry as he saw the two horsemen in the distance. "Dey comin', Mis' Sallie, dey is dat! Lawsy me, Mis' Sallie, dey want no uste fer yo' ter be skeered dat a way 'bout Mos' Grif. He's des dat staidy dat yo' c'd cahry wattah on he haid, let er 'lone Selim ain't gwine ter let no trouble come ter Mos' Grif. But I dus 'low dat'e oughter a tuck dis chile erlong wid'im ter look arter'im, dough. Dat's a fack. I knows dat. Run inter de kitchen, Lippy Jane, an' tell yo' maw dat Mos' Grif an' ole Mos' mose heah, an' she better git dem dar chicken fixins all raidy quick as ebber she kin. Dey gwine ter be hongry, sho's yo' bohn, dey is dat."

Lippy Jane sped away on her errand with that degree of enthusiasm which sprang from a consciousness of bearing a welcome message to expectant listeners, when suddenly, as she passed a group of idle compeers, one of the boys flung upon her lower lip, where it lodged and dangled in squirming response to her every motion, a long yellow apple peeling. She did not pause in her onward course, but called back in belligerent tones at the offender:

"I des gwine ter lef dat erlone dar, now, an' show hit ter Mos' Grif! I is dat! You nasty little nigger!" and she reappeared, after giving her message in the kitchen, with the pendant peel still reposing upon the superfluous portion of the feature to which she was indebted for her name.

## CHAPTER IV. – THE REV. GRIFFITH DAVENPORT

So desirable a candidate was speedily ordained, and Brother Prout himself rode with the boy on his two first rounds of the not far-distant circuit which was soon to be placed in charge of this youth who had so suddenly taken on the duties, responsibilities and desires of a man. Grif's temperament had always been so merry and frank and full of the joyful side of life that he found himself at once ill at ease and hampered by the feeling that he must curb his spirits. Brother Prout, whose own nature was only less buoyant, patted Grif on the back and advised against the change which he clearly saw the boy was trying to compass.

"Don't grow dull, Brother Davenport," he said one day, as they were riding toward the home of one of their members to make a pastoral visit. "Don't grow dull and old before your time. Religion is joy, not gloom. Your message to these people is happiness. Let your bright young face and voice bear testimony for the Lord, and prove to them that all His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are paths of peace. Let your neighbors see that in forsaking your old life you have not lost the best and most glorious part of it. You take that with you in addition to the rest. Laugh with them that laugh, and weep with them that weep. I'm an old man, now, and I never did have your spirits; but we need just that in our labors, my son. Don't allow yourself to grow dull. With your nature you will win and not drive souls to the Lord."

Such advice cheered the boy and made him feel less strongly the great change in his life. The long hours of riding his fine horse over the roads and by-paths of his beloved and beautiful valley; the talks with friends or strangers who were never strangers for long, since mutual acquaintance or intermarriage had made of the whole state almost one family, proved attractive and interesting to him. He found in this new work a real and fresh happiness. Fording swollen streams, searching for obscure mountain passes, riding alone or with a chance companion through extensive stretches of woodland, listening to, and often answering the notes of birds or the cry of some animal, were congenial occupations to the young parson, and his form rounded out and his face gradually settled into mature but gentle and kindly lines, and it was now grown to be his invariable rule to compose his sermons as he rode. He never wrote them. Some text would fix itself in his mind as he read his little black Testament night or morning, and upon that text he would build a simple and kindly talk which reached and touched his handful of listeners as no elaboration of rhetoric could have done.

Some days he would ride along for miles, humming or singing a single tune, while a train of thought for his next sermon was building itself up in his mind. Selim, the fine young sorrel, knew quite well what to do, and fell into a walk or a gentle canter, according to the briskness or volume of the notes that rose over his back. If "How-tedious-and-tasteless-the-hours, when-Jesus-no-longer-I-see," trailed out softly, with long and undeviated breaks in the continuity of sound and sense, Selim walked demurely, and saw no ghosts or interesting things whatsoever in woods or stream or distant valley. But when "Joy to the world! The Lord has come!" rang out, continuous and clear, Selim knew that he might even shy at a stone, and make believe a set state of terror at sight of a familiar old post or a startled groundhog; or that if he were to break into an unexpected gallop, no harm would be done, and that he would be pretty sure of some playful remarks and a bit of teasing from the rider, whose sermon, Selim knew full well, was finished. But so long as "Joy to the mm-mmmm-mmmmm-mmm-Let earth mmmm – mmmmmmmher King," greeted his ears, Selim knew that the responsibility of ford or path rested with him, and many a ford did Selim take before his rider realized that he had come to it. If swimming were necessary, Selim struck out with a powerful stroke, and came up on the other bank with a proud stamp of his feet and a whinny that bid for the recognition of his prowess that he knew was sure to come to him.

"Whoa, old fellow! Stop and get your wind! Steady! That was a pretty stiff current, wasn't it? There, take a nibble! Been some pretty heavy rains around here, haven't there? But what do you and

I care about rains and currents? Whoa, there, you rascal, keep your nose off my sleeve! O, you will, will you? Well, there, there, there, I've wiped it all off as good as ever. T-h-a-t's right; nip off some of these fresh buds. Here, let's take our bit out. Tastes better, doesn't it? Oh, you will, will you, old wet nose? Ha! ha! ha! Selim, you know more than most folks, you old hum-bug!"

If his master sat down and became absorbed in thought, or in his little black book, Selim would browse about for an hour; but at the first note of a hymn the faithful fellow came to have his bridle replaced, and was ready for a gallop or a walk, as his rider should indicate.

At first the young circuit rider would take a swollen ford, when a safer one could have been found a mile or two farther on, or he would ride miles out of his way to make a pass in the mountains, when, had he known the fact, an obscure but safe one was near at hand. But, as the years passed by, both Selim and his master would have scorned a guide, and, night or day, the country became to them like the fields of one's own estate, so familiar were they with it all. In this pass was a great nesting place, where, year after year, the circuit rider talked aloud to the birds, and fancied that they knew him. Many a friendly note of reply to his whistle or call gained a hearty laugh.

"Feel jokey to-day, do you, you ridiculous Bob White? Wish I could translate that into English. Know it was a good joke from the twist you gave it, but I'm no linguist. You'll have to excuse me if I don't reply intelligently," he would call out to some unusually individualized note, and Selim would whisk his tail in utter disapproval of a man who would so foolishly converse with birds – such little insignificant things as they were – when here was a full-grown, blooded horse, right under his nose! The pride and arrogance of species is great within us all – and Selim had associated much with man.

"Hello! Where's that great-grandfather of yours that I saw here the last time we crossed your ford?" Griffith remarked aloud to a frisky little trout, as it whisked past Selim's feet. "Hope nobody's caught him. Give him my regards when you get home."

Just then Selim's feet struck the bank, and, as he scrambled up, he shied a little, and his master recognized the long legs before him as those of the mountaineer in homespun trousers and hickory shirt, who had vexed the old Major at the baptizing in the Opquan that now seemed so long ago.

"Good-morning – " began the young minister, when Lengthy's gun went suddenly to his shoulder, there was a flash, a report, Selim sprang to one side, and the mountaineer poked with his gun where the horse had stood. "Look down. Say nothin'." Few words comprehend the whole he remarked to the astonished circuit rider, as he held up on the end of his gun a still writhing, ugly, dying snake, which had been coiled to spring. He was too confused, or too mentally embryonic to do more than grin in gratified silence at the thanks and compliments from the young preacher; for it was somewhat infrequently that Lengthy was addressed by one of Griffith's type, and the very sincerity of his evident admiration for the circuit rider still farther handicapped his already abnormally developed awkwardness of manner. It is possible that the vocabulary of this swarthy mountaineer (whose six feet and seven inches of bone and sinew had fixed upon him the only name that Pastor Davenport had ever heard applied to him), it is possible, I say, that his vocabulary may have been fuller than it was generally supposed to be. Among his fellows it is just possible that he may have ventured upon language with more freedom; but certain it is that when Lengthy was in the presence of what he was pleased to call "quality," the limitations were painfully apparent, and there was a legend – which appeared to have as solid a basis as belongs to most – that whatever slight variations he might venture upon as an opening remark, the *finale*, if one may so express it, was sure to be the same.

Mr. Davenport asked after his health, that of his family, the neighborhood in general and finally, unable to extract anything beyond a nod or a single word from the giant who had pitched the still squirming rattlesnake from the end of his gun into the river, Griffith took another tack.

"River seems to be unusually high. Selim had all he could do, didn't you, old fellow? Been having a freshet here, haven't you?"

Lengthy pointed with his gun, to the remnants of a rail fence, now high on the bank, in the top rails of which clung half-dry weeds and river refuse.



"Look there. Few words comprehend th' whole."

Griffith smiled, gave up the task of conversing with his admirer, shook the bridle on Selim's neck and with a cheery "Well, I'm glad to have met you. Good-bye," rode on toward the village where he was soon to begin his first year's pastorate as a "located" preacher. As he rode along he almost regretted the change. These had been happy years to the simple-hearted, but ardent young fellow; but he was consoled when he saw before him in mental vision the home in which pretty, black-eyed Katherine LeRoy was to preside – for the young circuit rider had found his fate and, alas! it had not been inside the Episcopal paddock nor even in the Methodist fold – such pranks does Fate play with us, such liberties does Cupid take, even with the hearts of those whose mission it is to deal with other things! Very early in the new life Griffith had stayed one night at the hospitable home of Katherine's father. In spite of all, his heart was lonely and his face less bright than in the old days. Miss Katherine saw. Miss Katherine was kind – and Miss Katherine's sweet face traveled many a mile with the young preacher after he, as Selim was well aware, should have been humming a hymn and composing that sermon for the morrow. But Selim was discreet; and when he shook his head or whinnied or changed his gait and Griffith did not heed, Selim plodded demurely on and waited. But as the months had gone by and Selim had carried the young master up the same lane a few times and had observed the same silent abstraction after each visit, he had grown to know very well indeed that this was a marked house and that Griffith liked to go there. So it came to pass that after the dark eyes had traveled with the young preacher and peered over his shoulder into his Testament and interfered sadly with the trend of his thoughts on sacred things, it had grown to be very certain to Griffith that something would have to be done. Then it was that for the first time he thought how little he had to offer. Not even a home! Not even his own companionship! For all these six years he had traveled his different circuits and slept where he found himself as night came on, and preached here or there as he had been directed. His home had been literally in his saddle, and his salary had been too insignificant to mention. The old Major, who to a degree, had become reconciled to the new order of things, had at first insisted that Jerry follow and care for the young master; but Griffith had argued that it ill became one who had taken such a step to take with him a body servant, and it had almost broken Jerry's heart to be compelled to stay at the old home-place and allow young Mos' Grif to saddle and feed Selim, if need be, and care for and brush his own clothes. This latter had, indeed, led to the loss of most of his limited wardrobe, for he had left behind him, at the house of some "member" a piece of clothing or some toilet article very often, at the first; but as it never failed to be returned to him on his next round, the leather saddle-bags retained about the same proportions from month to month, replenished as they were by his mother and Jerry on his frequent visits home.

But it was when the thought of a wife and a home of his own first came to Griffith that the life of a circuit rider grew less attractive and he wondered if it would be right to ask to be "located" or "stationed" as some of the married men were. To be sure they must change their "station" year by year and so tear up the little roots they could strike in so brief a period, but at least it gave something like a home and a "charge" to the preacher, and he – not his family – was the sole subject of solicitude and consideration to the authorities who governed his movements. Had not the Lord said to those whom He sent forth to preach that they must go from place to place leaving behind all family ties? Had not He so lived? Had not Paul and Timothy and the twelve? Later on had it not been so with the many until wealth and love of ease and the things of this world undermined the true faith?

But human nature is strong, and all faiths in the past have – as all in the future will continue to do – accommodated themselves to the human needs and demands of those who sustain the theory as infallible, immutable, unchangeable and unchanging; but modify it to fit the times, the natures and the conditions in which they strike root. If Mohammed will not go to the mountain, the mountain will come to Mohammed.

So when the young circuit rider had stopped again, as had grown to be his habit, with the family of Katherine LeRoy, and when she, with quaint coquetry, had met his equally quaint courtship by

finally accepting him on condition that he "take a charge" he had asked the presiding elder to locate him as a married man for the next year since he was about to marry. Brother Prout had approved, and the matter had been settled with little difficulty.

The courtship was unique. The young parson had grown to be so great a favorite where-ever he went that his cheerfulness, his kindly, simple and sincere nature insured him hearty welcome even outside of his own flock. His superior birth and breeding made him a marked man within his denomination. Many were the speculations as to which rosy-cheeked Methodist girl he would find nearest his ideal, and jokes were many at the expense of this or that one if he but stopped twice at her father's house.

At last it became plain that in one neighborhood he preferred to stay overnight with the family of Bernard LeRoy, a staunch and uncompromising Presbyterian, and it did not take long for others to discover why; but so sure was Mr. LeRoy, himself, that it was to his own superiority to his neighbors that the visits were due, that the times when a few words alone with Miss Katherine were possible were few indeed. The large, ready, hearty hospitality of the time and of Virginia were exemplified in this household. All welcomed him. Old, young, white and black alike; and the wide porch or great rooms and halls gave space and hearty invitation to family and neighborly gatherings. So it came about that at last Griffith felt that he could wait no longer. He must know his fate. The demure Katherine had reduced him to a mere spirit of unrest in spite of the presence of others, and while all sat talking of crops, politics, religion, neighborhood happenings, rains, swollen streams and the recent freaks of lightning, the young minister took from his pocket the little black Testament and drew a line around the words, "Wilt thou go with this man?" and handing it to Miss Katherine he asked: "Will you read and answer that question for me, Miss Katherine?" Their eyes met, and although Griffith returned to his seat and essayed to go on with the conversation with her father, they both understood.

Her dark eyes ran over the words, her color rose and fell, but, contrary to the hope of the young preacher, she did not mark and return the reply. She carelessly turned the leaves and his heart sank. He gave abstracted replies to her father and twice failed to hear what was said, and still Miss Katherine turned the leaves. At last he believed that she had either not understood or that she did not intend to reply, and with a sinking heart he rose to go. Selim had been put away. The circuit rider was always expected to stay overnight. He explained in a vague way that this time it would be best for him to go to a Methodist neighbor's two miles farther on. Was it that reply which decided dark-eyed Katherine not to farther tease her lover? Did she fear the wiles of the plump, demure girl in the quaint, unribboned bonnet who looked such open admiration into the eyes of the young preacher. However that may be, certain it is that at this juncture and under cover of the general movement to send for the guest's horse, Miss Katherine took from her belt a pansy and putting it between the pages to mark where she had drawn a line, she gave the little book back to its owner. He saw the movement and glanced within: "Why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldst take knowledge of me – seeing I am a stranger?" He read and his heart leaped. "A stranger!" She was not of his fold! It was *that* she thought of! He looked at her and both understood. He could ride away now and both would be content, even though he were under the roof with the quaint little Methodist bonnet.

As they moved toward the door the two young people managed to pass out alone and Griffith took her in his arms for one brief instant and kissed her lips.

"Thank God!" he whispered. "Thank God, for this last and holiest blessing! I love you next to my Saviour, Katherine. Sometimes I pray it may not be more than I love Him."

She laughed, a soft little ripple, and drew back just as her father appeared at the door.

"I shall not pray that," she said, as he mounted, and the young preacher rode away into the darkness with no disapproval of the heresy upon his radiant face. Selim knew that this was a strange proceeding – this late departure – and he shook his head so violently that the buckles of his bridle rattled. The young minister made no sign, but when, a little farther on, there suddenly arose over

his back, the notes of a long-forgotten song, Selim cast one eye backward and started at the break-neck pace of his youth.

"The moon is beaming brightly, love.  
Te tom te turn te te!  
A trusty crew is waiting, love,  
Away, away with me!"

Selim's surprise knew no bounds. He had not heard that song since before the day his young master went, for some strange reason, into the Opquan river, with Brother Prout. Something unusual had happened, that was very clear. Something that carried the young preacher quite out of himself and into a world where sermons and hymns were not; and, although the song was gay, Selim felt a tag at his bridle that meant a slower pace.

"Yea! old fellow, y-e-a!" Selim was surprised again. He stopped short.

"G'ap! g'lang!"

"Far o'er the deep, o'er the deep, o'er the d e-e-o p,  
Far o'er the deep blue sea!  
Far o'er the deep, o'er the deep, o'er the d-o-o-o-p,  
Far o'er the deep blue sea!  
Oh, come and share a sailor's heart – for o'er the deep blue sea!"

Perhaps Selim was not exactly scandalized, but he felt that it would not be judicious to reach the home of the quaint Methodist bonnet too prematurely. And Selim walked.

## CHAPTER V. – A man's conscience

But all this was away back in the years when you and I were not born, my friend, and, therefore, the only reason I tell you about it or expect you to be interested in such simple and far-off lives is that you may know something of the early habits and surroundings of the man who, I began by warning you, became a lawbreaker; for, I hold it to be a self-evident fact that however true it is that heredity stamps the character with its basic principles and qualities, it is never wise to forget that it is to environment, circumstance and education that we owe its modifications and the direction of its final development. But now that you will be able to picture to yourself the man as he then was, and his surroundings and conditions, I will tell you as directly as I can the story of his offense; but first I must explain that when his coming marriage to Miss Katherine LeRoy was announced at his home, the old Major objected again, but this time more mildly, to the choice his son had made.

"Her people are good, wholesome, respectable folks, my son," he said; "but – but, Grif, why couldn't you have found a girl of – well, one of the families you were brought up with. Mind, boy, I'm not saying anything against Miss Katherine. I've heard – and I don't doubt it – that she is a mighty nice sort of a girl; but –"

The Major had grown milder in his methods with his son, and he hesitated to speak words which might cause pain hereafter.

"Of course, Grif," he went, on after an awkward pause, "of course, if you love each other – and – and – well, if the thing is settled, I have only to congratulate you, and to say that I am truly glad to have you settle down, so I'll be able to know where you are. It's deucedly disagreeable not to know from week to week where to put a finger on you – such a tacky sort of shifty sensation about it. I can know now at least a year at a time. Perfectly ridiculous custom it is to move a preacher just when he gets acquainted with the people, and they begin to trust him! Infernal habit! I'd as soon live on a boat and just anchor from time to time in another stream and call it home – and – and living. I've come to respect your sincerity, Grif, but I can't respect the sense of a denomination that has no idea of the absolute value of stability, of continuity of association, between its pastor and its people. Why, just look at the thing! It uproots the best sentiments in both, and makes a wanderer of one who ought to be, not only by precept, but by example, stable and faithful and continuously true to those who look up to him. Why, a scamp can pose for a year or two as a saint; but it takes real value to live a lifetime in a community and be an inspiration and a guide to your members. Then just look at it! Nobody who has any self-respect is going to talk of his inner life to a stranger! We are all alike in that. We pose and pretend and keep our shutters up, mentally and morally, with a new-comer. Gad! I can't see the wisdom nor the sense of any such rules."

"Has its good points, father," said Grif, whose quiet chuckle from time to time had stirred the Major to unusual earnestness. He wanted to get at his son's real views on the subject. "Has some redeeming qualities, after all, father, quite aside from the Bible teaching upon which the leaders of our church base it. There are men – even ministers, I'm afraid, whom one enjoys much better when they are on another circuit; and I may as well confess to you that there are circuits a man enjoys a good deal better when he's not on them – after he has left."

"Some of the old boy in you yet, Grif," laughed the Major, slapping his son on the back. "Better not say that to Father Prout, or he will keep you on one of that kind for discipline." Jerry was filled with delight when told of the coming marriage of Mos' Grif. Jerry's own wife had long since presented him with twins, and it was his delight to show off the antics of these small ebony creatures to Griffith whenever he was at home. It was at first arranged that this family only should go to form the new household.

The mutterings born in a different clime and under other conditions had now reached proportions which could not be wholly ignored. In many a long ride over the mountain or valley paths

in the past few years had Griffith pondered the question, and he had definitely decided in his own mind that for one who had cast his lot with the itinerant Methodist clergy, at least, the ownership of slaves was wrong. He would never buy nor sell a human being. Upon that point his mind was clearly and unalterably made up. But Jerry and his family were to be a part of the new household while yet they remained, as before, the old Major's property. To this Griffith had consented readily, for Miss Katherine must have an efficient cook and Jerry would be of infinite use. Griffith had drawn a picture of a small house in the village in which this beautiful dream of his was to be realized; but, as the time drew near, the old Major developed his own plans with such skill as to carry his point.

When the house was to be looked for he said: "See here, Grif, you are a good deal younger than I am, and some of the older slaves are pretty hard to manage. They can't work a great deal, and they get into mischief one way and another. Look at that set oyer in the end cabin – they always did like you best – and since you have been gone so much they are a good deal of trouble to me. They've got to be cared for somehow. I wish you'd take them. They can do a lot of useful things if they are away from the others, and you can get twice as much work out of them as I can. They are stubborn with me, and it wears my soul out to deal with'em. I've needed your help a good many times since you've been away, but I did not like to say much. I think, now you are going to settle down, that you ought to think of your father's needs a little, too."

Grif winced. He recalled that he had always pushed his father's problem aside in his thoughts when he had settled or solved his own. He realized how unfair that was. He felt the force of the Major's complaint.

"Of course, I'll do anything I can, father, to help you; but I can't take a lot of negroes to a village and – "

"That's just it! Just it, exactly! Of course you can't. I didn't intend to ask you just yet, but I want you to give up that foolish idea of taking Katherine to town to live. She can't stand it. You are asking enough of a woman, God knows, to ask her to put up with your sort of life anyhow, let alone asking a girl that has been respectably brought up on a plantation to give all that up and go to a miserable little village. It is not decent to live that way! Cooped up with a lot of other folks in a string of narrow streets! I'd a good deal rather go to jail and done with it. Now, what I want and what I need you to do, is to take that other plantation – the one down, on the river – your grandfather's place – and take some of the hands down there and you can let them work the place. How in the name of thunder do you suppose you and Katherine are going to live on your ridiculous salary? Salary! It isn't enough to dignify by the name of wages – let alone salary! Y' can't live on it to save your lives. Katherine can't – "

"But, father – "

"That farm down there is plenty near enough to town for you to ride in every single day if you want to and – look here, boy, don't you think you owe a little something to your father? I'm getting old. You don't begin to realize how hard it is on me to meet all these difficulties that other men's sons help them with."

The Major had struck that chord with full realization of its probable effect, and he watched with keen relish the troubled and shamed look on the face before him. Griffith made a movement to speak, but the Major checked him with a wave of the hand.

"That farm is just going to wreck and ruin, and I haven't the strength to attend to that and this both. Besides, these negroes have got to be looked after better. Pete is growing more and more sullen every year, and Lippy Jane's temper is getting to be a holy terror. She and Pete nearly kill each other at times. They had a three-cornered fight with Bradley's mulatto, Ned, the other day, and nearly disabled him. Bradley complained, of course. Now, just suppose Ned dies and Bradley sues me? It seems to me it is pretty hard lines when a man has a son and – "

"But, father – "

"Now, look here, Grif, don't 'but' me any more. I've had that house on the other place all put in order and the negro quarters fixed up-. The negroes can belong to me, of course, if you still have

that silly idea in your head about not wanting to own them, but you have got to help me with them or – Then damn it all, Grif, I don't intend it to be said that a daughter-in-law of *mine* has to live in a nasty little rented house without so much as a garden patch to it. It is simply disgraceful for you to ask her to do it! I – "

"Father, father!" said Grif, with his voice trembling; "I – you are always so good to me, but I – I – "

The old Major looked over his glasses at his son. Each understood, and each feigned that he did not. The Major assumed wrath to hide his emotion. "Now, look here, Grif, I don't want to hear anything more about this business! You make me mad! Who am I to go to for help in managing my land and my niggers if I can't depend on you for a single thing? That's the question. Confound it all! I'm tired out, I tell you, looking after the lazy lot, and now you can take your share of the work. What am I going to do with the gang if I've got to watch'em night and day, to see that they are kept busy enough not to get into trouble with each other, and get me in trouble with my neighbors. Just suppose Pete had killed Bradley's Ned, then what? Why, I'd have been sued for a \$1,000 and Pete would have been hung besides! I tell you, boy, I'm too old for all this worry, and I think it's about time I had a little help from you. I – "

The young preacher winced again under the argument, although he knew that in part, at least, it was made for a purpose other than the one on the surface. In part he knew it was true. He knew that his father had found the task heavy and irksome. He knew that the negroes preferred his own rule, and that they were happier and more tractable with him than with the old 'Squire. He knew that as the times had grown more and more unsettled and unsettling, his father had twice had recourse to a hired overseer and that the results had been disastrous for all. He knew that other sons took much of this care and responsibility from the aging shoulders of their fathers. He hesitated – and was lost. He would take the negroes with him and live on the other place – at least one year!

But when Miss Katherine brought with her her father's gift of slaves – which Mr. LeRoy had tried hard to make sufficiently numerous to impress the old Major – Grif, to his dismay, found himself overseer and practically the owner of twenty-two negroes – and he on a salary of \$200 per year! With a plantation to work, the matter of salary was, of course, of minor importance. But Griffith had not failed to see glimpses of a not far-distant future, in these past few years as he had read or heard the urgent questions of political policy which had now become so insistent in the newer border states – a future in which this life must be changed. Riots and bloodshed, he knew, had followed in the train of argument and legislative action. Slaves had run away and been tracked and returned to angry masters. But the basic question as to whether it was right for man to hold property in man had, so far, been presented to his mind in the form of a religious scruple and with a merely personal application. *Should ministers of his Church* buy and sell black men? Griffith had definitely settled in his own mind that they should not. But whether they should inherit or acquire by marriage such property, had, until now, hardly presented a serious face to him. And now, in the form in which they came to him, he saw no present way out of the difficulty even had he greatly desired it.

I have no doubt that to you, my friend, who were not born in these troublous times, and to you, my neighbor, who lived in another latitude, the problem looks simple enough. "He could free the slaves which were in his power," will be your first thought. "I would have done that," is your next, and yet it is dollars to doughnuts that you would have done nothing of the kind. Oh, no! I am not reflecting upon your integrity, nor your parsimony – although I have not observed any tendency you may have toward dispensing with your property by gift – but to other and more complicated and complicating questions with which you would have found yourself surrounded, and with which your private inclinations would have come into violent collision, as Griffith Davenport discovered; and surely, my friend, you would not care to be written up in future years as a violator of the law – you who value so lightly "that class of people" that you have often said, quite openly, that you

cared very little to even read about them, and deplored the fact that writers *would* thrust them into respectable literature!

Griffith had watched the coming storm in the southwest. He had hoped and prayed (and until now he had believed) that for himself, at least, the question was settled. He would never own slaves, therefore he would not be called upon to bear any personal part in the coming struggle. But a wife's property was a husband's property in Virginia, in those far-off barbaric days, and so Griffith found himself in an anomalous position, before he knew it, for Mr. LeRoy had given Katherine her slaves as a marriage portion, and had striven to make sure that their number and quality should do honor to the daughter-in-law of her prospective husband's father. Mr. LeRoy had an exalted opinion of the position and importance of the old Major – or as he always called him, of "old 'Squiah Davenpoah." "

But so matters stood until, a few years later, an accident happened, which resulted in the death of the old Major. When the will was opened, Griffith found himself forced to confront the question of ownership of slaves, fairly if not fully. The will left "to my beloved son, Griffith, all the slaves now living with him, together with the farm upon which he now lives and the old homestead; with the admonition that he care for and protect the old slaves and train and employ the young." His other property was devised in accordance with his wishes, leaving to his grandchildren and distant relatives the other slaves and live stock.

Meantime, as this would indicate, there had been born to Griffith several children – three boys and a little baby girl – which now filled the hearts and home with life and joy.

The exigencies of his ministerial life had so far made it necessary for him to leave the plantation but twice. Father Prout had managed to have his "stations" rotate from one small town to another in the immediate vicinity, and, with his growing stoutness, Mr. Davenport had taken to driving, chiefly, since Selim had been retired from active service, to and from his places of meeting week after week. Twice, for a year each time, he had been compelled to leave the plantation in charge of Jerry and remove to a more distant town, where the small house and unaccustomed conditions had resulted in ill health for Katherine and the children. But now they were on the "place" again and were owners of much that required that they face larger and more complicated responsibilities – and what was to be done? Griffith had made up his mind, definitely, that he did not want his sons to grow up in a slave-owning atmosphere. He had read and thought much of the struggle over the Missouri Compromise Bill. He had hoped great things from it, and had beheld its final repeal with dismay. He had seen, so he believed, in it the arm that was destined to check if not to wipe out human slavery. How this was to be done he did not know; but that he hoped for it, for all men, he knew. For himself he was quite sure that as a preacher, if not as a man, it was wrong. He had determined to so educate his sons that they would not blame him for shutting them out from at least the inherited possibilities of the institution which had fallen upon him. But now, what could be done? The Major's will had thrown the task definitely upon him and had greatly increased the difficulties. He knew that it was against the laws of his state to free the negroes and leave them within its borders. Exactly what the terms of the law were, he did not know; but it was easy to realize its need and force. Free negroes were at once a menace to all parties concerned, both white and black. They had no work, no homes, no ties of restraint and responsibility. They were amenable to no one and no one was their friend. They could starve, or they could steal, or they could go North. If they did the first – in a land of plenty – they were not made of that stuff out of which human nature is fashioned, be that nature encased in a white or in a black skin. If they did the second they fared far worse than slaves – the chain-gang for home and the law for a driver has horrors worse than even slavery – at least so thought the colored man of 1852. But if they attempted to achieve the last of the three alternatives their lot was hardest of all. They must leave home, family, wife, children, parents and friends – all that made life endurable to a patient, affectionate, simple nature – and find what? Neither friends, welcome nor work! A climate in which they suffered, a people amongst whom their rarity and the strangeness of their speech and color made of them objects of curiosity and aversion – where the very children fled from them in

fright – little children like those whom they had nursed and fondled and who always had loved them! They would find the prejudice against their color intense beyond belief, for few indeed were the men or women in the free states who would give work of any kind to these strange-looking and stranger-speaking creatures. Indeed, no one was more shocked to learn than was Griffith, that in some of the border states it was illegal to give employment to these ex-slaves. All this Griffith was destined to learn to his cost. He knew, already, that slaves trained as his father's were, had no conception of hard and constant work such as was demanded of the northern laborer. He knew that they could not hope to compete with white workmen in a far-away field of labor even could they get the work to do. He knew that they would be the sport – where they were not the game and victims – of those white laborers. He knew that the employer (were they so fortunate as to find one) would not be slow to learn that they accomplished less and ate more than did their white rivals. That alone would, of course, settle their chances of competition, and starvation or crime would again become their only alternative.

A freed slave, in a country where slavery still existed, was a sorry and unhappy spectacle; but a freed slave in competition with freemen was a tragedy in black!

Griffith had fought his battle alone. It is true that he had talked much with his wife on the subject, and it is also true that her faith in and love for him made her ready acquiescence in his final decision a matter of course; but with no outlook into the political world, with no mental scope beyond the horizon prescribed as suitable for women, she could give him nothing but loyalty. She could echo his sentiments. She could not stimulate or aid his thought. Attuned to follow, she could not lead, and was equally unfitted to keep even step with him side by side. She did not share, nor could she understand, her husband's acute mental misgivings and forebodings. The few times she had spoken to her father of them, he had said that she need not worry. "Griffith is no fool. He'll get over this idiotic notion before long. It is reading those damned Yankee speeches that is the trouble with him. You just be patient. He'll get over it. The old 'Squire knew how to cure him. Like to know what he'd do with all those niggers? But Griffith is no fool, I tell you, if he is a Methodist." Katherine had not relished the last remark, and she did not believe that her father quite comprehended how deep a hold on Griffith the idea of freedom for the blacks – and freedom from ownership of them for himself – had taken; but she was silenced.



## CHAPTER VI

*"My conscience whispers."*

– *Shakespeare.*

But at last the crisis came. One of the girls – Sallie, a faithful creature – had married "Bradley's John," and now John was about to be sold and sent to Georgia. Either John must be separated from his wife and child, or Sallie must be sold, or Mr. Davenport must buy John and keep him here! The final issue had come! John begged to be bought. Sallie pleaded not to be allowed to be sold, nor to be separated from her husband. Katherine agreed to plead for Sallie, who had been her own playmate ever since she could remember.

"Git Mos' Grif ter buy John, Mis' Kate! Fo' God's sake, Mis' Kate, git'im ter buy John! Yoh kin. I knows mon'sous well dat yoh kin! He gwine ter do jes' what yoh tell 'im ter. I knows dat he is, Mis' Kate!"

Mr. Davenport was in his study. Katherine had explained the case to him fully, and Sallie's black face peered in behind him, with anxious eyes, watching and listening to her mistress.

"Katherine, I cannot! I cannot pay money for a human being. I have yielded, step by step, to what I felt was wrong long ago, until now I am caught in the tangled threads of this awful system – but I cannot! I *cannot* pay money for a human soul!"

Suddenly Sallie fell at his feet, and, swaying to and fro, swung her sturdy frame like a reed in the wind.

"Oh, Mos' Grif, fo' God's sake, buy John! Ain't yo' got no mussy, Mos' Grif? Don' let dat Mos' Bradley sen' John 'way off dar! I gwine ter die right heah, if yo' don' hep me, Mos' Grif! Ain't I been a good girl? Ain't I nus de chillun good, an' did'n I pull Mos' Beverly outen de crick when he fall in an' wus mose drown'd? Oh, fo' Christ's sake, Mos' Grif, buy my John! He gwine ter wuk fo' yoh all his life long, an' he gwine ter be good!"

She swayed and wept and moaned. She held her baby to her breast and cried out for John, and then she held it out toward Griffith and stared through streaming eyes at his face to see if he had relented. And still Griffith was silent. His teeth were set tight together, and his nails cut his palms, but he said not a word.

"Mos' Grif, Mos' Grif! what did God A'mighty gib yoh all dis lan' an' houses an' money fo'? What He gib yoh my Mis' Katherine fo'? 'Cause He know yoh gwine ter be good an' kine, an' – an' dat yoh gwine ter be good ter *us*! Mos' Grif, de good Lawd ain't fo'got we alls des kase we black!"

She rolled the baby on the floor beside her and grasped both of her master's clenched hands, and struggled to open them as she talked. She seemed to think if they would but relax that he would yield.

"Mos' Grif, we bofe gwine ter wuk fo' yoh, an' pray fo' yoh, and dat baby, dar, gwine ter wuk an' pray fo' yoh all ouh lifes long – all de days ob ouh lifes, des fo' dat little, teenchy six hund'ud dollahs, what Mos' Bradley got ter hab fo' John! All ouh lifes long! All ouh lifes long, we gwine ter wuk and pray fo' yoh, des fo' dat little, teenchy six hund'ud dollahs!!!"

Mrs. Davenport put her hand on her husband's shoulder. Her eyes were wet and her lips trembled.

"Griffith, what harm can it do? And see how *much* good! Griffith, we will *all* love you better if you will. I can't bear to see Sallie the way she has been these last two months – ever since it was decided to sell John to that man when he comes. It is heart-breaking. You know, darling, she played with me ever since we were babies, and she has been *so* good to my children —*our* children, Griffith!" She lowered her voice to a mere whisper: "Can God want you to be so cruel as this, Griffith?"

Mr. Davenport had never dreamed that anything he might feel it his duty to do would seem to his wife like cruelty. It hurt him sorely. He looked up at her with a drawn face.

"Katherine," he said, "let us give Sallie her freedom, and let her go with John."

"No, no, no, no! I ain't gwine ter go wid dat man! I ain't gwine ter be no free wife nigger, 'pendin' on him! I ain't gwine ter leabe Mis' Kath'rine, nedder!" She arose in her fear, which was turning to wrath. "Mis' Kate, yoh ain't gwine ter let him gib me away, is yoh? I don' belong to nobody ter gib away, but des ter my Mis' Kate, an' she ain't gwine ter gib me 'way arter I done nus her chillun an' save de life of Mos' Beverly! Dat ain't dekin' o' lady my Mis' Kate is! O Mis' Kate, Mis' Kate! I done wisht yoh'd a-gone and married dat Mos' Tom Harrison dat time wat'e ax you! *He* don't lub money dat much dat he can't spahr a little six hund'ud dollahs ter sabe me an' John an' – an' – an' dis heah baby!"

She caught up the baby from the floor again and held it toward her master.

"Dar! take hit an' kill hit fus' as well as las'! kase *I* gwine ter die, an' hit gwine ter be my Mos' Grif dat kill bofe of us. God gwine ter know'bout dat! John gwine ter tell'im! Jesus gwine ter know dat six little hund'ud dollahs is wuf more ter my Mos' Grif dan me an' yoh an' John," she moaned, holding the baby up in front of her. "All free, bofe ob us, ain't wuf dat little much t' ouh Mos' Grift All free, bofe ob us! A little, teenchy, ugly six hund'ud dollahs! He radder hab hit in de bank er in de desk er in he pocket – dat little six hund'ud dollahs what's mo' bigger dan *all* ob us – an' mo' bigger dan Mis' Kate's lub!" She fell to sobbing again. "Des dat little much! Des dat little much!" she moaned. "All ob us got ter die fer des dat little much! An' Mos' Grif, he don' care. He lub dat little much money mo' dan wat he do *all* ob us, countin' in Mis' Kate's lub wid de res'!"

His wife had gone to her chair and was holding a handkerchief to her face. He could see her lips and chin tremble.

"I will buy John, Sallie, if – "

Sallie grasped the two hands again. They were relaxed and cold.

"I knowed hit! I knowed hit! O good, kind Jesus! O Lord, Saviour! dey ain't no *if*! Dey ain't no *if*! My Mos' Grif gwine ter do hit. Dey ain't no *if* lef in dem han's! My Mos' Grif gwine ter buy John!" and she fell on her knees again and sobbed for joy. She caught the little black baby up from the floor where it lay, laughing and kicking its toes in the air, and crushed it so close to her breast that it cried out and then set up a wail. Sallie stopped weaving her body to and fro, and tried to smile through her tears.

"Des listen ter dat fool baby! Hits oryin' fo' des a little hu't like dat, an' I only des choke hit wif my arms! Mos' Grif done choke my hawt out vrid grief, an' now he done strangle me wid joy, befo' I got ter cry, chile! Yoah po' mammy's hawt done bus' wide open wid joy now. Dat's what make I can't talk no sense, Mos' Grif. I des wants ter yell. But Mis' Katherine, she know. I des kin see dat she do. *She* know dat I feel des like I gwine ter bos' plum' down ter my chist. She know!"

She laid the baby down again and suddenly held up both arms toward her master. Her voice was a wail.

"Tell me dat dey ain't no *if* lef in your hawt, Mos' Grif! I knows dat dey ain't, but I got ter heah yo' *say* dat dey ain't, an' den I kin go!"

"I will buy John, Sallie. There is no *if*," he said; and Katherine threw her arms around his neck and looked at him through tears of joy.

That night the Rev. Griffith Davenport prayed long and earnestly that he might be forgiven for this final weakness. He felt that his moral fiber was weakening. He had broken the vow taken so long ago. He felt that the bonds were tightening about him, and that it would be harder than ever to cleanse his soul from what he had grown to feel was an awful wrong – this ownership, and now this money purchase, of a human soul.

"I have gone the whole length," he sighed to himself. "I have at last, with my eyes open, with my conscience against me, done this wrong! I have paid money for a human being. I know it is a

wrong – I know – I know, and yet I have done it! God help me! God forgive me! I cannot see my way! I cannot see my way!"

In the distance, as he arose from his knees, there floated in through the open window the refrain from Sallie's song, as she moved about the quarters: —

An' deys no mo' trouble, an' deys no mo' pain,  
An' deys no mo' trouble fo' me, fo' me!  
An' deys no mo' sorrer, an' no mo' pain —  
Oh, deys no mo' trouble fo' me, f-o-h-h m-e-e-e!

I libs on de banks ob de golden shoah,  
Oh, I libs in de promise' lan'!  
An' I sez to de Lawd, when He opens the doah,  
Dat deys no mo' trouble fo' me!

De Lawd He says, when he took my han',  
"Enter into de gates ob res'!"  
An' He gib me a harp, an' I jines de ban',  
Fo' deys no mo' sorrer fer me!

Lippy Jane was dancing, on the back porch, to the rhythm of the distant song, and two of the black boys stopped in their race with Beverly, over the lawn, to take up the chorus – "Oh, deys no mo' trouble fo' me, f-o-h m-e!"

But, in spite of his prayer for "light and leading," as he would have called it, Mr. Davenport felt that his moral fiber was, indeed, weakening, and yet he could not see his way out of the dilemma. He had definitely decided so long ago now that he could not remember when he had thought otherwise, that for one in his position, at least, even the mere ownership of slaves could not be right. He recalled that it had come to him at first in the form of purchase and sale, and it had seemed to him that under no conditions could he be forced into that form of the complication; but a little later on he decided that the mere ownership involved moral turpitude for one of his denomination, at least, if he was in deed and in truth following the leadership of the Christ.

When first he had agreed to take part of his father's slaves, therefore, he had made himself feel that it was right that he should assume a part of the old Major's burdens as his son and trustee, only, and that there was to be no transfer of property. That this service was his father's due and that he should give it freely seemed plain to him. Katherine's slaves he had always thought of as hers alone – not at all as his; but ever since the old Major had died and the will had settled beyond a quibble that the Rev. Griffith Davenport was himself, in deed and in truth "Mos' Grif" to all these dependent creatures, it had borne more and more heavily upon his conscience. He had tried to think and plan some way out of it and had failed, and now he had been forced to face the final issue – the one phase which he had felt could never touch him, – the purchase for money of a black man, and he had yielded at the first test! His heart had outweighed his head and his conscience combined, and the line he had fixed so long ago as the one boundary of this evil which *he* could never pass, and which, thank God, no one else could thrust upon him, was obliterated, and he stood on the far side condemned by his whole nature! In this iniquity from which he had felt his hands should forever be free, they were steeped! He felt wounded and sore and that a distinct step downward had been taken, and yet he asked himself over and over again what he could have done in the matter that would not have been far worse. He slept little. The next day when he went to Mr. Bradley to buy John his whole frame trembled and he felt sick and weak.

His neighbor noticed that he was pale, and remarked upon it, and then turned the subject to the matter in hand which Sallie had duly reported an hour after she had won and her master had lost the great moral contest. For it cannot be denied that, all things considered.

Sallie had won a distinct victory for the future moral life of herself and for John and the baby.

So complicated are our relations to each other and to what we are pleased to call right and wrong in this heterogeneous world, that in doing this Sallie had forced her master into a position which seemed to him to cancel his right to feel himself a man of honor and a credit to the religion in which he believed he had, so far, found all his loftiest ideals. He could plainly see, now, that this phase of the terrible problem would be sure to arise and confront him again and again as time went on, and his heart ached when he felt that he had lost his grasp upon the anchor of his principles and that the boundary lines of his ethical integrity were again becoming sadly confused in a mind he had grown to feel had long ago clearly settled and defined them.

"You look as pale as a ghost. Better try a little of Maria's blackberry cordial? No? Do you good, I'm sure, if you would," said Mr. Bradley. "You're taking this thing altogether too much to heart, sir. What possible difference can it make to John whether you pay for him or whether he had come to you as the others did? If you'll allow me to say so, I think it is a ridiculous distinction. Somebody paid for the ones you've got. If you'll allow an old neighbor to make a suggestion, I think you read those Yankee papers altogether too much and too seriously. It perverts your judgment. It's a good sight easier for those fellows up there to settle this question than it is for us to do it. They simply don't know what they are talking about, and we do. With them it's all theory. Here it's a cold fact. What in the name of common sense would they have? Suppose we didn't own and provide for and direct all these niggers, what on earth would become of'em? Where would they get enough to eat? You know as well as I do there is nothing on this earth as helpless and as much to be pitied as a free nigger. They don't know how to take care of themselves, and nobody is going to hire one. What in thunder do people want us to do? Brain 'em?"

"Oh, I know, I know," said Mr. Davenport, helplessly, looking far off into the beautiful valley, with its hazy atmosphere and its rich fields of grain. "I've thought about it a thousand times, and a thousand times it has baffled me. I'm not judging, now, for you, Mr. Bradley, not in the least. I feel myself too thoroughly caught in the meshes of our social fabric to presume to unravel it for other people. But – but in *my*

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