

THE CLOVERFIELDS CARRIAGE.



NOT far from the roadside, in one of the southern counties of Virginia, there stood a neat log-cabin, inhabited by a worthy negro couple, known as Uncle Elijah and Aunt Maria. These two had belonged to a widowlady, who owned the estate of Cloverfields, about three miles away; but when, a few years before the open-

ing of our story, the close of the civil war had set them free, they, in common with nearly all the negroes in the county, thought it incumbent upon them, as an assertion of their independence, to leave their former owners, and either work for themselves or go into service elsewhere. Thus there was a general shifting from plantation to plantation. Uncle Elijah and his wife, both now past middle age, left the place where they had been born and raised, and hired this cabin on a neighboring plantation, where by day's labor and odd jobs on the part of the husband, and washing and ironing and chicken-raising on the part of the wife, they managed to live in moderate comfort.

Elijah had been the family coachman, and he had found it a hard thing to resign the dignity of this position; but had he retained it he would virtually have admitted to all his brethren and sisters that freedom had done nothing for him. In order to show that he was now director of his own fortunes, it was necessary that he should drop the reins by which he had so skillfully directed and controlled the two black carriage-horses which had been his especial care since their early colthood.

But his love for his old mistress and his sense of his former dignity never left him, and now, when from afar he saw approaching the familiar carriage, he

would drop his work, or get up from his meal, and watch it until it had entirely disappeared from sight. Sometimes, if it were near enough, he would advance, hat in hand, to speak to his old mistress; but this he did not often do,—people might think he wanted to go back.

One autumn evening, just about dusk, as Uncle Elijah came out of his cabin, he perceived, near the top of a long hill on the road, the Cloverfields carriage and horses. Other eyes in the growing gloom might not have known what vehicle it was, but the eyes of Uncle Elijah could make no mistake. As he stood and gazed they sparkled with emotion.

“Whar Miss Jane gwine dis time o’ night? An’ wot’s de matter wid dat kerridge!” he

ejaculated. "I'll be dangdiddled ef de eberlastin' fool dat's dribin' hain't gwine an' chain' up de hin' wheel as ef it was a hay-wagin. An' who's de no 'count idyit wot can't dribe down Red Hill widout chainin' de wheel? Lor'! how he do bump de stones! An' how dat mus' rile Miss Jane! But I reckon she mus' done got use' ter bein' riled, a pickin' up all sorts o' niggahs to dribe her kerridge."

When the vehicle reached the bottom of the hill, not far from the cabin, it stopped, and the driver got down to unchain the wheel. Possessed by a sudden thought, Uncle Elijah rushed into his house, from which his wife was happily absent, clapped on his hat, and seized his coat. Keeping well away from the road, he ran towards the carriage, climbed the fence, and approached the vehicle in the rear, where he would not be seen by any of its occupants. When he reached the man, who had just unfastened the chain, the soul of Uncle Elijah was filled with righteous indignation at finding it was Montague Braxton, a negro shoemaker of the neighborhood. Without a word he seized the cobbler coachman by the collar, including a good part of one ear in his grasp, and led him away from the carriage, Montague, who knew who had clutched him, submitting without a word. When they had hurriedly gone a dozen steps Elijah hissed in the other's ear:

"Is you comin' back ter-night?"

"Yaas," whispered the shoemaker, very much astonished at the manner of his interviewer.

"Well, den, jus' you go 'long up ter my house, split de wood fur Aun' M'riar, fotch a bucket ob water from de spring, and stay hyar till I come back. I'se gwine ter dribe dis kerridge myse'f. Ain't got no time to say no moh. Now, git!"

Montague, who knew "Uncle 'Lijah" as a pillar of strength in the church, as well as a pillar of not very easily restrained strength in his own proper person, made no answer, but noiselessly slipped away. Elijah passed quickly around the carriage, keeping at a little distance from it to avoid being recognized by those within, although he scarcely need have feared this in the increasing gloom, and mounted to the elevated seat in front; when, taking up the reins and whip, he started the horses, and the equipage moved on. Now sat Uncle Elijah like a king upon his throne, and his soul was moved within him with a joy that he had not known for years. Here were Gamma and Delta, the two horses that he had driven so long, a little older, a little browner in their manes and tails, but still the same good horses, with plenty of strength and spirit left; here was the same

old harness—he could recognize it even in the dark—badly kept, and badly put on, but still the same; here were the reins that once no hand but his had ever dared to touch; and here the whip, very old now and shabby, with a miserable new lash on it, but still the same whip he used to wield; and here was the high seat on which he alone had sat from the time he became a man in years until that day when his freedom made him another man.

Now the thoughts of the regenerated coachman ran riot in his brain. Indignation towards the shoemaker who had dared to drive the family carriage of his old mistress on a night which promised to be as dark as this, first took entire possession of him.

"Dat no 'count cobbler!" he said to himself. "Wot he know 'bout dribin'? An' o' nights, too! An' wid de crick up. An' wid de water all ober de road 'longside for harf a mile. An' de road pas' Colonel Tom Gileses all washed so dat he couldn't help slidin' inter de gully to sabe his soul, ef he hadn't fus' druv inter de crick, an' tumbled de kerridge an' hosses, an' his own eberlastin' fool se'f, top o' Miss Jane, an' mos' likely little Miss Jane an' Miss Almira Gay. But dey's all right now I'se dribin'. You ken bet your life on dat."

If any one had heard this remark, he would have been quite safe in accepting the wager, for, by day or by night, washed by rains, covered by freshets, or in their normal condition, Uncle Elijah knew the roads in this neighborhood better than any man alive; ever since he had become a freeman he had studied the difficulties and obstructions of the highways as he walked to and from his work. "Ef I was a dribin' hyar" he would say to himself, "I'd put dis fron' wheel roun' dat little stone, den one small twis' ud bring de hin' wheel on dis side ob it, an' I'd clean miss de big rock in de udder rut."

Remembering and avoiding the stones, deep ruts, and encroaching gullies, Elijah, like a pilot who steers past the rocks and sandbars which lie under the water, as the road now lay in the darkness of the night, went steadily on, without bump or jolt of any account. Passing the flooded part of the road without deviating a foot to the right or left of the proper course, passing the tobacco field of Colonel Giles, where the rains had washed the road into a shelving hillside, without bumping an exposed rock or sliding towards a gully, he reached the higher and more level portion of the road, which was now so comparatively good and comparatively clear, to the sharp eyes of horses and driver, that Elijah went on at a fair pace, now and then waving his whip and straightening himself up as a

man who breathes his native air once more. Suddenly a dreadful thought flashed across his mind, and he barely checked himself from pulling the horses back on their haunches.

"Whar's I gwine?" said he, almost aloud. "Dat double, eberlastin' fool shoemaker neber tole me! Whar kin Miss Jane, an' mos' like little Miss Jane an' Miss Almira Gay, be gwine at dis time? An' comin' back ter-night, too! Dey mus' be 'tendin' ter spen' de ebenin' somewhar,—but whar?"

Elijah now revolved in his mind every place to which he thought the family might be going. So far he had made no mistake because there had been no turn in the road; and although he had passed the place of Colonel Tom Giles, they could not be going to see him, for he was an old bachelor, living alone, and besides had gone to Richmond. A short distance ahead the road branched, and in one direction led to the house of Dr. Marshall Gordon, distant about a mile, and in the other to the hospitable mansion of General William Tucker.

"Dey can't be gwine fur de doctor fur anybody sick," thought Elijah, "fur if it had been dat dey'd sent a boy on a hoss, an' not hitched up de kerridge wid a shoemaker ter drike; an' I'd be dreffel 'shamed ter take 'em more'n four miles to de Gin'ral's ef dey wasn't gwine dar."

The nearer he approached the fork of the road the more completely Uncle Elijah became convinced that he could not decide this important question for himself. It was absolutely necessary that he should get down and ask his old mistress where she was going. This was a terribly hard thing for him to do. He would be obliged to tell the whole story, and to admit that his affection for her, as strong as ever, had prompted him to take the driver's seat. And this was to relinquish a portion of his new freedom and manhood. But it had to be done, for the fork of the road was reached. Drawing up his horses, Elijah descended from his seat, and with the reins in one hand, for he was not a man, like the cobbler, to leave his horses standing free in the road, he reverently opened the carriage door.

"Miss Jane," said he, "I spec' you s'prised to see me drubin', but I couldn't stan' still an' let dat no 'count shoemaker, wot don' know nuffin 'bout hosses, nor de roads nuther, an' night comin' on pitch dark, drike you. He hadn't eben sense 'nuf to tell me whar you's gwine, so I begs you'll scuse me fur gittin' down ter ax you."

They were now in the heavily shaded portion of the road, and the interior of the carriage was quite dark. From the farthest corner of the back seat came a thin, low voice

which said to him: "Keep on now to the kyars."

This reply surprised Elijah in several ways. In the first place, he had confidently expected that his old mistress would say something expressive of her satisfaction in finding herself under his charge on such a dark night as this; and, again, he was surprised to hear that voice come out of the carriage. It did not belong to Miss Jane, nor, as far as he could judge, to any of her family. After a moment's hesitation he closed the door, and then, irresolutely, mounted to his seat and drove slowly on. He had not proceeded a hundred yards before there dawned upon his mind a dim recognition of the voice which had come from the carriage. Drawing up his horses again, he quickly got down and opened the carriage door.

"Who in dar, anyhow?" he said, in a tone by no means as respectful as that he had used before.

At this question the opposite door of the carriage suddenly opened, and the occupant popped out of it. As this individual, upon reaching the ground, turned, and stood facing Uncle Elijah, the latter could see, outlined upon a patch of sky behind him, the plainly discernible form of the cobbler, Montague, from whose lips now burst forth a roar of laughter that completely established his identity. The outraged soul of Uncle Elijah boiled and bubbled within him. He put out his left arm as if he would reach through the carriage and clutch the scoundrel by the throat. But this was impossible, and he would not drop the reins to run around the carriage.

"You eberlastin' fool cobbler!" he cried, "what fur you go play dis trick on me?"

"I no play no trick on you, Uncle 'Lijah," returned Montague, still laughing immoderately. "You played de trick on youself. I'se done nuffin but jus' keep out your way. I got up behin' so's ter see whar you was gwine, an' den I unhooked de back cuttins, an' slipped inside 'cause 'twas moh com'ble."

"I'll break your neck fur dat!" cried Uncle Elijah. "A low-down, yaller shoemaker like you gittin' inter Miss Jane's kerridge!"

"Got ter ketch me fus', Uncle 'Lijah, 'fore you break my neck," replied the shoemaker, still in a merry mood.

"Shet up your fool talk," cried Elijah, "an' tell me whar you was sent ter."

"I was sent fur Miss Polly Brown, de seamstress wot libes on Colonel Tom Giles's place, but dat was a long time back. She done gone ter bed afore dis. Miss Jane tole me ter go arly in de ebenin, but somebody done took one ob de hoss coll'rs fur de plow team, an' I couldn't find it nowhar, so it got

right smart late afore I started. An' now you done tuck up so much time, Uncle 'Lijah, comin' way out hyar on your little business, dat 'tain't no use gwine fur Miss Polly Brown till de mawnin'. Whar *is* you gwine, anyhow, Uncle 'Lijah?"

To this Uncle Elijah made no answer, but his tone moderated a little as he asked: "Wot fur you tell me to keep on ter de kyars?"

"Cos I didn't know no udder place ter go, ef it was lef' ter me. 'Tain't fur ter de kyars now, an' dar's allus sumfin dar fur de fam'ly, an' I'd ruther go back an' tell Miss Jane dat I done mistook whar she tole me ter go dan ter say I ain't been nowhar."

Uncle Elijah's mind was not a quick one, but it did not take a very long time for it to dawn upon him that in this predicament it might be better to go somewhere than nowhere. His anger had cooled down somewhat, for he felt that in his controversy with Montague he had had the worst of it. After rubbing the side of his head for a few moments he said shortly to the cobbler, "Shet dat doh', an' come 'long ter de kyars. Ef dar's anyting dar fur de fam'ly, you kin git it, an' I'll drike back. Ain't gwine ter trus' you wid dese hosses in de night."

"Look hyar, Uncle 'Lijah," said Montague, coming round to the back of the carriage, but keeping well out of reach, "dar ain't gwine ter be no fightin' if I done git up 'longside o' you, is dar?"

"Come 'long hyar," said Uncle Elijah, mounting to his seat; "I ain't gwine ter fight while I got dese kerridge an' hosses under my chawge. But I don't say nuffin 'bout ter-morrer mawnin', min' dat."

"Don't keer nuffin 'bout mawnin', long as 'tain't come," said Montague, getting up on the other side.

The railroad station was a little beyond Dr. Marshall Gordon's, and the road to it was one over which Elijah had gone so often that he felt warranted to drive at a good round pace, especially since he knew that his old mistress would not be bumped if he happened to strike a stone. His recollection of his previous careful driving made him grumble all the more at the shoemaker for having brought him on such a tom-fool errand.

"Now look hyar, Uncle 'Lijah," said Montague, "did you eber hear de par'ble ob de fox an' de mule?"

"Don't member no sich par'ble," said Elijah. "Is it in de Scripter?"

"I reckon so," said the shoemaker. "I neber read it dar mysef, but I spec's it's from de Scripter. Dar was a fox a-gwine ter de well fur a drink ob water, an' when he got dar he pull up de rope, an' sho' 'nuf dar wasn't no

bucket to it. Dar had been a baptizin' at a church not fur off, an' as de baptizin' pond was all dried up, some ob de bredren come ter de well ter git some water, an' when dey saw dat de bucket was a good big one, dey t'ought dey mought as well take it 'long to baptize de sister right in it, cos she was a little chile on'y free weeks old."

"Dey don't dip 'em dat young," interrupted Elijah.

"Dis was a long time ago," said Montague, "an' a Mefodis' baby at dat. An' when de fox foun' out de bucket was gone, he jus 'rar'd an' chawged, fur he was pow'ful firsty, habin' bin eatin' fur his breakfus' some ob dat dar mean middlin' dat dey sen's up from Richmon', wot is moh salt dan meat. But sw'arin' wouldn't fotch de water up ter him, an' so he 'cluded ter climb down de rope, an' git a drink dat way. When he got down dar he drunk, an' he drunk, an' he drunk, an' when he felt mos' like fit to bus' he thought he'd had enuf, an' he'd go up ag'in. But when dat ole fox try ter climb up de rope, he fin' it right smart dif'rent wuk from comin' down, an' he couldn't git up nohow. When he foun' dis out he was pow'ful disgruntled, fur he had to stan' in de water, an' it was mighty cole, an' he 'spected he'd git de rheumatiz, an' have to have his legs wrop up in red flannel an' turpentine. While he was 'volvin' in his min' wot he'd do to dat sto'-keeper wot sole him dat salt middlin', 'long come a' army mule an' look down de well. He was p'intedly ole, dat mule, an' branded wid U. S. twice on bof sides, what had been guv to a preacher at Pow'tan Court House by de guv'ment, in de place ob a good mule dat de Yankees took."

"Th'ain't no mention of Pow'tan Court House in de Scripter," interrupted Elijah.

"Don't know 'bout dat," said Montague; "I reckon it's a Scripter name. Anyhow, de army mule he poke he head down de well, an' holler: 'Hello! Whar de bucket? an' who down dar?' 'Mawnin', Cap'n Mule,' said de fox. He was one ob dem red foxes dat been hunt so offen by Gin'ral Tucker's pack of hounds dat it make him pow'ful peart. 'De bucket no 'count, Cap'n. De bottom's bruck out, an' it's been throwed away. Eberybody comes down de well arfter de water, an' I jus' tell you, Cap'n, it's mighty good dis mawnin'. Somebody mus' 'a' drop' a tickler an' a couple ob pounds ob sugar down hyar, fur it tastes jus' like apple toddy.' An' de fox he 'gan to lap wid he tongue as ef he could neber git enuf. When de army mule he heard 'bout de apple toddy, he say no moh, but jus' slid down de rope. 'Hello!' he holler when he git to de bottom. 'How you put your head down to drink? Th'ain't no room fur me to put my

head down.' 'Dat's so,' said de fox, who was scrouging ag'in' de wall to git out ob de way; 'you do fill up dis well 'mazin', an', sho' 'nuf, dar ain't no room fur you ter put your head down. But neber you min'. Jus' stan' still, an' I'll fix all dat.' De army mule, his hind legs was in de bottom ob de well, his fore legs was ag'in' de sides, an' he great long neck was stickin' eber so high up. Him gittin' right smart skeered 'bout dis time. De fox he jus' jump on de mule back, den on he neck, den on he head, an' den he gib one skip right out ob de well. 'Hello, dar!' hollered de mule. 'Whar you gwine? Come back hyar, an' haul me out dis well! What fur you go 'way an' leab me hyar?' De fox he come back, an' he look down de well, an' he say: 'Wot's de matter, mule?' An' de heart ob de mule went down into his hoofs when he notus he done lef' off de cap'n. 'I got nuffin' ter do wid dat well, nur wid you nudder. Ef you wan' ter go down arfter apple toddy, dat's your look-out. Good-mawnin'.' An' off went Mr. Fox to de stoh' po'ch to tell de folks 'bout dat fool mule.

"Now dat par'ble 'minds me ob you, Uncle 'Lijah. You didn't hab to git up on dis seat, an' hol' dese reins, an' dribe dese hosses, ef you hadn't wanted ter. 'Tain't no use jawin' me fur dat."

"Ef I wasn't 'feared dese hosses ud run away," roared Uncle Elijah, "I'd jus' take you down de road and gib you sech a-hidin' as you haven't had sence you got inter breeches."

With Uncle Elijah's hands so fully occupied as they were, Montague felt safe; and, edging as near as possible to his end of the seat, he exclaimed:

"But dat ain't all de par'ble, Uncle 'Lijah. De fox he come back dat ebenin', an' when he look down de well, dar de mule yit, sw'arin' an' cussin' like all out-doh's. When he see de fox, de mule he 'clar ter gracious dat when he git out he kick dat fox inter little bits so small dat dey could sow him ober de fiel's from a wheat-seeder. 'Look hyar,' said de fox, 'you min' me ob de par'ble ob de man what los' his spring lamb. Somebody stole that lamb wot he 'spected to get foh' dollars fur at de Court House, an' de man he rared an' chawged, an' he swore dat ef he kotch dat thief he'd lick him wuss dan any sheep-thief was eber licked in dat county, or any ob de j'ining counties. He hunted high, an' he hunted low, to find de thief, an' jus' as he got inside de woods he come across a great big b'ar who had his spring lamb a hung up a-barbecuin', an' he was a-nailin' de skin up ag'in' a tree fur ter dry. De man was orful skeered; but de b'ar he sees him, an' he sings out: 'Hello! man,

now you kotch de t'ief wot stole your spring lamb, why you no punch he head? Why you no break he back wid dat club? Tell me dat, you big man!' An' de b'ar he put down he hammer an' he nails so's ter talk de better. De man he too skeered to speak a word, an' he kep' squeezin' back, an' squeezin' back, widout sayin' nuffin. De b'ar he come nigher an' nigher, an' he sing out: 'Wot fur you keep your mouf shut like a can o' temahters? Why you no do some ob dem big t'ings you blow 'bout jus' now?' De man he squeeze back, an' he squeeze back, till he git ter de edge ob de woods, and den he sing out: 'I mube dis meetin' 'journ'!' An' he more'n 'journed.

"Now, Uncle 'Lijah, I don' wan' ter make no 'flections 'gin' you in dis par'ble, but de fox he did say ter de mule dat 'fore he blow 'bout de big t'ings he gwine ter do, he better 'mune wid his own soul, an' see ef he able. Right smart fox dat, min' you, Uncle 'Lijah."

To this Uncle Elijah made no answer, but his eyes sparkled, and his big hands were gripped very tightly on the whip and the reins that he held; and in a minute more he had drawn up at the little railroad station. Montague got down, and went to inquire if there were any packages of goods waiting for the Cloverfields family, while Elijah remained in his seat. This was a very familiar spot to the old negro. In former times he had been in the habit of driving here two or three times a week, and as he sat on his old seat on the carriage, with the same old reins in his hand, and the two black horses of the olden time again before him, and the familiar scenes all about him, Elijah actually forgot for the time being that he had ever resigned his ancient post.

"Look hyar," said Montague, presently returning with a package in his hands. "Hyar's some dry-goods from Richmon', an' ef we hadn't druv down hyar, I'd been sent arfter 'em ter-morrer in de cart or on mule-back. De train's comin' in ten minutes; might as well wait, an' see ef dar's anythin' moh'."

Elijah grumbled a little at waiting, but Montague, whose soul delighted in being stirred, even by so small a matter as the arrival of a railroad train, insisted that it would be unwise to go away, when a few minutes' delay might save a lot of future trouble. And so they waited.

Soon there was heard a distant whistle, then an approaching rumble, and the train rolled up to the station and stopped. As she had always done, Gamma tossed her head and looked to one side, while Delta pricked up his ears; but, as he had always done, Uncle Elijah kept a firm hand upon the reins,

and spoke to his horses in a low, quiet tone, which had the effect of making them understand that they might safely remain where they were, for under no circumstances would the train come their way.

Out of the open window of a car a young man put his head, and looked up and down the narrow platform, and then his eye was caught by the Cloverfields carriage, standing full in the light of the station lamp. Drawing in his head, he continued to look steadily at the carriage, and then he arose and came out on the car platform. One of the good comfortable stops, not unfrequent on the roads in this part of the country, was taking place, and the conductor had gone into the station to send a telegram. The young man came down to the bottom step, and again looked up and down. Here he was espied by Montague, who rushed up and accosted him.

"How d'ye, Mahs Chawles? Don' you 'member me? I'se Montague Braxton. Use' ter men' your boots."

"Isn't that Uncle Elijah?" asked the young man. "And who is the carriage waiting for?"

"Come fur you, sah," said the mendacious cobbler. "All ready waitin', sah. Gimme your checks, Mahs Chawles, an' I'll git de baggage."

"Come for me!" repeated the young man. "How did they know?"

"Cawn't tell nuffin 'bout dat, sah, but Miss Jane she sen' me an' 'Lijah arfter you wid de kerridge. Better hurry up wid de checks, sah."

The young man stood upon the bottom step looking steadily at the carriage, and paying no attention to Montague's last remark. Then he moved his eyes and saw the conductor coming out of the station. He turned, sprang up the steps and into the car, returning almost instantly with a valise and a light overcoat, which were immediately taken by the obsequious Montague.

"Dat all, sah?" said he.

The young man nodded. "All aboard!" cried the conductor. And in a moment the train had moved away.

Montague put the coat and valise on the front seat of the carriage, and stood holding open the door. "Hyar Mahs Chawles," said he to Elijah.

The old man turned so suddenly as to startle the horses. "Mahs Chawles!" he exclaimed, his eyes opening like a pair of head-lights.

"How d'ye, Uncle Elijah?" said the young man, extending his hand, which the old negro took as if he had been in a dream.

Montague looked a little anxiously at the two. "Better hurry up, sah," he said in a low voice. "It's gittin' late, an' Miss Jane's awful skeery 'bout dribin' at night."

At this the young man entered the carriage, Montague shut the door and ran around to his seat, and Uncle Elijah, his mind dazed and confused by this series of backward slides into times gone by, turned his horses and drove away. For ten minutes he spoke not a word, and then he said to Montague: "Did you know Mahs Chawles was comin'?"

"Ob course I did," said the cobbler. "You don's'pose, Uncle 'Lijah, dat I'd fotch you all de way down hyar jus' fur a little bun'le ob cotton cloth? Didn't say nuffin 'bout Mahs Chawles, cos I feared he mightn't come, an' you'd be dis'p'inted, an' dem par'bles was jus'ter pahs de time, Uncle Lijah — jus' ter pahs de time."

The old man made no answer, but drove steadily on, and the moon now having arisen, he was able to make very good time. Little more was said until they had nearly reached Uncle Elijah's cabin; then Montague asked the old man if he intended driving all the way to Cloverfields.

"Ob course I do," was the gruff reply. "You don' s'pose I'd trus' you wid Mahs Chawles dis time o' night?"

"Well, den," said the other, "I reckon I'll git down and cut acrost de fiel's ter my house ef you'll be 'bligin' enuf, Uncle 'Lijah, jus' ter put up de hosses when you gits dar, an' I'll come fus' t'ing in de mawnin an' 'tend to ebery'ting, jus' as I allus does."

"Go 'long," said Elijah, slackening his horses' pace. "I'se got no use fur you, nohow."

The mistress of Cloverfields, with little Miss Jane and Miss Almira Gay, was sitting in the parlor of the old mansion very much disturbed. In the middle of the afternoon Montague Braxton had been told to take the carriage and go for Miss Polly Brown, the seamstress, who had promised to give a week of her valuable time to Cloverfields; but, although it was now between nine and ten o'clock, he had not returned. The force of men-servants at Cloverfields was very small, and no one of them lived at the house excepting a very old man, too decrepit to send out to look up a lost cobbler and a carriage; and "Miss Jane," who was still a vigorous woman, though her hair was white, with her daughter, little Miss Jane, and her niece, Miss Almira Gay, had almost determined that they would walk over to a cabin about half a mile distant, and get a colored man living there to saddle a mule and ride to Miss Polly Brown's to see what had happened, when their deliberations were cut short by the sound of carriage-wheels on the drive. The three ladies sprang to their feet and hurried out to the porch, throwing the front door wide open that the light from the hall lamp might illumine the steps.

"Why, Miss Polly!" exclaimed little Miss

Jane, what on earth——” And then she abruptly stopped, ejaculating in a low tone: “Uncle Elijah!”

At these words her mother moved quickly forward to the edge of the porch, but before she had time to say anything the carriage-door opened, and there stepped out, not the middle-aged seamstress who was expected, but a young man, on whose pale and upturned face the light of the hall lamp shone full. There was a cry from the women, a sudden bound up the steps, and in an instant the son of the house was in his mother's arms, with his sister clasping as much of his neck as she could reach.

A quarter of an hour after this, as Master Charles sat in the parlor, his mother on one side with an arm around him, his sister on the other side with her arm around him, while his right hand clasped that of Miss Almira Gay, he thus explained himself: “I hadn't the least idea of getting off the train, for you know I had vowed never to come here till there was an end of that old trouble; but I thought if I went down to Danville in the late train we probably wouldn't stop at our station at all, and that I wouldn't notice when we passed it. But we did stop, and I couldn't help looking out, and when I saw the Cloverfields carriage standing there just as natural as life, and old Uncle Elijah in the driver's seat——”

“Uncle Elijah!” exclaimed his mother, pushing back her chair. “Did he go down to the station to bring me my son?”

“It was Elijah!” cried little Miss Jane. “I saw him on the seat.”

The old lady arose and left the room. She stepped upon the porch and looked out, but the carriage had gone. Then she went to the back door, hastily lighted a lantern which stood on the table, and with this in her hand made her way under the tall oaks and along the driveway to the barn, which was at some distance from the house. Through the open door of the stables she saw dimly the form of a man engaged in rubbing down a horse. Raising the lantern in her hand, she stepped to the door and threw the light within.

“Uncle Elijah,” she said, “is that you?”

The man turned around. He forgot he had a vote; he forgot he could serve on a jury. He simply took off his hat, and coming forward, said: “Yaas, Miss Jane, dis is me.”

The next morning, not very early, the cobbler approached the Cloverfields stables to attend to the horses, and to do the various oddments and bitments of work for which he had been temporarily hired. To his surprise, just as he turned a corner of the barn he met Uncle Elijah, who was engaged in attaching a new lash to the carriage-whip. Montague, astounded, stood for a moment speechless,

gazing at Elijah, who, in some way, seemed to be different from what he was the day before. He looked taller and wider; his countenance was bright, his general aspect cheerful, and an element of Sunday seemed to have been infused into his clothes.

“Didn't spec to see you hyar, Uncle'Lijah,” stammered the cobbler when he found his voice.

“Reckin not,” said the old man, “but I'se glad ter see you, cös I wants ter tell you a par'ble. Dar was once a mud-turkle, de low-downest, or'nerest, no 'countest mud-turkle in de whole worl'. His back was so cracked dat it wouldn't keep de rain off he skin, and he bottom shell bin ha'f sole' free or four times; he so lazy he ruther scuffle it ober de rocks dan walk; an' de chickens had eat off he tail afore de war, cos he too triflin' ter pull it in. Well, dis mis'ble mud-turkle come 'long one day, an' he sees a Chris'mus tukkey a-settin' on de limb ob a big apple-tree. De tukkey, he feel fus'-rate, an' he look fus'-rate, an' he jyin hese'f up dar 'mong de leabas an' de apples. An' de mud-turkle he look up, an' he say: 'Dat mighty nice up dar! Reckin I'd like ter set up dar myse'f. Jus' you come down, Mahs Chris'mus tukkey, an' lemme set up dar 'mongst de apples an' de leabas.' Den de Chris'mus tukkey, he bristle hese'f up, an' he stick out he feathers, an' he spread out he tail, an' his comb an' his gills git redder dan fire, an' he sing out: 'Go 'long wid you, you mud-turkle; don' lemme heah you say no moh 'bout settin' up hyar.' You dunno how to dribe a hoss; you got no moh sense dan ter chain de hin' wheel ob a kerridge, gwine down Red Hill; you lose de hoss-collus; you breaks de whip-lashes, and gits de harness all upside down wrong; an' you comes ter feed de hosses arfer dey's bin watered an' turned out moh'n two hours. P'raps you dunno who I is. Ise de driber ob de Cloverfields kerridge, an' as long as I has de use ob my j'int, an' can see wid my eyes, nobody dribes dat kerridge but me. An' now, look hyar, you shoemaker mud-turkle, when me, an' Miss Jane, an' little Miss Jane, an' Miss Almira Gay, an' p'r'aps Mahs Chawles, gits ter de Happy Lan', don' you reckon dat you's gwine ter come dar too cos your foolin' helped fotch Mahs Chawles home. De angel Gabr'el, he p'int his horn right at you an' he sing out: 'Ain't got no use fur no yaller cobbler angels hyar, wid dey fool par'bles, an' dey lies 'bout bein' sent fur Mahs Chawles, an' dey lettin' An' M'riar split her own wood an' fotch her own water from de spring.' An' now you's got my par'ble, Montague Braxton, an' de nex' time you comes you gits your lickin'.”