low that I was weaker than I thought. And now, as you say, 'it is over.' Your hands are empty! Oh! it was a poor passion, and this is the fitting end for it!"

She moved a little toward the door and stopped.

"Good-bye," she said.

In a moment more all that was left was a subtle breath of flower-like fragrance in the atmosphere of the bare room.

It was an hour before he passed through the iron gates, though there had been nothing left to be done inside.

He came out slowly, and having locked the gate, turned toward the Broxton road.

He was going to the little grave-yard. It had been a dull gray day, but by the time he reached the place, the sun had crept through the clouds and brightened them, and, noting it, he felt some vague comfort. It was a desolate place when there was no sun.

When he reached the mound he stood looking down. Since the night he had lain by it looking up at the sky and had made his resolve, the grass had grown longer and thicker and turned from green to brown and rustled as it moved.

He spoke aloud, as before.

"It is done," he said. "Your thought was what you dreamed it would be. I have kept my word."

He stopped as if for an answer. But it was very still—so still that the silence was like a Presence. And the mound at his feet lay golden brown in the sunlight, even its long grass unstirred.

They left Broxton the next day and in a week he set sail. As the ship moved away he stood leaning upon the taffrail watching a figure upon the shore. It was a girl in a long cloak of gray almost the color of the mist in which she stood—a slender motionless figure—the dark young face turned seaward.

He watched her until he could see her face no longer but still she had not stirred.

"When I return," he said, scarcely conscious that he spoke, "it will be to you."

Then the grayness closed about her and she faded slowly from his sight.

THE END.

A SAILOR IN THE COTTON FIELD.

I WAS not well adapted for the struggle for a livelihood into which I was forced after the civil war, for I had been brought up in the navy, and knew little of the ways of landsmen. What little money I had left after the war, I invested in an unprofitable business in a Southern sea-port, and failing in that, I undertook my present business of cotton planting.

The first sight of the land where my wife and I determined to settle was not encouraging. There was not a house or a fence on it. A large portion of it had not been cultivated since the beginning of the war—about eleven years—and was covered by a wilderness of briars, vines and young forest trees; affording shelter to innumerable rabbits, opossums, raccoons, catamounts, rattlesnakes and "cotton-mouth" moccasins, while beavers reveled undisturbed in the sluggish stream that wound its hidden way through the dense jungle. Another part of the tract, known in the language of the country as "old field," was kept bare by hundreds of cattle that sought it for pasture. The whole was the type of thousands of acres still lying uncultivated in these Gulf states.

Our place is fifteen miles from the nearest railway station, and in certain seasons of the year the country roads that lead to the market towns are nearly impassable.

As may readily be imagined, the society in such a neighborhood was not very polished—that is, when taken as a whole; for it is, perhaps, peculiar to our Southern states that one may so often discover oases of refinement and intelligence in the midst of their solitudes, hundreds of miles from the great centers of civilization. Sometimes it is a single family bringing with them into the wilderness the mode of life acquired in a more refined community; at others, it was an entire neighborhood.

However, the home in which we found a temporary resting-place as boarders, was the type of home most common in the South. Mr. Clacker, its head, was a widower about sixty years old, with a family, still dependent on him, of four buxom

daughters. His house was an unplastered frame building of six rooms, glaring white, without a shade-tree within fifty yards. Every room had its feather-bed,—some of them plethoric-looking beds, that seemed aspiring to reach the joists above, and defying invasion, except by the aid of scaling-ladders; but which, when one conquered their apparent difficulties, yielded suddenly and buried him over head and ears.

Mr. Clacker's picture gallery was not extensive, being made up in the main of wood-cuts taken from the illustrated weeklies, and pasted irregularly about the walls.

The table groaned under a load of solid food; one meal differing little from another, heaping dishes of fried bacon, fried chicken and hot biscuits being always on duty. Breakfast was served at day-break, dinner at noon, and supper at dusk.

Mr. Clacker had been an overseer, but he bore no more resemblance to the traditional monster of that name, than did the late Admiral Farragut to the sailor of the stage; for though his face is very red, it is one of the most benevolent-looking I ever beheld. He is a man well-to-do for this out-of-the-way place, for he not only has his farm, but a store at the cross-roads that brings him in a good profit. One of our neighbors who passes for a wit says that Mr. Clacker, from motives of economy, carries the sign of his store in his face.

As Mr. Clacker had lived in the country for many years, I sought his advice as to settling in my new home and bringing the land into cultivation; but like most people who ask advice, I had no notion of taking it unless it coincided with my own ideas. It must be acknowledged that my undertaking was a difficult one—nothing less than to build a house, and then clear, inclose and cultivate a farm, without the slightest knowledge of any mechanical or agricultural implement, and after being accustomed for years to a sedentary life.

"You'll never do it in the world," said Mr. Clacker. "What! go to choppin' in the woods this time o' the year? Why, a nigger can't hardly do it, let alone a white man. And one, too, as is never been used to work! Pshaw!"

"Well," I said, "my business here is to bring that land into cultivation, and as I see no prospect of hiring any hands, now that they are all busy with their crops, I am compelled to do, at least, a part of the work myself."

"I doan' keer," was the reply; "I tell you no white man can't work here in the summer time a-splittin' rails."

"Did you ever try it?" I asked.

"Of course I never did," with a look of surprise.

"Did you ever know any white man to try it?"

"Of course I never did, for everybody's done heard 'em say no white man can't split rails here in the summer time."

Paying no heed to what Mr. Clacker had heard 'em say, I entered upon my new career of woodman on the 12th day of June, 1871. The primitive forest where I began my work was grown up in undergrowth some twenty to thirty feet high, which by cutting off all circulation of air made it as hot as a furnace. The tree selected for my first experiment in rail-splitting was a white oak, about two feet and a half in diameter, growing near a little stream, whose pools were kept cool by the deep channel in which it flowed. I began operations in the early morning while the temperature was yet pleasant, and after repeated "spells" to catch breath, I had the satisfaction to see the great tree sway to and fro, as if loth to abandon its exalted position, and then plunge headlong to the earth. It was the first large tree I had ever felled, and I had the exultation a young hunter feels in bagging his first deer.

The next step was to cut the trunk into sections, preparatory to splitting it up, and this I undertook in the manner I had seen old woodmen do—standing on the trunk, and cutting to the heart first from one side and then from the other. I got along well enough while my work was in the shade, but the fallen tree had left a great vacant space in the forest, to which the sun mounted in the forenoon, shining down upon me with an ardor and persistency worthy a better cause. That was an arrangement I had not bargained for; but nature provides a remedy for most evils if we only know how to apply it. It was while standing ax in hand, nearly suffocated with heat, that I discovered why timber trees grow near the banks of cool streams, and instantly made the most of it by throwing down the ax and plunging into the nearest pool.

What a glorious change it was from the hard labor under the broiling sun to the sandy bed of the cool, clear water! Only I had not come into the woods for the purpose of sitting neck deep in water all day. There were the fallen tree and the ax and

other implements to remind of that fact. Suppose Mr. Clacker should happen to come along: wouldn't his triumph be more than I could stand? Impelled by such reflections, I made a desperate rush for the ax, and set to work again with renewed ardor, my dripping clothes keeping me cool for a time in spite of the sun. But only for a time. With every successive blow of the ax, my longing for the water became more and more intense, until after a few minutes of rapid work the ax was again abandoned, and again I was musing neck deep in the water.

I followed this improved method of splitting rails, until the sun sank behind the trees, when I finally reckoned up my day's work, and found myself the possessor of twenty-one rails—twenty-one thousand being the whole number I required. Rather discouraging it undoubtedly was, but I put on a bold face with Mr. Clacker, and boasted to him that I found there was no truth in what he had "heard 'em say."

With a little more practice I became more successful, and one day a professor of the art of rail-splitting appeared on the scene, and advanced matters very much. I was hard at work splitting up a "cut," when I became aware of the presence of a spectator. At a little distance from me was a man squatting on the ground, with his knees drawn up to his chin, and his eyes fixed on me, or rather on my work. He was clad in a "hickory" shirt and yellow jean trowsers, the latter hung upon him by suspenders of bed-ticking three inches wide. A shabby straw-hat, with a rim twisted in every conceivable direction, half hid his dark, sun-burned face. A passing thought suggested that I was in the presence of some evil spirit of the woods.

"Good-morning," I said, when I had partly recovered from my surprise.

"Mornin'," was the reply, with which the conversation ceased, and I resumed work.

Some minutes elapsed, when my strange visitor again broke the silence:

"Seen any hogs?" he asked.

"I've not seen any lately. Have you lost any?"

"A bunch uv 'em strayed from me 'bout a week ago. Gone to the swamp, I reckon."

There was another pause, my visitor still retaining his remarkable posture, and still watching my work.

"Got any trading stock?"

Did I look like a man who dealt in stocks? and was this a capitalist in disguise looking for a profitable investment? I stared at the man in blank astonishment, and my perplexity was relieved only when he continued:

"I've got a young mar', jest four year old, I wouldn't mind tradin' for a mule. She's as good a cr'atur' as you ever shake plow-lines over."

I declined trading for his "mar'," whereupon he rose to his feet as suddenly as if he were worked by steel springs, and said he would go to the swamp to look for that "bunch o' hogs"; but turning suddenly after he had bid me "mornin'" and walked away a few steps he said: "Let me show you how to split them rails," and without more ado took possession of my implements, and went to work.

Look at any man while occupied with his specialty and you will find it worth your while. There is nothing in the thing itself, but everything in the way in which it is done. This wild man of the woods, so uncouth-looking and so ignorant of all that the world places under the head of knowledge, won my heart-felt admiration, as he deftly placed the wedges, and burst asunder, with apparent ease, the fibers of the mighty oak. The lesson he gave me made it clear that I had been doing double the work necessary for the result accomplished. "But it's powerful hot to be a-splittin' rails," he said as he laid down the maul, and, with a final "mornin'," disappeared in the forest.

I have since seen more of my instructor (he rejoiced in the name of Bill Gumball), and have found that there is nothing of the fool in his composition. Indeed, were he transferred to Wall street, given the jargon of that locality instead of his own, and trained to sit in a chair, he is made of the very stuff that would be apt to render him successful, for he possesses the speculative instinct in a superlative degree, and was never known to come out "second best" in a horse-trade: that, too, in a country where the chief use to which "the noble animal" is put is to swap him for another.

For me the wild woods of my native South have ever possessed a peculiar fascination. They are associated with my earliest memories; for they were my play-ground when a child; and all their sights and sounds, their trees and flowers and birds, have ever been familiar to me; and often when, on my lonely watch at sea, thoughts of home have stolen over me, it was the old primeval forest that I longed for the most. So in turning woodman I was going

on old, familiar ground, and I would have proved a woodman more than willing to spare the tree had there only been a way to coax the rails out from under the bark without the help of ax and wedge.

I used to be on the ground, ready for work, at the break of day, and to do so had to make my way through the darkness. This was running a great risk, as I proved one morning nearly at the cost of my life, for I heard close at my heels the terrible warning of the rattle-snake. I must have stepped over him in the dark and narrow path. (I have since met these deadly reptiles on still more intimate terms, having killed one in the bedroom where I am now writing.) But in spite of such hidden dangers, the early morning is the time when the forest is in its glory. The gloom and mystery the night had thrown over it are then just breaking away. The songs of the wood-thrush and the oriole have begun, and the last notes of the owl and the chuck-will's-widow still linger on the air—the merry music of the morning exorcising the sad voices of the night.

Audubon is just in his commendation of the wood-thrush. One of these birds occupied for many mornings the "verra topmost, towering height," of a sycamore that stood where my path led by the margin of a pond, and poured forth a flood of music that often tempted me to play the truant to my work. There is a common law in the South that renders infamous the shooting of a mocking-bird; but no such "divinity hedges" our other sweet songsters, and they have perceptibly diminished since every negro in the land has become a so-called sportsman.

In spite of all drawbacks, when the month of October came I had accomplished more than is often done in this section by trained labor, having split some two thousand rails and cut logs enough to build six single cabins. The next thing in order was to haul them out of the woods, and I hired two negro men, Mike Brown and Pete Penny, to do this with a team of oxen.

The animals were rather the worse for wear, having been hauling, on short rations, for several weeks from the railroad, fifteen miles distant. One old fellow, that rejoiced in the name of "Lion," seemed so heart-broken, and at the same time so humble, that he hardly dared chew the cud while you looked at him. One eye had been knocked out by some brutal driver, and the other was weak and watery. He was literally skin and bones, and his comrades in the team were not much better.

The oxen came to the rendezvous at their slow, swinging gait; Mike seated on the tongue, bearing aloft a goad attached to a pole eight feet long, and Pete astride of the coupling-pole (the wagon was without a body), "picking a jig" on the jew's-harp. The old wagon creaked and rattled and groaned in accompaniment, while eight or ten half-starved curs yelped through the woods, or snapped and snarled at one another about the wheels,—for here a negro owns from two to ten curs, which he keeps alive by hook or by crook, even though himself and his family be hungry and ragged. No one in the country pretends to keep sheep, else one might readily know "upon what meat" these canine Cæsars feed.

"I am afraid, boys, you are overloading the team," I said, as Mike and Pete piled log after log upon the wagon.

"Ef 'twa'n't fur dat bad place on de branch, sah, dey mout pull it."

"Is there no way of avoiding that place?"

"No, sah, it's onpossible to 'void it."

"Then you know you are putting on more than the team can pull over it?"

"Dey'll all pull, sah, scusin' Lion,"—"scusin'" being for excusing, which our negroes invariably use for excepting.

"In plain English, you have a heavier load on the wagon than the team can haul to where I wish the logs taken."

"Ef 'twarn't fur dat bad place in de branch ——"

It was quite useless appealing to Mike's reasoning faculties, seeing that he had none; and as for Pete, he was even a grade lower in intelligence than his partner, and was accustomed to regard as law all that fell from the latter's lips. I made them throw off a part of the load, notwithstanding which the oxen came to a dead "balk" at the ford. The whole blame was laid on Lion, and the poor old animal was flogged unmercifully in consequence. It failed to make him pull, for doubtless he had already put forth all his strength.

"Twis' he tail, Pete," said Mike; "twis' he tail, while I start the turrers wid de whip."

Whereupon Pete took the old ox's tail in both hands and twisted it till it fairly squeaked. But still old Lion refused to budge.

"Lor', gemmen," exclaimed Pete, still twisting away as if his life depended on getting the tail entirely off, "dis ole steer been

had he tail twis' so much he ain' been keer nuttin mo' 'bout it."

At last I interfered, as doubtless humanity should have prompted me to do sooner:

"It is very easy to throw some of these logs off, and then put them on again, after the wagon is drawn over this bad place."

"Dat's so, sah," responded Mike.

It was accordingly done, and there was no more trouble that day. But the next day I heard Mike and Pete, who were still engaged on the job, making a great uproar at the ford; and, going to the spot, I found that they were trying to get the overloaded wagon across by the plan that had failed the day before,—Pete still twisting Lion's tail, and Mike flogging the rest of the team. As on the former occasion, they readily agreed with me when I suggested that the wagon be unloaded.

When it came actually to building even a log house, I was as much at sea as if I had undertaken to duplicate St. Peter's. All the time I was getting the material together, I was trusting to the hope that some good angel would come to the rescue at the right moment. And he did, in the shape of a master workman, and, as it happened,—also fortunately,—he was a Virginian, familiar with the tobacco barns of his native state, which are generally built of logs. Under his supervision, my double log cabin, with a kitchen in the rear, rose rapidly into shape, and a month after its foundation was laid, we moved into it.

By this time the winter was well upon us, and it being too cold to "daub" the house, an operation that must be performed by hand, I made use of the gray moss so common here to stop the spaces between the logs. It presented a very picturesque appearance, the moss hanging down in irregular festoons as it grows on the forest trees. I congratulated myself on the adaptation, for I had never seen it so used before, and we went to bed that night, my wife and I, as pleased as a child with a new toy. The cold wind whistled without, but our rude cottage was warm and comfortable. We had been working hard all day, and we slept soundly—soundly, but not long, for in the small hours of the night, there were noises about the house that would have waked the Seven Sleepers. We heard the trampling of many hoofs, the tinkling of bells and the lowing of herds. Rushing to the door without stopping to put on even a coat, I found that the cows had gathered from near and far to feast on my moss. Smarting under the injury, I armed myself with a long pole, and, still *sans culotte*, I began a furious attack on the depredators. They were soon routed from the house, and then began a flight and pursuit scarcely paralleled in history. They were by moonlight, over hill and dale, across brooks and through thickets. The enemy broke into detachments, and after pursuing one of those for some distance, I returned home only to find that I had been flanked by an entire army-corps that had taken possession of my camp, in spite of the feeble efforts of my wife to dislodge them. They fled at my approach with the pole, and we went to bed once more, but not to sleep, for we had scarcely closed our eyes, when I was again summoned to the fray. And in that way we passed our first night in our quiet home in the wilderness.

With the new year it was necessary to make preparations for my first cotton-crop, and the most important step of all was to obtain work-animals. As I expected to reenforce my own labor with that of "the man and brother," I thought it best to obtain a pair of mules instead of horses, for it is the firm belief of many people, based on long experience, that the negro and the mule were created to work together.

Mr. Bill Gumball, my champion rail-splitter, knowing that I would need mules, took the field at an early day in order to be prepared to act as broker. One morning he made his appearance at my house, having first announced his presence by a loud "hello!" I found him squatting on the ground as I had first seen him in the woods.

"Fine mornin'," he said after the pause that followed our first greeting.

I agreed with him, and there was another pause. Then Mr. Gumball rose to his feet, and remarked that he had to go home; to which I made no objection, and bidding me "mornin'" he started to go. Then he turned and made known his real business.

"I heerd you wanted to buy a pa'r o' mules," he said, "and I thought I'd sorter step over and let you know whar you kin git 'em. Ole man Bowser, lives on the Ripton and Jackson road, got as fine a pa'r for sale as you ever see. I'll sorter bring 'em over in the mornin', neighbor-like, you know, as I ain' got nothin' pertiklar to do."

He was as good as his word, and appeared the next day with two little mules in excellent order and well matched, for which

I paid $125 apiece. I learned afterward that Gumball made just $25 by his "neighbor-like" transaction.

Never had I seen animals apparently more kind and tractable. Surely, we thought, the mule has been much maligned in these Southern states, for how often do we hear the phrases, "stubborn as a mule," "vicious as a mule," "a mule will play you some trick sooner or later," etc., etc.! Now it was perfectly plain to me, and to my good wife as well, that if mules in general deserve such hard names, which we doubted, here were our new mules, Kitty and Jinny, to prove exceptions to that rule; for who could look on them and think any evil of them as they stood there in the lot, with eyes half closed and shaven tails battling with the flies. It is only ill treatment, we argued, that makes the mule vicious, and it is only in the South that he has a bad name.

"Poor things!" said my wife one day, "they must be so tired of this lot. How they would enjoy a run for a few hours in the open fields!"

They were accordingly turned out and certainly did enjoy themselves, if running was enjoyment, for when I tried to drive them back into the lot, they ran, with me in pursuit, till darkness and exhaustion on my part put an end to the performance for that night. The next day I hired Mike and Pete to help me pursue them, and after chasing them five miles we caught them by the merest accident, having driven them into a sort of blind alley formed by two fences that joined at an acute angle. The next day one of them, without any provocation, kicked me down; and I had not owned them long before both had more than once "bucked" me over their heads,—a feat that is performed by the animal throwing its head between its fore legs, humping its back into a sharp curve, and springing rapidly into the air as often as is necessary to dislodge its rider—which, in my case, was not often. At the first symptom of a "buck" I generally came down promptly, like Davy Crockett's 'coon. It is astonishing how often a man may be tossed into the air and fall sprawling to the earth without breaking any bones.

The next thing in course was to hire a permanent hand, a thing that was no easy matter in a country where, instead of labor seeking employment, there is a competition among the employers for the labor. After several unsuccessful attempts, I succeeded in securing, for the year, a middled-aged negro man named Tony Love; a very solemn-looking darky, who seemed to have some great care on his mind. At times he would sigh in a way that was absolutely startling, and when asked what was the matter would only answer:

"Nuttin much, sah, jes moanin' ober family conflagrations, sah."

He was a married man living with his wife, Mandy, in one of the cabins I had lately built. One day I learned the secret that weighed like a mill-stone on his heart.

"My trouble is all 'bout womens, sah," he began with a heart-rending sigh. "I had to sue for a revorce, you see, and de jedge he wus so precocious, I had ole wuks wid 'im, I tell you, sah."

"Was it Mandy that you tried to get 'revorced' from?"

"Oh no, sah," with a pensive smile, "'twarn't Mandy. I done had Mandy, you see, sence I sued fur de revorce. In fac', I sorter tuk up wid her 'fore dat, and dar's whar my tribulation done begin."

"Your other wife was opposed to your introducing a rival into the house?"

"Lor', sah, dar warn't no arribal at de house! Mandy, you see, libed in a nudder house. But Suzan, dat was my fust wife, she tuk on mightly, an' de fust thing I knowed she had me up 'fore de jedge, and de whole ob de jury. An' de jedge he did warnt know ef dem was my chillen 'long wid Suzan, and wherrer or not I gub 'em wittels and close, and ef I didn't gub 'em, I mus' gub 'em. Well, I didn't make no answer right away, but dar wus de jedge, and de jury, and de lyeyrs a-settin' round, and I thought to myself, I gwine nebber hab a better charnse to sue fur a revorce, so I clars my throat, jes so, and I sez: Marse jedge, and gen'l'men ob de jury and de lyeyrs: Whar's de jestice in makin' me buy wittels and close for dem chillen, enny more'n makin' de mudder what bar' 'em buy wittels and close fur 'em? Whar's de jestice? I tell you how to settle dish 'ere thing, sez I, lookin' de jedge squar' in de face, and sorter studyin' 'fore I went on. I tell you how to settle dish 'ere case, sez I. Gub me a revorce, sez I, sort o' risin' like, as I hollered: Gub me a *revorce!* and let dat 'oman go 'long 'bout 'er bus'ness. De lyeyrs and de jurymans dey all larf, but de jedge he was dade ag'in me from de start, and he holt out as I was boun' to s'port dem chillen. Den, sez I, Marse jedge, I repeal de case. Ef I carn

git jestice in dish 'ere court, I'll repeal the case to the gubnor of Vicksburg; and ef I carn git jestice from the gubnor of Vicksburg, I'll repeal to the gubnor of Tennessee, and ef he don't gub me a revorce, I'll repeal to de gubnor of St. Louis. Then the jedge he hollered to the sheriff to 'rest me for temptin' de court; but 'fore de sheriff could cotch me, I broke out o' dat place, and de naix thing dat jedge knowed, I'd done repealed de case to gubnor Alcorn in Jackson. He was a gen'l'man, sah; he gub me a revorce widout any more repealin', an' here I is now. But lordee, ef Suzan was to find out whar I is!"

"Why, what would it matter since you are 'revorced' from her?"

"Lor', sah, you doan know dat 'oman! She'd raise sich a circumvention roun' me, I'd have to repeal for anudder revorce!"

By what authority Governor Alcorn granted a divorce it is not easy to explain. I only know that had he given Tony a funeral ticket or a circus bill for a writ of "revorce," that person would have been perfectly satisfied.

Six years have passed away since Tony unburdened his heart as above described, and at the present writing he is still near me, with Suzan and Mandy under one roof, yet apparently in the enjoyment of domestic peace; the two former rivals having tacitly agreed to divide their lord's affections between them. Such a state of things is the rule rather than the exception with the newly enfranchised.

The whole month of January was spent by Tony and myself in hauling from the woods the rails to inclose the land, and that done, we began clearing up the jungle mentioned in the first part of this paper. This work occupied us till the first of March, and then we began plowing. Here was work entirely new to me, but I soon became as expert at it as if I had been trained to the plow all my life. The mules were docility itself while at their work. It was only in their "hours of ease" that they were, like woman, "uncertain, coy and hard to please."

One evening we were riding from the field, Tony in advance on Jinny, and I following on Kitty. Suddenly, without any warning, Tony's mule performed the evolution known as "swapping ends," which resulted in shooting her rider, like an arrow from a bow, head foremost a distance of ten feet, more or less. For a moment I thought the negro's neck was broken, but my anxiety was soon relieved when I saw him rise slowly from the ground, casting a pitying rather than reproachful look upon the mule, that stood, the picture of innocence, quietly grazing by the side of the path.

"Now I done know it," said Tony. "I was jes studyin' 'bout de way dat mule dash folks, and now I done know it. Gen'l'men, dat mule see sperrits!"

"What sort of foolish talk is that, Tony?"

"She see sperrits! Dat mik 'er jump roun' so sudden-like. You know she kin see 'em when we kearnt. De very fuss lizard I kotch I's gwine to bile 'im 'live, and 'n'int dat mule's eyes wid de licker."

I have Tony's word for it that he carried his diabolical threat into execution a few days later, notwithstanding which the mule continued to see "sperrits,"—that is, if her continuing to throw Tony occasionally was proof of it.

"Nebber min'," was his usual exclamation after such mishaps; "de naix lizard I kotch I'll boun' I'll bile 'im in de crease o' de moon!"

"In the increase or decrease, Tony?"

"Dunno 'bout dat, sah. All I knows is, it mus' be in one o' de creases."

After a few months had passed, I had "laid by" as fine a crop of cotton as one could wish to see. An area of thirty acres, more or less, that the year before had been a wilderness, was now one level sea of green, spangled with the red and the white blooms. Experienced planters who saw my crop estimated that it would not fall below twenty bales, worth in the gross, at the price of cotton then, fully $1,500. In addition to the cotton crop, I had some twenty other acres in corn, sweet-potatoes, cow-pease, etc. I had paid out $75 for extra labor. My own work in the crop had equaled Tony's in every respect, and, so far as I could judge, I had stood the test as well as he.

To walk about the crop, marking its rapid growth, was my great delight. One morning, in a low, damp place in the field, I discovered some half dozen green, striped worms stretched at full length on the leaves of cotton they had partly devoured. This was the advance-guard of the dreaded "army worm." The date of their appearance was the first of September. By the middle of that month every plant in the field had been stripped bare of leaves and young bolls. The damage was all the greater from my crop being a late one, and the plants on that account young and tender. Instead of twenty bales, I gathered only eight, and, to

add to my misfortune, the great financial panic occurred about that time, and the price of cotton fell from eighteen and twenty cents a pound to eight and ten. That first cotton crop of mine brought me in debt about $600. I have since recovered from the blow, and, though still poor in purse, I yet have all the necessaries of life in abundance: bread and meat of my own raising, milk and butter, an orchard of choice fruits, a well-filled kitchen-garden, at my very door.

I think that my experience may be of value to others. It proves that, although a man's life may have been a sedentary one, and himself unskilled in the use of ax, hoe or plow, he may yet prove competent to make his way in the wilderness, as did the first settlers of the country.

THE NEW YEAR.

Oh, not where winter comes through fields of snow,
With half-worn shoes, the new-born year begins;
But where the streams of life unfettered flow,
And blossoms o'er the sun-lit meadows blow
The fragrant hope that straight our credence wins.