Scribners monthly.

KING DAVID.

THE scholars were dismissed. Out they trooped,—big boys, little boys, and full-grown men. Then what antics, what linked lines of scuffling, what double shuffles, leaps, and somersaults, what rolling laughter, interspersed with short yelps, and guttural cries, as wild and free as the sounds the mustangs make, gamboling on the plains! For King David's scholars were black,—black as the ace of spades. He did not say that; he knew very little about the ace. He said simply that his scholars were "colored;" and sometimes he called them "the Children of Ham." But so many mistakes were made over this title, in spite of his careful explanations (the Children having an undoubted taste for bacon), that he finally abandoned it, and fell back upon the national name of "freedmen," a title both good and true. He even tried to make it noble, speaking to them often of their wonderful lot as the emancipated teachers and helpers of their race; laying before them their mission in the future, which was to go over to Africa, and wake out of their long sloth and slumber the thousands of souls there. But Cassius and Pompey had only a mythic idea of Africa; they looked at the globe as it was turned around, they saw it there on the other side, and then their attention wandered off to an adventurous ant, who was making the tour of Soudan, and crossing the mountains of Kong, as though they were nothing.

Lessons over, the scholars went home. The school-master went home too, wiping his forehead as he went. He was a grave young man, tall and thin, somewhat narrow-chested, with the diffident air of a country student. And yet this country student was here, far down in the South, hundreds of miles away from the New Hampshire village where he had thought to spend his life as teacher of the district school. Extreme near-sightedness, and an inherited delicacy of constitution which he bore silently, had kept him out of the field during the days of the war. "I should be only an encumbrance," he thought. But when the war was over, the fire which had burnt within burst forth in the thought, "the Freedmen!" There was work fitted to his hand; that one thing he could do. "My turn has come at last," he said. "I feel the call to go." Nobody cared much because he was leaving. "Going down to teach the blacks?" said the farmers. "I don't see as you're called, David. We've paid dear enough to set 'em free, goodness knows, and now they ought to look out for themselves."

"But they must first be taught," said the school-master. "Our responsibility is great; our task is only just begun."

"Stuff!" said the farmers. What with the graves down in the South, and the taxes up in the North, they were not prepared to hear any talk about beginning. Beginning, indeed! They called it ending. The slaves were freed; and it was right they should be freed. But Ethan and Abner were gone, and their households were left unto them desolate. Let the blacks take care of themselves.

So, all alone, down came David King, with such aid and instruction as the Freedman's Bureau could give him, to this little settlement among the pines, where the freedmen had built some cabins in a careless way, and then seated themselves to wait for fortune. Freedmen! Yes; a glorious idea! But how will it work its way out into practical life? What are you going to do with tens of thousands of ignorant, childish, irresponsible souls thrown suddenly upon your hands,—souls that will not long stay childish, and that have in them also all the capacities for evil that you yourselves have,—you with your safeguards of generations of conscious responsibility and self-government, and yet—so many lapses! This is what David King thought. He did not see his way exactly; no, nor the nation's way. But he said to himself, "I can at least begin; if I am wrong I shall find it out in time. But now it seems to me that our first duty is to educate them." So he began at "a, b and c;" "you must not steal;" "you must not fight;" "you must wash your faces;" which may be called, I think, the first working-out of the emancipation problem.

Jubilee-town was the name of the settlement; and when the school-master announced his own, David King, the title struck the imitative minds of the scholars, and, turning it around, they made "King David" of it, and kept it so. Delighted with the novelty, the Jubilee freedmen came to school in such numbers that the master was obliged to classify them; boys and men in the morn-

ings and afternoons; the old people in the evenings; the young women and girls by themselves for an hour in the early morning. "I cannot do full justice to all," he thought, "and in the men lies the danger, in the boys the hope; the women cannot vote. Would to God the men could not either, until they have learned to read and to write, and to maintain themselves respectably!" For, abolitionist as he was, David King would have given years of his life for the power to restrict the suffrage. Not having this power, however, he worked at the problem in the only way left open: "Take two apples from four apples, Julius,—how many will be left?" "What is this I hear, Cæsar, about stolen bacon?"

On this day the master went home, tired and dispirited; the novelty was over on both sides. He had been five months at Jubilee, and his scholars were more of a puzzle to him than ever. They learned, some of them, readily; but they forgot as readily. They had a vast capacity for parrot-like repetition, and caught his long words so quickly, and repeated them so volubly, with but slight comprehension of their meaning, that his sensitive conscience shrank from using them, and he was forced back upon a rude plainness of speech which was a pain to his pedagogic ears. Where he had once said, "demean yourselves with sobriety," he now said "don't get drunk." He would have fared better if he had learned to say "uncle" and "aunty," or "maumer," in the familiar Southern fashion. But he had no knowledge of the customs;—how could he have? He could only blunder on in his slow Northern way.

His cabin stood in the pine forest, at a little distance from the settlement; he had allowed himself that grace. There was a garden around it, where Northern flowers came up after a while,—a little pale, perhaps, like English ladies in India, but doubly beautiful and dear to exiled eyes. The school-master had cherished from the first a wish for a cotton-field,—a cotton-field of his own. To him a cotton-field represented the South,—a cotton-field in the hot sunshine, with a gang of slaves toiling under the lash of an overseer. This might have been a fancy picture; and it might not. At any rate it was real to him. There was, however, no overseer now, and no lash; no slaves and very little toil. The negroes would work only when they pleased; and that was generally not at all. There was no doubt but that they were almost hopelessly improvident and lazy. "Entirely so," said the planters. "Not quite," said the Northern school-master. And therein lay the difference between them.

David lighted his fire of pitch-pine, spread his little table, and began to cook his supper carefully. When it was nearly ready, he heard a knock at his gate. Two representative specimens of his scholars were waiting without,—Jim, a field-hand, and a woman named Esther, who had been a house-servant in a planter's family. Jim had come "to borry an ax," and Esther to ask for medicine for a sick child.

"Where is your own ax, Jim?" said the school-master.

"Somehow et's rusty, sah. Dey gets rusty mighty quick."

"Of course, because you always leave them out in the rain. When will you learn to take care of your axes?"

"Don' know, mars."

"I have told you not to call me master," said David. "I am not your master."

"You's school-mars, I reckon," answered Jim, grinning at his repartee.

"Well, Jim," said the school-master, relaxing into a smile, "you have the best of it this time; but you know quite well what I mean. You can take the ax; but bring it back to-night. And you must see about getting a new one immediately; there is something to begin with. Now, Esther, what is it? Your boy sick? Probably it is because you let him drink the water out of that swampy pool. I warned you."

"Yes, sah," said the woman impassively.

She was a slow, dull-witted creature, who had executed her tasks marvelously well in the planter's family, never varying by a hair's breadth either in time or method during long years. Freed, she was lost at once; if she had not been swept along by her companions she would have sat down dumbly by the way-side, and died. The school-master offered supper to both of his guests. Jim took a seat at the table at once, nothing loth, and ate and drank, talking all the time with occasional flashes of wit, and an unconscious suggestion of ferocity in the way he hacked and tore the meat with his clasp-knife, and his strong white teeth. Esther stood; nothing could induce her to sit in the master's presence. She ate and drank quietly, and dropped a courtesy whenever he spoke to her, not from any especial respect or gratitude, however, but from habit. "I may possibly teach the man something," thought the school-master; "but

what a terrible creature to turn loose in the world, with power in his hand! Hundreds of these men will die, nay, must die violent deaths before their people can learn what freedom means, and what it does not mean. As for the woman, it is hopeless; she cannot learn. But her child can. In truth, our hope is in the children."

And then he threw away every atom of the food, washed his dishes, made up the fire, and went back to the beginning again and cooked a second supper. For he still shrank from personal contact with the other race. A Southerner would have found it impossible to comprehend the fortitude it required for the New Englander to go through his daily rounds among them. He did his best; but it was duty, not liking. Supper over, he went to the school-house again; in the evenings, he taught the old people. It was an odd sight to note them as they followed the letters with a big crooked forefinger, slowly spelling out words of three letters. They spelled with their whole bodies, stooping over the books which lay before them until their old grizzled heads and gay turbans looked as if they were set on the table by the chins in a long row. Patiently the master taught them; they had gone no farther than "cat" in five long months. He made the letters for them on the black-board again and again, but the treat of the evening was the making of these letters on the board by the different scholars in turn. "Now, Dinah—B." And old Dinah would hobble up proudly, and, with much screwing of her mouth and tongue and many long hesitations, produce something which looked like a figure eight gone mad. Joe had his turn next, and he would make, perhaps, an H for a D. The master would go back and explain to him carefully the difference, only to find at the end of ten minutes that the whole class was hopelessly confused; Joe's mistake had routed them all. There was one pair of spectacles among the old people; these were passed from hand to hand as the turn came, not from necessity always, but as an adjunct to the dignity of reading.

"Never mind the glasses, Tom. Surely you can spell 'bag' without them."

"Dey helps, Mars King David," replied old Tom with solemn importance. He then adorned himself with the spectacles, and spelled it—"g, a, b."

But the old people enjoyed their lesson immensely; no laughter, no joking broke the solemnity of the scene, and they never failed to make an especial toilet,—much shirt-collar for the old men, and clean turbans for the old women. They seemed to be generally half-crippled, poor old creatures; slow in their movements as tortoises, and often unwieldy; their shoes were curiosities of patches, rags, strings, and carpeting. But sometimes a fine old black face was lifted from the slow-moving bulk, and from under wrinkled eyelids keen sharp eyes met the master's, as intelligent as his own.

There was no church proper in Jubilee; on Sundays, the people, who were generally Baptists, assembled in the school-room, where services were conducted by a brother who had "de gif' ob preachin'" and who poured forth a flood of Scripture phrases with a volubility, incoherence and earnestness alike extraordinary. Presbyterian David attended these services, not only for the sake of example, but also because he steadfastly believed in "the public assembling of ourselves together for the worship of Almighty God."

"Perhaps they understand him," he thought, noting the rapt black faces, "and I, at least, have no right to judge them,—I, who with all the lights I have had, still find myself unable to grasp the great doctrine of Election." For David had been bred in Calvinism, and many a night when younger and more hopeful of arriving at finalities, had he wrestled with its problems. He was not so sure, now, of arriving at finalities, either in belief or in daily life; but he thought the fault lay with himself, and deplored it.

The Yankee school-master was, of course, debarred from intercourse with those of his own color in the neighborhood. There were no "poor whites" there; he was spared the sight of their long, clay-colored faces, lank yellow hair, and half open mouths; he was not brought into contact with the ignorance and dense self-conceit of this singular class. The whites of the neighborhood were planters, and they regarded the schoolmaster as an interloper, a fanatic, a knave or a fool, according to their various degrees of bitterness. The phantom of a cotton-field still haunted the master, and he often walked by the abandoned fields of these planters, and noted them carefully. In addition to his fancy, there was now another motive. Things were not going well at Jubilee, and he was anxious to try whether the men would not work for good wages, paid regularly, and for their Northern teacher and friend. Thus it happened that Harnett Am-

merton, retired planter, perceived, one afternoon, a stranger walking up the avenue that led to his dilapidated mansion; and as he was near-sighted, and as any visitor was, besides, a welcome interruption in his dull day, he went out upon the piazza to meet him, and, not until he had offered a chair, did he recognize his guest. He said nothing; for he was in his own house. But a gentleman can freeze the atmosphere around him even in his own house, and this he did. The school-master stated his errand simply; he wished to rent one of the abandoned cotton-fields for a year. The planter could have answered with satisfaction that his fields might lie forever untilled before Yankee hands should touch them. But he was a poor man now, and money was money. He endured his visitor, and he rented his field; and, with the perplexed feelings of his class, he asked himself how it was, how it could be, that a man like that—yes, like that—had money, while he himself had none! David had but little money,—a mere handful to throw away in a day, the planter would have thought in the lavish old times; but David had the New England thrift.

"I am hoping that the unemployed hands over at Jubilee will cultivate this field for me," he said; "for fair wages, of course. I know nothing of cotton myself."

"You will be disappointed," said the planter.

"But they must live; they must lay up something for the winter."

"They do not know enough to live. They might exist, perhaps, in Africa as the rest of their race exists, but here, in this colder climate, they must be taken care of, worked, and fed, as we work and feed our horses—precisely in the same way."

"I cannot agree with you," replied David, a color rising in his thin face. "They are idle and shiftless, I acknowledge that; but is it not the natural result of generations of servitude and ignorance?"

"They have not capacity for anything save ignorance."

"You do not know then, perhaps, that I—that I am trying to educate those who are over at Jubilee," said David. There was no aggressive confidence in his voice; he knew that he had accomplished little as yet. He looked wistfully at his host as he spoke.

Harnett Ammerton was a born patrician; poor, homely, awkward David felt this in every nerve as he sat there. For he loved beauty in spite of himself, and in spite of his belief that it was a tendency of the old Adam. (Old Adam has such nice things to bother his descendants with; almost a monopoly, if we are to believe some creeds.) So now David tried not to be influenced by the fine face before him, and steadfastly went on to sow a little seed, if possible, even upon this prejudiced ground.

"I have a school over there," he said.

"I have heard something of the kind, I believe," replied the old planter, as though Jubilee town were a thousand miles away instead of a blot upon his own border. "May I ask how you are succeeding?"

There was a fine irony in the question. David felt it, but replied courageously that success, he hoped, would come in time.

"And I, young man, hope that it will never come! The negro with power in his hand, which you have given him, with a little smattering of knowledge in his shallow, crafty brain,—a knowledge which you and your kind are now striving to give him,—will become an element of more danger in this land than it has ever known before. You Northerners do not understand the blacks. They are an inferior race by nature; God made them so. And God forgive those (although I never can) who have placed them over us,—yes, virtually over us, their former masters,—poor ignorant creatures!"

At this instant an old negro came up the steps, with an armful of wood, and the eye of the Northerner noted (was forced to note) the contrast: there sat the planter, his head crowned with silver hair, his finely chiseled face glowing with the warmth of his indignant words; and there passed the old slave, bent and black, his low forehead and broad animal features seeming to typify scarcely more intelligence than that of the dog that followed him. The planter spoke to the servant in his kindly way as he passed, and the old black face lighted with pleasure. This, too, the school-master's sensitive mind noted; none of his pupils looked at him with anything like that affection. "But it *is* right they should be freed, it *is* right," he said to himself as he walked back to Jubilee, "and to that belief will I cling as long as I have my being. It *is* right." And then he came into Jubilee, and found three of his freedmen drunk, and quarreling in the street.

Heretofore the settlement, poor and forlorn as it was, had escaped the curse of drunkenness. No liquor was sold in the vicinity, and David had succeeded in keeping his scholars from wandering aimlessly about the country from place to place,—

often the first use the blacks made of their freedom. Jubilee did not go to the liquor. But, at last, the liquor had come to Jubilee. Shall they not have all rights and privileges, these new-born citizens of ours? The bringer of these doctrines, and of the fluids to moisten them, was a white man, one of that class which has gone down on the page of American history, knighted with the initials C. B. "The captain" the negroes called him,—and he was highly popular already, three hours of the captain being worth three weeks of David, as far as familiarity went. The man was a glib-tongued, smartly dressed fellow, well supplied with money, and his errand was, of course, to influence the votes at the next election. David, meanwhile, had so carefully kept all talk of politics from his scholars, that they hardly knew that an election was near. It became, now, a contest between the two higher intelligences. If the school-master had but won the easily-won and strong affections of his pupils! But, in all those months, he had gained only a dutiful attention. They did not even respect him as they had respected their old masters, and the cause (poor David!) was that very thrift and industry which he relied upon as an example.

"Ole Mars Ammerton would nebber wash his dishes ef dey was nebber washed," confided Maum June to Elsy, as they caught sight of David's shining pans.

The school-master could have had a retinue of servants for small price, or no price at all; but to tell a truth (which he never told), he could not endure them about him.

"I must have one spot to myself," he said feverishly, after he had labored all day among them, teaching, correcting untidy ways, administering simple medicines, or binding up a bruised foot. But he never dreamed that this very isolation of his personality, this very thrift, were daily robbing him of the influence which he so earnestly longed to possess. In New England, every man's house was his castle; and every man's hands were thrifty. He forgot the easy familiarity, the lordly ways, the crowded households, and the royal carelessness, to which the slaves had always been accustomed in their old masters' homes.

At first the captain attempted intimacy.

"No reason why you and me shouldn't work together," he said with a confidential wink. "This thing's being done all over the South, and easy done, too. Now's the time for smart chaps like us,—'transition,' you know. The old Southerners are mad, and wont come forward, so we'll just sail in and have a few years of it. When they're ready to come back,—why, we'll give 'em up the place again, of course, if our pockets are well lined. Come now, just acknowledge that the negroes have got to have somebody to lead 'em."

"It shall not be such as you," said David indignantly. "See those two men quarreling; that is the work of the liquor you have given them!"

"They've as good a right to their liquor as other men have," replied the captain, carelessly, "and that's what I tell 'em; they aint slaves now,—they're free. Well, boss,—sorry you don't like my idees, but can't help it; must go ahead. Remember, I offered you a chance, and you would not take it. Morning."

The five months had grown into six and seven, and Jubilee-town was known far and wide as a dangerous and disorderly neighborhood. The old people and the children still came to school, but the young men and boys had deserted in a body. The school-master's cotton-field was neglected; he did a little there himself every day, but the work was novel, and his attempts awkward and slow. One afternoon, Harnett Ammerton rode by on horseback; the road passed near the angle of the field where the school-master was at work.

"How is your experiment succeeding?" said the planter, with a little smile of amused scorn as he saw the lonely figure.

"Not very well," replied David.

He paused and looked up earnestly into the planter's face. Here was a man who had lived among the blacks all his life, and knew them; if he would but give honest advice! The school-master was sorely troubled that afternoon. Should he speak? He would at least try.

"Mr. Ammerton," he said, "do you intend to vote at the approaching election?"

"No," replied the planter; "nor any person of my acquaintance."

"Then incompetent, and, I fear, evil-minded men will be put into office."

"Of course; the certain result of negro voting."

"But if you, sir, and the class to which you belong, would exert yourselves, I am inclined to think much might be done. The breach will only grow broader every year; act now, while you have still influence left."

"Then you think that we have influence," said the planter.

He was curious concerning the ideas of this man, who, although not like the typical Yankee exactly, was yet plainly a fanatic; while as to dress and air—why, Zip, his old valet, had more polish.

"I know at least that I have none," said David. Then he came a step nearer. "Do you think, sir," he began slowly, "that I have gone to work in the wrong way? Would it have been wiser to have obtained some post of authority over them,—the office of justice of the peace, for instance, with power of arrest?"

"I know nothing about it," said the planter curtly, touching his horse with his whip and riding on. He had no intention of stopping to discuss ways and means with an abolition school-master!

Things grew from bad to worse at Jubilee. Most of the men had been field-hands, there was but little intelligence among them; the few bright minds among David's pupils caught the specious arguments of the captain, and repeated them to the others. The captain explained how much power they held; the captain laid before them glittering plans; the captain said that by good rights each family ought to have a plantation to repay them for their years of enforced labor; the captain promised them a four-story brick college for their boys, which was more than King David had ever promised, teacher though he was. They found out that they were tired of King David and his narrow talk; and they went over to Hildore Corners, where a new store had been opened, which contained, among other novelties, a bar. This was one of the captain's benefactions. "If you pay your money for it, you've as good a right to your liquor as any one, I guess;" he observed. "Not that it's anything to me, of course; but I allow I like to see fair play!"

It was something to him, however; the new store had a silent partner. And this was but one of many small and silent enterprises in which he was engaged throughout the neighborhood.

The women of Jubilee, more faithful than the men, still sent their children to school; but they did it with discouraged hearts, poor things! Often now they were seen with bandaged heads and bruised bodies, the result of drunken blows from husband or brother; and, left alone, they were obliged to labor all day to get the poor food they ate, and to keep clothes on their children. Patient by nature, they lived along as best they could, and toiled in their small fields like horses; but the little prides, the vague grotesque aspirations and hopes that had come to them with their freedom, gradually faded away. "A blue-painted front do';" "a black silk apron with red ribbons;" "to make a minister of little Job;" and "a real crock'ry pitcher," were wishes unspoken now. The thing was only how to live from day to day, and keep the patched clothes together. In the meanwhile, trashy finery was sold at the new store, and the younger girls wore gilt ear-rings.

The master, toiling on at his vain task, was at his wit's end. "They will not work, before long they must steal," he said. He brooded and thought, and at last one morning he came to a decision. The same day in the afternoon he set out for Hildore Corners. He had thought of a plan. As he was walking rapidly through the pine woods, Harnett Ammerton on horseback passed him. This time the Northerner had no questions to ask; nay, he almost hung his head, so ashamed was he of the reputation that had attached itself to the field of his labors. But the planter reined in his horse when he saw who it was; he was the questioner now.

"School-master," he began, "in the name of all the white families about here, I really must ask if you can do nothing to keep in order those miserable, drinking, ruffianly negroes of yours over at Jubilee? Why,—we shall all be murdered in our beds before long! Are you aware of the dangerous spirit they have manifested lately?"

"Only too well," said David.

"What are you going to do? How will it end?"

"God knows."

"God knows. Is that all you have to say? Of course He knows; but the question is, do you know? You have brought the whole trouble down upon our heads by your confounded insurrectionary school! Just as I told you, your negroes, with the little smattering of knowledge you have given them, are now the most dangerous, riotous, thieving, murdering rascals in the district."

"They are bad; but it is not the work of the school, I hope."

"Yes, it is," said the planter angrily.

"They have been led astray lately, Mr. Ammerton; a person has come among them——"

"Another Northerner."

"Yes," said David, a flush rising in his

cheek; "but not all Northerners are like this man, I trust."

"Pretty much all we see are; look at the State."

"Yes, I know it; I suppose time alone can help matters," said the troubled teacher.

"Give up your school, and come and join us," said the planter abruptly; "you, at least, are honest in your mistakes. We are going to form an association for our own protection; join with us. You can teach my grandsons if you like, provided you do not put any of your—your fanaticism into them."

This was an enormous concession for Harnett Ammerton to make; something in the school-master's worn face had drawn it out.

"Thank you," said David slowly;" it is kindly meant, sir. But I cannot give up my work. I came down to help the freedmen, and ——"

"Then stay with them," said the planter, doubly angry for the very kindness of the moment before. "I thought you were a decent-living white man, according to your fashion, but I see I was mistaken. Dark days are coming, and you turn your back upon those of your own color and side with the slaves! Go and herd with your negroes, —but, look you, sir, we are prepared. We will shoot down any one found upon our premises after dark,—shoot him down like a dog. It has come to that, and, by Heaven! we shall protect ourselves."

He rode on. David sat down on a fallen tree for a moment, and leaned his head upon his hand. Dark days were coming, as the planter had said; nay, were already there. Was he in any way responsible for them? He tried to think. "I know not," he said at last; "but I must still go on and do the best I can. I must carry out my plan." He rose and went forward to the Corners.

A number of Jubilee men were lounging near the new store, and one of them was reading aloud from a newspaper which the captain had given him; he had been David's brightest scholar and he could read readily; but what he read was inflammable matter of the worst kind, a speech which had been written for just such purposes, and which was now being circulated through the district. Mephistopheles in the form of Harnett Ammerton seemed to whisper in the school-master's ears, "Do you take pride to yourself that you taught that man to read?"

The reader stopped; he had discovered the new auditor; the men stared; they had never seen the master at the Corners before. They drew together and waited; he approached them, and paused a moment; then he began to speak.

"I have come, friends," he said, "to make a proposition to you. You, on your side, have nothing laid up for the winter, and I, on my side, am anxious to have your work. I have a field, you know, a cotton-field; what do you say to going to work there, all of you, for a month? I will agree to pay you more than any man about here pays, and you shall have the cash every Monday morning regularly. We will hold a meeting over at Jubilee, and you shall choose your own overseer; for I am very ignorant about cotton-fields; I must trust to you. What do you say?"

The men looked at each other, but no one spoke.

"Think of your little children without clothes."

Still silence.

"I have not succeeded among you," continued the teacher, "as well as I hoped to succeed. You do not come to school any more, and I suppose it is because you do not like me."

Something like a murmur of dissent came from the group. The voice went on:

"I have thought of something I can do, however; I can write to the North for another teacher to take my place, and he shall be a man of your own race; one who is educated, and, if possible, also a clergyman of your own faith. You can have a little church, then, and Sabbath services. As soon as he comes, I will yield my place to him; but, in the meantime, will you not cultivate that field for me? I ask it as a favor. It will be but for a little while, for, when the new teacher comes, I shall go, unless, indeed," he added, looking around with a smile that was almost pathetic in its appeal, "you should wish me to stay."

There was no answer. He had thrown out this last little test question suddenly. It had failed.

"I am sorry I have not succeeded better at Jubilee," he said after a short pause,—and his voice had altered in spite of his self-control,—"but at least you will believe, I hope, that I have tried."

"Dat's so;" "dat's de trouf," said one or two; the rest stood irresolute. But at this moment a new speaker came forward; it was the captain, who had been listening in ambush.

"All gammon, boys, all gammon," he began, seating himself familiarly among them on the fence-rail. "The season for planting's over, and your work would be thrown away in that field of his. He knows it, too; he only wants to see you marching around to his whistling. And he pays you double wages, does he? Double wages for perfectly useless work! Doesn't that show, clear as daylight, what he's up to? If he hankers so after your future,—your next winter, and all that,—why don't he give yer the money right out, if he's so flush? But no; he wants to put you to work, and that's all there is of it. He can't deny a word I've said, either."

"I do not deny that I wish you to work, friends," began David—

"There! he tells yer so himself," said the captain; "he wants yer back in yer old places again. *I* seen him talking to old Ammerton the other day. Give 'em a chance, them two classes, and they'll have you slaves a second time before you know it."

"Never!" cried David. "Friends, it is not possible that you can believe this man! We have given our lives to make you free," he added passionately, "we came down among you, bearing your freedom in our hands ——"

"Come now,—I'm a Northerner too, aint I?" interrupted the captain; "there's two kinds of Northerners, boys. *I* was in the army, and that's more than he can say. Much freedom *he* brought down in *his* hands, safe at home in his narrer-minded, penny-scraping village! He wasn't in the army at all, boys, and he can't tell you he was."

This was true; the school-master could not. Neither could he tell them what was also true, namely, that the captain had been an attaché of a sutler's tent, and nothing more. But the sharp-witted captain had the whole history of his opponent at his fingers' ends.

"Come along, boys," said this jovial leader; "we'll have suthin' to drink the health of this tremenjous soldier in,—this fellow as fought so hard for you and for your freedom. I always thought he looked like a fighting man, with them fine broad shoulders of his!" He laughed loudly, and the men trooped into the store after him. The school-master, alone outside, knew that his chance was gone. He turned away and took the homeward road. One of his plans had failed; there remained now nothing save to carry out the other.

Prompt as usual, he wrote his letter as soon as he reached his cabin, asking that another teacher, a colored man if possible, should be sent down to take his place.

"I fear I am not fitted for the work," he wrote; "I take shame to myself that this is so. Yet, being so, I must not hinder by any disappointed strivings the progress of the great mission. I will go back among my own kind; it may be that some whom I shall teach may yet succeed where I have failed." The letter could not go until the next morning. He went out and walked up and down in the forest. A sudden impulse came to him; he crossed over to the school-house and rang the little tinkling belfry-bell. His evening class had disbanded some time before; the poor old aunties and uncles crept off to bed very early now, in order to be safely out of the way when their disorderly sons and grandsons came home. But something moved the master to see them all together once more. They came across the green, wondering, and entered the school-room; some of the younger wives came too, and the children. The master waited, letter in hand. When they were all seated,

"Friends," he said, "I have called you together to speak to you of a matter which lies very near my own heart. Things are not going on well at Jubilee. The men drink; the children go in rags. Is this true?"

Groans, and slow assenting nods answered him. One old woman shrieked out shrilly, "It is de Lord's will," and rocked her body to and fro.

"No, it is not the Lord's will," answered the school-master gently; "you must not think so. You must strive to reclaim those who have gone astray; you must endeavor to inspire them with renewed aspirations toward a higher plane of life; you must—I mean," he said, correcting himself, "you must try to keep the men from going over to the Corners and getting drunk."

"But dey will do it, sah; what can we do?" said Uncle Scipio, who sat leaning his chin upon his crutch and peering at the teacher with sharp intelligence in his old eyes. "If dey wont stay fo' you, sah, will dey stay fo' us?"

"That is what I was coming to," said the master. (They had opened the subject even before he could get to it! They saw it too, then,—his utter lack of influence.) "I have not succeeded here as I hoped to succeed, friends; I have not the influence I

ought to have." Then he paused. "Perhaps the best thing I can do will be to go away," he added, looking quickly from face to face to catch the expression. But there was nothing visible. The children stared stolidly back, and the old people sat unmoved; he even fancied that he could detect relief in the eyes of one or two, quickly suppressed, however, by the innate politeness of the race. A sudden mist came over his eyes; he had thought that perhaps some of them would care a little. He hurried on: "I have written to the North for a new teacher for you, a man of your own people, who will not only teach you, but also, as a minister, hold services on the Sabbath; you can have a little church of your own then. Such a man will do better for you than I have done, and I hope you will like him,"—he was going to say, "better than you have liked me," but putting down all thought of self, he added, "and that his work among you will be abundantly blessed."

"Glory! glory!" cried an old aunty. "A color'd preacher ob our own,—glory! glory!"

Then Uncle Scipio rose slowly, with the aid of his crutches, and, as orator of the occasion, addressed the master.

"You see, sah, how it is; you see, Mars King David," he said, waving his hand apologetically, "a color'd man will unnerstan us, 'specially ef he hab libed at de Souf; we don't want no Nordern free niggahs hyar. But a 'spectable color'd preacher, now, would be de makin' ob Jubilee, fo' dis worl' an' de nex'."

"Fo' dis worl' and de nex'," echoed the old woman.

"Our service to you, sah, all de same," continued Scipio, with a grand bow of ceremony; "but you hab nebber *quite* unnerstan us, sah, nebber quite; an' you can nebber do much fo' us, sah, on 'count ob dat fack,—ef you'll scuse my saying so. But it is de trouf. We give you our t'anks and our congratturrurlations, an' we hopes you'll go j'yful back to your own people, an' be a shining light to 'em forebber more."

"A shinin' light forebber more," echoed the rest. One old woman, inspired apparently by the similarity of words, began a hymn about "the shining shore," and the whole assembly, thinking no doubt that it was an appropriate and complimentary termination to the proceedings, joined in with all their might, and sang the whole six verses through with fervor.

"I should like to shake hands with you all as you go out," said the master, when at last the song was ended, "and,—and I wish, my friends, that you would all remember me in your prayers to-night before you sleep."

What a sight was that when the pale Caucasian, with the intelligence of generations on his brow, asked for the prayers of these sons of Africa, and gently, nay, almost humbly, received the pressure of their black toil-hardened hands as they passed out! They had taught him a great lesson, the lesson of a failure.

The school-master went home, and sat far into the night, with his head bowed upon his hands. "Poor worm!" he thought, "poor worm! who even went so far as to dream of saying, 'Here am I, Lord, and these brethren whom Thou hast given me!'"

The day came for him to go; he shouldered his bag and started away. At a turn in the road, some one was waiting for him; it was dull-faced Esther with a bunch of flowers, the common flowers of her small garden-bed. "Good-bye, Esther," said the master, touched almost to tears by the sight of the solitary little offering.

"Good-bye, mars," said Esther. But she was not moved; she had come out into the woods from a sort of instinct, as a dog follows a little way down the road, to look after a departing carriage.

"David King has come back home again, and taken the district school," said one village gossip to another.

"Has he, now? Didn't find the blacks what he expected, I guess."