PINE RIDGE PLANTATION

WILLIAM DRYSDALE

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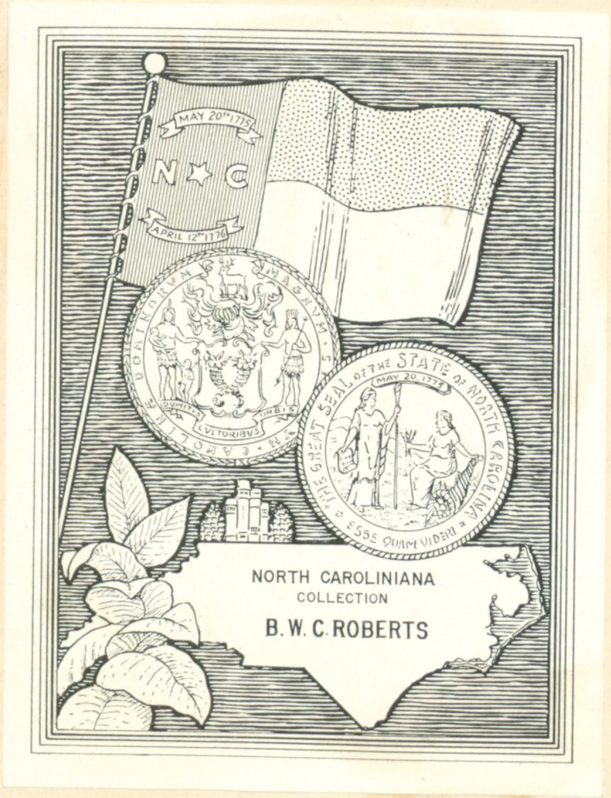
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HUNT DID THE WEIGHING AND PAYING OFF HIMSELF.

PINE RIDGE PLANTATION

OR

THE TRIALS AND SUCCESSES OF A YOUNG COTTON PLANTER

BY

WILLIAM DRYSDALE

AUTHOR OF "HELPS FOR AMBITIOUS BOYS," "HELPS FOR AMBITIOUS GIRLS," ETC.

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PINE RIDGE PLANTATION.

CHAPTER I.

HUNT ROBERTSON, THE FARM DRUDGE.

"HUNT, Hunt, come here, sir!"

Huntley Robertson, the owner of the name, sprang instantly out of his hard and narrow cot-bed, and in so doing struck his head a ringing whack against one of the rafters of the low loft in which he slept.

"Yes, sir, at once, sir!" he answered, as he groped about in the gloom for some of his clothes.

"Don't you know it's after four?" came in the same voice.

There was nothing alarming in the words; but Hunt recognized the imperative tone of farmer Warren, who was in part his guardian and in whole his master; and he was startled at seeing the first gleams of daylight stealing through the narrow window of the loft, and he had been cautioned to be astir before half-past four.

"It's well I have so few clothes, and such old ones," he said to himself, as he quickly dressed, "for they don't take much time."

"Come, young man, this sort of thing won't do, you know!" farmer Warren exclaimed, menacingly, to him a few moments later, in the back yard. The farmer held a riding-whip in his hand and snapped it as he spoke, but the boy did not flinch, for he had no reason to fear.

The boy who stood manfully up before his master, without the least suspicion of bravado or impertinence in his manner, was the Hunt of the few old clothes and the bumped head.

"Sorry if I'm late, sir," he said; "but I kept watch on the window for daylight, and you know I have no clock, sir."

Farmer Warren gave the whip a vicious snap, but there was nothing vicious in his look as he fixed his eyes upon the boy. Being a man of labor himself, he looked rather admiringly at the strong, well-knit frame of his farm drudge, grown now to nearly five feet six inches in height, with the muscles of his upper and lower limbs well developed by several years of almost unceasing labor upon his farm. The thick coating of tan upon Hunt's hands and face showed that he had taken his full share of sun and wind, as a farmer's boy should. There was a frank, honest, manly look in his face, which corresponded well with his brown eyes and wavy brown hair.

"Oh, you want a clock, do you?" Farmer Warren laughed, with another wicked snap of the whip. "A clock, upon my word! Why not a coil o' steam pipes to keep you warm? Or suppose we say an elevator to carry you up to your set of apartments, without the trouble of climbing the stairs? How would that do, Mister Hunt? or a nice velvet carpet on the floor, or a soft arm-chair to rest in?"

The farmer emphasized each of these suggestions with a snap of the whip.

"A clock, eh? We're getting pretty high and mighty in our notions, lately. I'm afraid you're growing discontented, Hunt, and there's nothing equal to one of these things to take discontent out of a boy;" and again he snapped the whip.

"No, sir; I'm not discontented," Hunt answered respectfully; "only if I had a clock I could always be up in time, sir. If I just earned a little spending-money now and then, like other fellows, I should buy one for myself, sir."

"Like other fellows!" the farmer quickly repeated, making circles in the air with the whip. "Like Scotty Watson, I guess you mean. He's the boy that's been filling your head with bad notions, and the less you have to do with him the better you'll be off. Don't you know that he has to work like a slave for his little spending-money, in that factory or furnace or whatever he works in?"

"That's just what he tells me, sir," Hunt replied; "but he don't mind the work any more than I mind work on the farm, sir; but I'd like a chance to strike out for myself, sir, some day, so as to see something ahead."

"Another of Scotty's notions," the farmer de-

clared; "and I know what you're hinting at, when you speak of having a little spending-money. You need not be alarmed, young man, for your money is all safe in my desk—the one hundred and fifty dollars your father left you, and the twenty-five dollars you have added to it by your own labor."

"I suppose you know," he continued, "that your father was the poorest man in Ontario County, except two or three who had nothing but debts. But he left you what little he had, and I have it safe for you, and you may have a receipt for it whenever you want it, so you needn't hint about it."

"No, sir; indeed I was not hinting about money," Hunt protested. "I know that much more than that would be quite safe in your hands, sir. And you have always been very kind to me, Mr. Warren, and I am not discontented. Indeed I am not, sir; only I want a chance to do something for myself, so that I shall not be the poorest man in Ontario County, like my poor father."

"Look at this farm, young man!" Mr. Warren commanded, sweeping his whip around in a great circle.

"There is no better farm in Ontario County, sir," Hunt admitted.

"You're right, boy!" Mr. Warren continued; "there's no better between Geneva and Canandaigua, or anywhere about here. It is just about what a farm should be. Look at those barns, boy, and that twenty-acre pasture lot; and the grain fields, and the orch-

ards. Fences all up, boy, and no discount on the live stock in the barns, eh?"

It was a common saying among the neighbors that David Warren was a just man, but as changeable in his moods as a weather vane in the winds; and Hunt saw his moods change rapidly that morning.

"Now, see here, Hunt; look at me!" the farmer resumed.

"We're agreed that this is a good farm, eh? Well, what makes it a good farm? Nature made the soil good in the beginning, but it's my money and my labor that have made it what it is this minute. Now, whenever you begin to feel discontented, I want you to remember that you get as much out of this farm as I do. Don't you forget that, my boy."

"As much as you do, sir!" Hunt exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, sir; just as much as I do!" the farmer resumed. "I get my board and clothes out of it, and so do you; so we're even on that. You get plenty to eat, don't you? And good enough clothes to wear?"

"Yes, sir; but you are the master of the farm and everything on it," Hunt answered; "and I should like to be my own master, sometime, when I am old enough."

"Hunt, come here and give me your hand!" Mr. Warren ordered, turning toward the boy, for his mood had suddenly changed again. "I like to see the ambition in you, my boy," he continued, when Hunt stepped up and held out his hand. "I like to see a

boy with grit enough to want to strike out for himself; and if the time ever comes for you to strike out, you may count on me for a friend. There was something more your father left you, Hunt, that I forgot to mention a minute ago."

"Something more my father left me, sir!" Hunt replied, greatly surprised.

"Yes, sir; the greatest thing your father left you was a sister," Mr. Warren resumed. "She is worth more to you than the little money you inherited, Hunt. You have always been a good brother to her, I must admit, and have done as much for her as you could; and I like you for it; but before you get these foolish notions into your head, Hunt, think of her. Always say to yourself, 'I must think of my sister.'"

"Yes, sir!" Hunt answered, "I think very much of her, and it is mainly on her account that I want to make something of myself, sir."

"Go and get that kitchen fire started, boy!" Mr. Warren exclaimed, laughing, and suddenly withdrawing his hand. "Do you see that sun? Whether it's on my farm or your own, Hunt, always let the smoke of the kitchen chimney be ready to greet the first ray of the sun. Away with you, boy!"

With these words Mr. Warren started off at a rapid pace toward the stables, leaving Hunt to struggle alone with the kitchen fire. But this was plain sailing for him, for he was a "forehanded" boy in all matters of duty, and never let an evening pass without having

his kindling-wood for morning split and neatly laid behind the kitchen stove.

The entrance to the kitchen was from the little "stoop" at the side, invisible from where the two had been standing talking, and when Hunt reached it and sprang briskly up the steps, it gave him a shock to see that the door stood ajar. Still, that might not mean burglars during the night, because he was a little late, and Mrs. Warren sometimes made a very early appearance in the kitchen. In another moment he was sure that Mrs. Warren was within, for her shrieks fell upon his ears.

"Oh, oh!" she cried; "my lands a massy!" "Well, of all my born days! Hunt, Hunt, do come here! oh-h-h!"

With a single bound Hunt was at the door, fearing that in starting the fire Mrs. Warren might have set fire to her clothing, for there was not the least doubt about her voice. One look, when he dashed into the room, convinced him that his mistress was not on fire, but that something had "scar't the mortal life clean a'most out of her," as she said, for she was standing helpless and limp.

"Ow! ow! Hunt, what is it?" she continued her cries. "Do take it out of this, Hunt, for massy's sake!"

"What is it?" That was the important point, for after the open yard the kitchen was almost dark. Hunt looked well around him, prepared to encounter a burglar, if necessary, but no burglar was in sight.

Yet something surely moved in the dark corner beyond the stove; and just as surely he saw a pair of round eyes shining at him from that corner, down close enough to the floor to be a cat's eyes, but far too large for a cat's eyes.

Mrs. Warren evidently saw the same alarming sight, for she continued to beg Hunt to "Take it away! Do take it away, Hunt, before it kills some of us."

While he peered cautiously into every possible nook and corner, thoughts of some possible wild animal flashed through Hunt's mind—a bear, perhaps; but the idea of a bear in a farmhouse kitchen in Central New York was too ridiculous to consider, though the glowing eyes were just about as far above the floor as a bear's would be if he held his head down.

His own eyes becoming more accustomed to the gloom, Hunt made out a strange, uncouth shape, above the eyes, that alarmed him; and from the top of this dim form there extended, evidently, a pair of small legs, sticking up, and beating the air.

"I think it's a —." He was about to say "a boy," but before he could finish the sentence, the dangling legs were thrown suddenly forward, the large feet belonging to them struck the floor with a thud, and there stood before them, bowing and smiling, a small boy, with the blackest face they had ever seen—the face apparently of a little old man, his bright eyes rolling dreadfully, and he grinning till he showed every one of his white teeth.

"Gimme a nickel, boss, an' I'll tu'n you another handspring!" this apparition pleaded; and he held his hands out and seemed about to carry the offer into effect, but raised one black hand to snatch off his tattered soft gray felt hat.

This alarming appearance, as if the black boy had sprung up through the floor, was more than Mrs. Warren could stand, and she began to shriek again, turning imploringly to Hunt, and wringing her hands.

"Take it away, Hunt!" she cried. "I do believe it's the evil one himself, or one of his imps. Take it away—do, Hunt!"

"Bress yer ha'at, ma'am," the little black exclaimed; "yer not 'feared of a pore little niggah, is you? I'se not gwine done hurt yer, ma'am."

Certainly, he did not look dangerous, for he was not more than four feet high, his short, thin legs encased in very tight trousers, and his long, slim arms now hung down meekly by his sides.

So Hunt made bold to seize him by one arm, as if to lead him away.

"Where did you come from, boy?" Hunt demanded; "and what's your name?"

"No'th Ca'line, boss," the boy readily answered; "and my name hit be N-N-Nathaniel."

"But what are you doing here?" Hunt asked; and, before the question could be answered, Mrs. Warren gave vent to a fresh series of shrieks:

"Oh, take it away! take it away!" So Hunt led the willing boy out of the door.

"Now, what do you want?" he asked, when they stood outside, on the "stoop."

"Please, boss!" the little black answered, "Cunnel Andrews he done sen' me here ter say he be stayin' in de tavern doun ter Genevy, an' he comin' here heself, terday, if he kin git here."

Now that the black boy was outside, Mrs. Warren felt much relieved, and the name of Colonel Andrews immediately attracted her attention.

"What's that?" she asked, turning toward them; "Colonel Andrews in Geneva? And your name is Nathaniel, is it? Nathaniel what?"

"No, ma'am," the boy answered, grinning again, and rolling his eyes wildly; "not N-N-Nathaniel Watt, ma'am, N-N-Nathaniel Brown."

"Oh! and you walked here this morning from Geneva, did you?" Mrs. Warren asked.

"No, ma'am," Nathaniel replied; "I run'd every bressed step of de way; 'deed I did, ma'am."

"Are you Colonel Andrews's boy?" Hunt asked.

"Wat, me, sah?" Nathaniel replied, still grinning. "No, sah! You t'ink Cunnel Andrews have a little niggah like me, sah? No, sah, me fadder, he Cunnel Andrews's boy, sah."

He said it with pride, and was about to say more; but unfortunately at that moment Mrs. Warren threw up her hands, as if in dismay; and, with one farewell handspring down the steps, Nathaniel disappeared up the path toward the front gate, and around the corner of the house, his little legs looking unequal to the

task of dragging along his great feet. But at the last point at which he was visible from the kitchen he turned one more handspring, snatched off his hat again, bowed and grinned, and rolled his eyes as if he would include soil and sky and all the adjoining counties in that last look.

"Well, I never!" Mrs. Warren declared, when Hunt returned to the kitchen. "That blackey looks old enough to be his own grandfather, but he's no bigger 'n one of our old roosters. But you hustle around, Hunt, and get this stove hot. You heard what he said, did you? If Colonel Andrews is in Geneva, as he said, we're agoing to have company to-day, for sure. But I forgot you don't know about it. Colonel Andrews, he's a big cotton planter from down South, and he an' Mr. Warren have been writing letters to one another about exchanging properties. So you must make everything neat and tidy, Hunt, after the breakfast is cleared away."

Hunt's work on the Warren farm was not all out in the fields, but lay in large part in the farmhouse kitchen, where he was Mrs. Warren's sole assistant. He soon had the fire roaring; but that, as he well knew, was only the beginning of his duties preparatory to breakfast. He went out to the pump and filled the teakettle, brought in a strip of smoked bacon from the adjoining pantry, and cut off six neat slices. Then the cattle needed his attention in the barn; and more than an hour passed before he could return to eat the hot biscuit and slice of bacon and odds and

ends of bread that Mrs. Warren left upon the kitchen table for him, both Mr. and Mrs. Warren having meanwhile eaten their own breakfasts in an adjoining room.

Taking only a few hasty bites while standing, Hunt, when he returned to the kitchen, set immediately to work at the cleaning and scouring that he knew he must do if Mrs. Warren expected company that day. The kitchen stove was now cold, and his first work was to polish it till it shone like a mirror. Then he took up all the pots and pans in use and carried them into the yard, where he scoured them till they were as bright as new. Knives and forks and kitchen spoons came next, and he continued his scouring till all the kitchenry was in excellent order.

This and future work in the barn kept him busy till past ten o'clock; and when he next returned to the kitchen to carry in more water for his mistress, he was surprised by a visit from Mr. Warren.

"You have everything looking very bright and clean, here, Hunt," the farmer told him, "and I'm glad of it, for we expect company to-day. If that little black imp told the truth, we may expect to see Colonel Andrews here before night."

"But I'm going to send you down to Geneva, presently, with the gray mare to bring Colonel Andrews here," he continued; "so I will tell you who he is. You know the road to Geneva, of course, and if he is there you will be sure to find him at the Jefferson House, because that is the best hotel."

"You wouldn't find Colonel Andrews in any hotel but the best," he went on, "for he is not afraid to spend his money. Colonel Andrews has a large cotton plantation down in North Carolina; and as he knows a good farm when he sees it, he and I have been writing to one another for some time about exchanging our properties—trading, you know. I don't suppose anything will come of it; but when you get down there I want you to give him my compliments, and tell him I sent you down to bring him up here, if he can come. Then you bring him back with you, if he'll come. Do you hear? The colonel is a very fine gentleman, and I want you to treat him just as polite and nice as you know how. Now, run up to your room and spruce yourself up a bit, and take the gray mare and top-buggy down to Geneva."

CHAPTER II.

COLONEL ANDREWS, OF NORTH CAROLINA.

It made a gala day for Hunt, driving alone to Geneva with the top-buggy, the newest and shiniest vehicle that the Warren farm afforded. Following instructions to the letter, he kept the gray mare at a leisurely pace, exercised great care in the busy streets of the town, and drew up beside the horse block in front of the Jefferson House, where one of the stable boys ran up and took his horse by the bridle.

"I am looking for Colonel Andrews," he told the boy; "can you tell me where to find him?"

"That's Colonel Andrews, on the piazza," the boy answered, nodding his head toward a gentleman who sat tilted back against the wall, in one of the broad arm chairs. "Here he comes now."

Hunt sprang out, and waited at the foot of the piazza steps for the tall, plump, well-dressed and well-tanned gentleman in a broad-brimmed, pearl-gray hat, who now approached and lithely descended the steps, with content and good-nature written in every feature of his handsome face.

"Looking for me, my boy?" the gentleman asked, when he reached Hunt, and patted him kindly on the shoulder. "That's a fine animal you have there," he

continued; and in another moment he had stroked the mare's sleek side, looked at her mouth, and lifted her "nigh" forefoot. "She's Farmer Warren's mare, if I'm not mistaken," he added, after completing the examination. "And are you Mr. Warren's boy?"

"Yes, sir," Hunt replied; put at his ease by the gentleman's friendly manner. "Mr. Warren sends his compliments to you, sir, and sent me to carry you down to the farm, if you can go, sir."

"Very kind of him, I'm sure," the colonel exclaimed, looking the buggy over with a critical eye, and offering his hand to Hunt. "Friend Warren must have confidence in you, my boy, to trust you with the gray mare, and the top-buggy that he drives to church in."

The coin that Colonel Andrews flipped to the stable boy for holding the horse was a quarter-dollar, Hunt was almost sure; and when the colonel's boy, Mose, from North Carolina, appeared, as he did in a few minutes, the chief end and aim of his life seemed to be to brush the very last speck of dust from the colonel's clothes, and to leave no spot or blemish upon his patent-leather boots. Mose looked to Hunt a little past thirty, a full-grown man, and a man of no little importance, in his own eyes, because his was the sole responsibility for keeping "de Kunnel's" clothing presentable. When Mose, in coming to the front, stuck his head in the partly open door, and called back to some invisible person, "Now, you git back dar, you li'l' niggah. Ef you follers me agin, I'll

wring your brack neck, I will," it was presumably to the acrobatic Nathaniel that he was talking; and the frequent thumping of a pair of hands upon the bare floor inside, followed always by the louder thumping of a pair of heavy shoes, justified the inference that Nathaniel was turning a series of handsprings down the long hall.

"I'm going out to the Warren farm, Mose," the colonel said to his man, as he seated himself in the buggy. "That's six or seven miles from here, and I shall want you there during the day, but it's too far for you to walk. So you take the one o'clock train up to Phelps, the next town from here, and then walk a mile or two across. The Warren farm; you hear, boy?"

"Yis, sah; yis, Kunnel. I'll be dar, sah," Mose replied, taking off his hat and bowing and scraping himself all the way up the piazza steps; "yis, Kunnel, nevah feah 'bout Mose, sah, he be dah, suh, sah."

"Go on, my boy," the colonel then told Hunt, smiling a little at Mose's antics. "If you don't have to hurry home, we might drive around the streets a little, to see the town, and the lake it stands on; what's the name of this lake here?"

"Seneca Lake, sir," Hunt answered, proud to be able to give any information to so fine a gentleman; "and I know Mr. Warren would want me to take you wherever you like to go, sir."

They had not driven far through the streets before Hunt was nodding and smiling at a young man in

working-clothes, who was waving his hand furiously in return, and who evidently desired to stop and speak.

"That a friend of yours, my boy?" the colonel asked.

"Yes, sir," Hunt answered; "that's Scotty Watson. He works here in Geneva, sir."

"Then stop and speak to him, if you want to," the colonel ordered; "don't hesitate on my account, for I'm in no hurry," and Hunt pulled up to the curb and stopped.

"Hello, Scotty," was his greeting, "I'm afraid you're not looking well; ain't you feeling as well as usual?"

Scotty touched his hat respectfully to the colonel before answering. "Yes, just about as well as usual, Hunt, and that's not saying very much. This early and late business is doing me up, for a fact, and I don't see that there's ever going to be any end to it. But my boss pays for my muscle, and I suppose he's entitled to wear it out if he wants to. It's wearing the heart out of me, too, Hunt, this everlasting grind for other people. I like work, and I don't care how much I have of it, if I could be working for myself, and see a little something ahead, old fellow. Some day I want to strike out for myself, old chap, and then we'll see whether I haven't a lot of good work in me."

"Working for wages, for one of the big firms here, are you?" the colonel asked, turning pleasantly toward

Scotty. "Well, my boy, I don't wonder that you feel all fagged out, for you have precious little to look forward to. I never see a working boy up in the North here without feeling like advising him to come down into my country and strike out for himself. I come from North Carolina, Scotty, where a man can work outdoors nearly every day in the year, and where a poor boy can begin by buying a little patch of land very cheap, and put up his own little shanty, and soon buy his own mule, and gradually turn his land into a little cotton plantation, and so work on and up till he makes a man of himself. There's something to look forward to, you see, Scotty, and it's better than wearing your life out here in the Northern cities, as so many poor boys are doing. You can't do the same thing up here, you know, because the price of land is so much higher; and I'm sure there is no outlook for you in a factory. It seems to me that all the poor boys in the North just crowd into the towns, where they are ground into powder. I wish I could take a few regiments of them south with me, where they would have a chance to make men of themselves."

"Is land cheaper down in North Carolina, sir?" Scotty asked, apparently much interested. "What could a fellow buy a little land down there for, sir?"

"That depends upon the situation," the colonel answered, smiling. "Now, my place is near Goldsboro', where good land is worth nearly as much as it is here in Central New York. But suppose you went a few miles out of New Bern, let us say, where I go

to do a great deal of my business. There the Neuse and the Trent Rivers flow together, you know; and if you should go three or four miles up the Trent River, to a good spot I know, I think you could get wild land for a dollar or two dollars an acre. That is a cotton country, you know, and besides it is a great trucking country; and you could make that same land worth fifty dollars an acre in a few years, if you gave it plenty of hard work."

"But a fellow must have some sort of a house to live in down there, sir, I suppose?" Scotty asked.

"Of course, he must," the colonel answered, smiling again. "We have saw mills on the river banks, where slabs are sold for almost nothing. Slabs are the outer slices off of big logs, you know, before the boards are cut. And many a good shanty has been built out of slabs, at a cost of about half a dollar and a little work. Then a young fellow with a bit of land has a home of his own, Scotty, and is independent of the world, and can always have plenty. Why the ground is full of corn and cotton, and the rivers are full of fish, and the woods are full of wild turkeys, and the river bars are full of oysters. Never give up, Scotty, my boy, while dear old North Carolina is within a thousand miles of here, to give you a chance in life. Many a poor boy has started there without capital, and now has his bank account and his home and cotton bales. So, cheer up, Scotty, my boy, cheer up!"

"Thank you, sir!" Scotty exclaimed, taking off his

hat, as Hunt tightened the reins. "Thank you very much for telling me about such a place. I did not know there was any place in the world where a fellow could get out of this dreadful grind of working always to make other people rich."

"Why, to be sure there is, Scotty," the colonel laughed, "and North Carolina is the place. Not only my State, understand,—though, of course, I think of that first,—but all that region there in the Middle South, where land is cheap and Nature is kind. No man can starve down there, Scotty; and if he works hard he has the benefit of his own labor. It is no place for drones, but an industrious young man down there can soon make himself independent. It is worth your thinking about, Scotty."

"Thank you, sir!" Scotty repeated, again taking off his hat. "If I knew as much about farming as you do, Hunt, I should be down in this gentleman's country in short order, I tell you."

"I should like to be down there myself," Hunt called back, as he started up the mare and Scotty turned away.

"That's an evidence of your good sense, my boy," the colonel said to Hunt, when they were under way. "I suppose you try to look forward sometimes to see what you are coming to. If you do, you can see yourself a farm laborer ten years from now, instead of a farmer's boy, as you are at present. If I can say anything that will help you to be an independent man in ten years, a planter in a small way, growing your

own crops, I shall be glad. You are just the sort of young man to make your way down in my country, I think."

"Thank you, sir," Hunt answered. "I have often wished for such a thing, but I do not know how to set about making the start."

"Oh, you have! have you?" the colonel exclaimed. "Then it is a good morning's work that you have been put into this buggy with me, for I can tell you how to make the start. So head the mare for home, my boy, but let her take her time, to give me a chance to tell you a thing or two."

"The first thing for you or any other young man to do is to save a little money," the colonel continued. "Save your wages, raise a colt if your boss will let you, raise some pigs, and do odd jobs for the neighbors when you can."

"I have a little money now, sir," Hunt frankly admitted. "It is only a little, of course. My father left me one hundred and fifty dollars, and I have saved twenty-five dollars, and Mr. Warren is keeping the one hundred and seventy-five dollars for me."

"Then the way for you to start is as clear as a pane of glass!" the colonel cried, clapping Hunt upon the shoulder. "If you have as much grit as I think you have, you can be at work on your own little farm before this time next year. Since you have a little money for your first expenses, there is nothing to hinder you. First make your way to New York, and there buy your ticket right through to New Bern,

North Carolina. When you get to New Bern, go right straight to Burrus & Gray, cotton brokers and grain and hay dealers, and tell Mr. Burrus that Colonel Andrews sent you to him. Tell him I told you to ask about a little cotton patch over on Brice Creek. He will treat you well, and he knows that country. In a few days after you get your land you will have your own little shanty up, and then you will be at home. Why, I shall be out there some day to eat dinner with you, my boy. And you will have two friends down in that country; one will be Mr. Burrus and the other will be Colonel Andrews. So there are the plans laid for you, my boy, if you really have the pluck to start in and make a man of yourself."

"But my sister, sir?" Hunt asked. "I have a sister a year younger than myself, working for a farmer near Mr. Warren's, and I cannot desert her."

"Of course, you cannot desert her!" the colonel retorted. "But you can go ahead to make a home for her, and in a few months she can be keeping house for you on the shore of the river Trent. Why, you are a lucky boy, to have a little nest egg of money and a sister. But when you go, my boy, as I believe you will, do everything honestly and fairly, and ask Mr. Warren's advice and permission. No running away, you know, for that makes a bad beginning."

"Oh, I shall not run away, sir, and I am sure Mr. Warren will be my friend. But my head is very full of a little farm of my own, sir, and working for myself."

Before many hours had passed the "chores" on the Warren farm had been done, and Mr. Warren and the colonel had been long in consultation in the sitting-room, and Hunt had been sent for, and Mr. Warren had expressed his willingness to let his boy sally forth to make a start for himself.

"Then that matter is settled, sir," Hunt answered, looking at both Mr. Warren and the colonel, "and I am going to North Carolina."

"Good boy!" the colonel exclaimed. "Down there you will make a man of yourself, I am sure. And here is some one who says she is going to help you to establish a home. Come here, little one, and tell your brother what you have been telling me."

Much to Hunt's surprise, his sister stepped timidly forward from a corner at this summons, for she had been sent to the Warren farm on an errand.

"Indeed, Hunt, I will do my share of the work, if you will let me," she declared; and her eyes sparkled with pleasure at the very idea of their having a home of their own.

"Well, Mary, it shall be a home for us both, if I can manage to get one," Hunt answered. "I am going to make a push for independence, Mary, but it is for independence for us both."

"And it is with my approval, Mary," Mr. Warren assured her, after a moment, for the little girl seemed rather alarmed.

"And I think your brother is going to make a man of himself," he added.

"I am sure of it," the colonel echoed. "You have a good brother, little one, and he is on the right track now to make a home for you both. So your name is Mary, is it? I want you to keep this silver dollar for me, Mary, till I meet you on your brother's farm in North Carolina."

CHAPTER III.

HUNT BECOMES A NORTH CAROLINIAN.

When the steamboat Neuse drew up to her wharf at the foot of Craven Street, in New Bern, and Hunt stepped ashore, he found himself practically in a new world. Instead of the bales of hay that he had been accustomed to see about him, the bales here were bales of cotton, and they were so many that they littered the platforms and almost blocked the way. Instead of the farmers and farmer's boys to be seen on the railway platforms of Ontario County, the people on the wharf were nearly all black. A few white passengers landed, like himself, from the boat, but they were soon lost in the crowd of blacks, and disappeared.

"Then this is what I have to buck against in the South," he said to himself, as, in making his way to the exit to the street, he looked wonderingly at the assembly of negroes.

"These fellows all have muscle for sale, and most of them, no doubt, have as much of it as I have. I must try to mix some brain with my muscle, for that's what counts."

"Transfer, sah? Right this way, sah, all ready to start." Every man in the crowd seemed to be a hackman, and to call his hack a transfer.

"No, I am going to walk," he told each of them; for the few dollars left in his pocket warranted no extravagance, and he pushed through to the street, where, almost directly across the way, he was delighted to see the name of "Burrus & Gray" upon a large sign surmounting a brick building. But, being something of a traveller by this time, he wisely concluded that a business firm would be busy immediately after the arrival of the boat, and that he had better have a tramp about the town before calling. With this idea he crossed the street and started inland at a brisk pace, and as he passed the Burrus & Gray building his progress was stopped by a rapping upon the window. Looking in, he saw a kindly faced gentleman leaning back comfortably in an arm chair, smoking a long-stemmed pipe, and beckoning him in.

Wondering much at this, he stopped and entered the office, in which were several chairs and desks.

"Are you Hunt Robertson, my boy?" the gentleman with the pipe asked.

"Yes, sir!" Hunt replied, taking off his hat in great wonderment.

"Ah, I thought you might be," the gentleman continued, "for a letter from Colonel Andrews this morning told me you were coming. I am Mr. Burrus, and I just called you in to make you feel a little at home here, for we like to show some little attention to strangers. Quite a ways from Central New York you are, but you will find plenty of good-hearted people down here. Did you come all the way by

water?" he asked, with another pull at the long-stemmed pipe.

"Yes, sir," Hunt answered; "nearly every step of the way from the farm, for I walked over to Lyons and made my way down to New York on the canal, because that was so much cheaper than the cars. Then I bought my ticket through to New Bern, sir, and the big steamship that made me sick carried me to Norfolk, and there they put me in the cars, and then in the steamboat Neuse, sir, that brought me across Albemarle Sound and Pamlico Sound, sir, and we got here a few minutes ago, sir."

"You did perfectly right, Hunt," Mr. Burrus declared, "and now we'll soon make a North Carolinian of you down here, and a cotton planter, too, I hope, for Colonel Andrews tells me that is what you have in view. Go out and see our city, now you're in it, but be sure to be back here by four or five o'clock, and I'll help you make your plans for the night."

"Thank you, sir; I'll be back in time, sir," Hunt answered, turning to the door. He was hardly outside before he was surrounded by a group of colored men, so sprinkled with loose cotton that he thought they must have been rolling in it, for he could not know that they were Burrus & Gray's porters just returned from their work in the gin house, where loose cotton flies like snowflakes; but they were very civil and polite, and every one of them bade him "Mawnin', sah;" "Mawnin', sah." He started toward the next street, and just as he reached the corner he

had to stop to make way for a very old and very black woman, clad in rags, with a few sticks of wood on one arm and some long, straggling gray hairs on her chin, who held out her hand beseechingly to him.

"Mawnin', boss," she greeted him; "gimme a penny? Please gimme a penny, boss? I'll let you kiss me if you give me a penny."

"Poor soul," he said to himself, seeing at once that she had lost her mind, "I guess she needs it worse than I do!" and handing her the penny he turned the corner, and found himself in a few moments at the point formed by the junction of the Neuse and Trent Rivers, where several abandoned old steamboats lay on the shore, and some trim steam launches and yachts were anchored in the stream. Turning here to the left he was in East Front Street, with the beautiful Neuse River on his right.

"Why, it's as large as the Hudson River at New York!" he said to himself, "with big steamboats going up and down, and no end of sailing craft, and that handsome white steamer up above there must be the Revenue Cutter I've heard them speak of."

"Mawnin', sah!" This came from an intelligent-looking black man, who took off his hat and evidently desired to stop and talk. "Strangah, heah, sah?"

"Just got here this morning," Hunt answered. "I wish you would tell me whether all the people in this place are colored? It seems to me I don't meet any but colored people in the streets."

"No, sah; not quite all," the man answered, adding

a merry yah, yah, yah. "Dey's nine t'ousan' people in New Bern, sah, an' six t'ousan' of 'em's brack; so w'en you meets t'ree people in de street, two of 'em's boun' to be brack. Got a little baccy 'bout you, boss?"

Hunt had no tobacco, so he started along, but the man stopped him with an exclamation.

"You see dat big brick house ober dar, boss?" he asked, nodding his head toward a very gloomy and dismal old brick house on the river bank. "Dat de Ashclark house, boss. Reckon yo' done heerd tell o' Ashclark, fer he was a great pirate in dese parts, long time ago. He de man w'at drownded his two darters down to Beaufort, so dey does say, an' married an Eyetalian woman, an' like to git he's neck stretch in prison if Massa Grant hadn't a done pardon 'im, boss. Dat was soon awftah Massa Linkum done make us all free, bless de Lawd."

Hunt continued his walk up the river side as far as the Neuse River bridge, a mile and a quarter long, a wooden bridge with an iron draw near the centre; and beyond the bridge he saw a long line of saw mills and factories; but as his errand was to see the town he turned here to the left and took a cross-street inland. There were many fine old mansions, he noticed, some of wood and some of brick; but in a few minutes he was in a maze of narrow streets lined with shanties, whose occupants were evidently the colored people, and the occupants were much in evidence in the doorways, in the windows, and leaning in the sun

against the fences; nearly every one of them greeting him with a cheerful "Mawnin', boss."

These long streets of shanties interested him more than the finer houses, for he hoped before long to make an experiment of his own in shanty architecture.

"I never saw anything like this," he admitted to himself, "nor imagined such a thing. If this is the way the Southern negroes live, I don't wonder that they're poor. I wouldn't leave a cow shed the way they are satisfied to keep these shanties. Some of them have had paint on them long ago, and some have had whitewash, but it's always gone. The chimneys are what take my eye."

"Chimleys, sah?" said a voice close to his ear, belonging to a very black man, who leaned against the fence. "Yes, we all has chimleys, sah. Some people's so shif'less dey's satisfied wid a little fiah in de back yaad; but in New Bern we all does have chimleys, sah."

It gave Hunt a start to find that in his interest in the subject he had put his thoughts into spoken words, and the man had heard them. "Won' you step in, boss, if you's a strangah in dese parts?" the man went on; and Hunt accepted his invitation.

"It's the queer way you build your chimneys down here I was thinking of," he said, after the man had shown his little premises with some pride "Why, they're all built outside, up against the ends of the houses, and generally lean away from the house, and —why, I declare they're built of wood. I should

think they would catch fire, when they don't fall down. There's one in the next yard that has fallen down, and broken all to pieces."

"No, sah; dey don' take fiah, sah," the man explained. "Ain' dat de way you does build chimleys up No'th?"

"What, of wood?" Hunt answered. "No, sir; we use bricks or stone up North."

"Dey ain' no stones in No'th Ca'line, boss," the man explained, "'s fur as I've seed, an' poor niggah he can't afford to buy bricks, so he use sticks an' clay, an' it make berry good chimley, sah."

"No doubt it answers the purpose," Hunt agreed, "but I should think you'd have some dreadful fires here. Why, this street of cabins must be a mile long, and they're not only set up one after another, but more cabins put in the back yards, and more back of those, and more and more wherever there's a foot of room, till every foot is covered. But I don't see why you don't straighten up the fallen chimneys, anyhow, and replace the broken glass in the windows, and put new hinges to the doors and shutters. Why, everything seems to be falling to pieces."

"Dat jest how it is, boss," the man answered; "ebryt'ing done fall ter pieces. Pore niggah, he don' have no time ter fix up, boss. We ain' lak you w'ite folks up No'th, boss."

Street after street of these one-story and apparently one-room cabins Hunt walked through, meeting great civility everywhere, and seeing poverty and shiftless-

ness without end. Walls were tottering, chimneys falling, fences leaning, and a majority of the windows were sashless. But the people, unkempt as they were, were as merry as they were black, and ever ready for a laugh.

"Tin Cup Alley" he read on a sign at one of the corners, and there he turned off, thinking it time to change his surroundings.

"Good morning," said a white gentleman whom he soon met, and politely touched his hat; "been having a look at Blackville?" "Good morning," said the druggist, whose store he soon afterward passed in Middle Street. "Are you a stranger in New Bern? I hope you'll go out and see the City Cemetery, and the National Cemetery, where the soldiers are buried. Do you know anyone in New Bern?"

"I know Mr. Burrus, sir," Hunt answered.

"Then you know a good man, and you're all right," the druggist said. "My name is Davis. Don't hesitate to come to me when you want to find out anything. Live far away from here?"

"I live more than a thousand miles from here, sir," Hunt answered; "but everyone is so polite and obliging in New Bern it makes me feel as if I had always lived here, sir."

In continuing his walk through the business streets he passed a very large brick building that he was told was the Court House, and another, even handsomer, that he learned was the Post Office. After a time he found himself at the end of another long wooden

bridge, which a colored man whom he encountered told him was the Trent River bridge, leading over to James City. The Trent, he said, was a little more than half as wide as the Neuse, and he crossed the bridge to have a look at James City, which, as he was told, contained nearly three thousand inhabitants, everyone colored, and all living in cabins in narrow alleys.

"More and more of them!" he said to himself, as he passed cabin after cabin. "Wages must be very low down here, with all this labor unemployed, so it's a good thing I am going to work for myself. But all these colored people manage to live, so I guess I can."

When he recrossed the bridge to New Bern he saw by a clock in a jeweler's window that it was nearly four, and he turned toward the office of Burrus & Gray.

"Well, what do you think of New Bern?" Mr. Burrus asked him, when he entered the office.

"I think it is a very fine place, sir," Hunt answered. "But I never saw so many colored people in my life, and I am afraid that where there is work to do they will get it and leave me without, for I want to earn a little money as I go along."

"Don't worry your mind about the colored people," Mr. Burrus laughed; "they are not looking very hard for work. To tell the truth, good labor is hard to get here, and if you have come down determined to work you will make your way all right. Got any money?"

Hunt's first impulse was to reply that Mr. Warren had paid him thirty dollars out of his little hoard, and

that having spent about ten dollars for travelling expenses, he still had twenty dollars left, with the privilege of writing to Mr. Warren for more, if necessary; but on second thought it seemed wiser not to go into these details, so he answered:

"A little, sir; but I want to earn enough to pay my way from the start, if I can, and save a little, if possible, for I am only a poor boy, sir."

"That's the talk!" Mr. Burrus exclaimed; "we want intelligent labor here, and I want some of it myself. Go up to my house, in East Front Street, facing the Neuse River (anyone will show you where it is), and go through into the back yard, where you will find a little house that has a room in one end stored half-full of furniture, and a woodshed in the other end. Back of the woodshed is a pile of firewood. If you want to earn your board and lodging till you get acquainted, split up the wood and pile it nicely in the shed, and you can sleep on some of the furniture. Between times you can deliver orders from the store for me; and as you will want some solid cash, my son will give you work in the cotton-gin house."

In this way Hunt passed his first two weeks in New Bern, splitting wood, delivering goods, and working about the wonderful cotton gin, where he took his first lessons in the handling of cotton. In that time he had earned ten dollars, without spending any of his own money. Meanwhile his eyes and ears had been wide open, and he had had some useful talks

with Mr. Burrus about his desire to set up for a small planter. So it did not surprise him when, on entering the office one morning, he was greeted with:

"Well, Hunt, you have only to say the word now, and you are a land owner. That fellow over on Brice Creek is willing to sell the five-acre patch for ten dollars. My friend, Lawyer Pearsall, has examined the title for me, and it is all right. It is wild land, of course, with some timber on it, and not extra good, at that price, but you can bring it up with hard work. The owner needs the money, and I think it is a bargain at ten dollars. You'd better go out and examine it yourself to-morrow morning—walk right out through James City. Then, if you say the word, the deed is done and you are a North Carolina land owner, for I owe you exactly ten dollars. Five acres is a small farm, but it's enough for a beginning."

"Thank you very much, sir!" Hunt replied. "I will examine it carefully to-morrow, and see about my house, for my idea is to have a little house to live in as soon as possible, if I get the land."

"That you must have," Mr. Burrus told him, "and the sooner the better, and be sure to put a fireplace in it, for the cold days of winter will soon be upon us. We are in the 'Sunny South,' but we need fires on cold winter days—no such cold as you have up in Ontario County, of course, but enough to make you shiver."

Hunt set out bright and early the next morning, crossing the bridge to James City, and thence striking

off toward Brice Creek, which he crossed on another bridge, as he had been told to do. The six miles seemed short to him, for he was well pleased with the appearance of the country, and he knew that a considerable distance from the city was one of the penalties that he must pay for buying cheap land.

"Here we are," he said to himself, when he reached the five-acre "patch," which he had visited before. "From the great pine tree to the bluff by the creek, thence following the creek to the big water oak, then inland to the old elm with the limb broken off, and then back to the pine. Why, I get quite a lot of timber if I buy this, not large timber, but good for firewood, and that means a lot of clearing to be done."

"Hello, here! young man!" a voice called to him, and there sat Mr. Burrus in a buggy, with a white man beside him." You beat me here after all, didn't you? This is Mr. Brock, Hunt, who owns the land. I brought him up so you could do business with him, and to save you the long walk back to town."

"Thank you very much, sir!" Hunt exclaimed; and in five minutes the three were walking over the land, Hunt examining it carefully.

"Yes, it's sandy, of course," Mr. Burrus admitted. "All the land hereabouts is sandy. But look at this bluff along the creek! isn't that a fine situation? And here is water in plenty in the creek, for your own use or your animals. By clearing this land up you can make it just as good as you like, my friend, and I don't know a better place for a young man to start."

Hunt was more than satisfied with the place, for he saw what he could make of it; and the money was soon paid and the agreement drawn and signed that made the land his own.

"Now, we are square, Hunt," Mr. Burrus told him, "for I have paid the ten dollars I owed you, and you are a North Carolina land owner. Good luck to you, my boy. Here's a hatchet and saw that I brought you in the buggy, for you will need them when you come to build your shanty. For to-night and a few more nights till you get something up, the people in any of these cabins will give you a lodging for a small consideration"—and he nodded his head toward the three or four cabins in sight. "They are all colored people, of course, but that is no matter. That large house near the river belongs to Mr. Vincent, a white man, and you will find him a good neighbor. Now, good day, Mr. Planter."

So saying he drove away, taking Mr. Brock with him, but leaving the hatchet and saw behind.

Hunt felt at least a foot taller as he walked over his own land, examining his own trees and his own soil.

"So far my object is accomplished," he said to himself, "for I have my little place. Now to make the little place give me bread and butter; but that will be a work of time."

"Good evening, sir," said a voice behind him, and turning quickly he saw a white man. "I hear you have bought this five-acre patch," the gentleman con-

tinued, "and are going to put up a cabin. My name is Vincent, and that is my house over yonder by the river. I bid you welcome to Brice Creek, young man, and I shall expect to see you at my house every night till you have a place of your own to sleep in. You'll always find a slice of bacon there, and occasionally a baked potato."

"Thank you very much, sir!" Hunt exclaimed. "I am glad that I have come among such kind people to live, sir."

When he looked up again Mr. Vincent was gone, but he continued his examination of the trees, and sat down upon one of his own logs to rest. At last he owned a bit of land, and the task of converting it into a farm lay before him.

"To be sure, it is no great feat to buy a little tract of land," he said to himself, "when you have the money. But I have earned the money to buy this since I came here, and I still have my twenty dollars in my pocket. Such a fine bluff along the creek," he continued his silent talk, "and so green with the big and little pines. That will help me give a name to the place, after I make it worthy to have a name."

CHAPTER IV.

A MODEST HOME IN THE SUNNY SOUTH.

TEN days after his purchase of the land, and after the deed had been prepared and filed, Hunt stepped out of his own cabin and leaned a stick against the door to hold it open, returning then to the fireplace that he had built with his own hands, where he was making a fire to test the draught of the chimney that he had also built.

As he bent over the fireplace, a few minutes later, a slight noise in the doorway attracted his attention, and turning quickly he saw there a genial-looking gentleman with gray hair and a gray beard, his smiling face reddened by exposure to the North Carolina sun. Hunt instantly straightened up and stepped toward his visitor.

"Hello, here, young man, and is this where you live?" the newcomer asked. "Why you have quite a house here, I declare," he continued; "didn't build it all yourself, did you?"

"Yes, sir," Hunt answered, with a touch of pardonable pride in his voice. "I bought the land a few days ago, and set right to work to build a place to live in."

"You don't say so!" the visitor exclaimed. "My

friend Burrus told me about you, and said you were going to put up some sort of a shanty, but I had no idea you could build as good a little house as this. Why, you'll be just as snug here as if you had a brick mansion, and less taxes to pay. And you've got one of these chimneys built of sticks and clay, too. That must have bothered you to build, if you did it yourself, for you don't have chimneys like that in your country, I guess. You're a New York boy, I hear."

"Yes, sir, I am from Central New York State," Hunt answered, "and I was a little afraid about the wooden chimney at first, for fear it might set fire to the house. But I examined such chimneys on other houses, sir, to see how to build one, because I wanted to have everything in regular North Carolina style. It was not hard to build, sir, and it is so well daubed with clay both inside and out that there does not seem to be any danger, sir."

"Well see here, you're a good deal of a genius, it seems to me!" the gentleman said, with a smile. "And I see you have a little lean-to at the back of the house to store your firewood in and keep it from the weather. That looks like industry and thrift, young man, and I guess you are going to make your way, over here."

"I am going to try my best, sir," Hunt declared.

"And a good big fireplace, too, well daubed with clay like the chimney," the visitor exclaimed, as he stepped up and examined it. "Is that your own invention too?"

"Yes, sir," Hunt replied. "I was going to build it of stones, sir, but I could not find a stone as big as my fist on the place."

"Not much like the New York land, eh?" the gentleman asked.

"No, sir, but I had to have a fireplace," Hunt went on, "so I made use of slabs, and filled it in with about a foot of sand, and daubed the sides thick with clay, sir, like the chimney, and it works very well, sir. I was just trying the draught when you came, and I find that the chimney draws finely, sir."

"Yes, but that is 'light wood' you are burning, and 'light wood' would burn in an iron pot," the gentleman said; "I suppose you know the difference between 'light wood' and other pine, by this time?"

"Oh, my yes, sir," Hunt answered. "I have a good stock of light wood laid in ready for use, both here in the corner and in the lean-to. That is what we call 'fat pine' in the North, the heart or knots of a pine tree, very full of resin and turpentine, and I split a lot of it because it is my light at night as well as my fuel by day, sir. It looks very cheerful and homelike in here at night, sir, when I have the doors and shutters hooked, and a good fire of light wood burning on the hearth. Why, it makes the room so light that I can see to read by it, sir."

"Ay, I'll warrant you can," the visitor exclaimed, as he stepped up closer to the fireplace and warmed his fingers; "light wood is fine stuff, my boy, for a quick fire or a bright blaze. Some day you will have

candles or a lamp, I suppose, and then you'll not need to build up a fire."

"The light wood gives me all the light I need, sir," Hunt asserted, "and it's cheaper than candles or lamp. I hear that some of the richest farmers over in Hyde County never have either candles or lamps in their houses, but always use light wood for lights, because that is cheaper."

"So they do, my boy," the gentleman said, with a laugh. "I was over there a short time ago, and they were going to send me to bed by the light of a light wood fire; but they'd forgotten to have any light wood, so I went to bed in the dark. There is not a mile of railroad in that county, I suppose you know. But of course you know it," he continued. "You are picking up the North Carolina ways very rapidly. I'd like to see you here some evening when your house is all bright with the light wood fire."

"'Scuse me, gemmen," a very black young woman in a tattered calico dress broke in before Hunt could answer his visitor's last remark, she having walked in noiselessly without the formality of knocking at the door. "'Scuse me, but I come to see wedder de young gemman done got some washin' he like fer me to do fer him?" The most noticeable thing about her was a small brown stick which protruded several inches from her mouth, and which she chewed upon constantly, and removed from her mouth several times while talking. On these occasions the mouth end of the stick was seen to be chewed into a sort of brush,

or "mop," as it is locally called; and each time she removed the stick from her mouth she took a tin tobacco box from her pocket and opened it, and dipped the "mop" into the brown powder it contained, and rolled it about in the powder, returning the stick again to her mouth and chewing it again with great gusto, as if it were some choice morsel.

"What's that you've got in your mouth, Dinah?" the white gentleman asked.

"Dat my toofe brush, sah," the girl answered, adding a loud "yah, yah, yah," and rubbing the "mop" against her teeth as if it had been indeed a tooth brush.

"No, I don't have much washing to do," Hunt told her, "and when I have any soiled clothes to be washed, I take them down to the creek and wash them myself."

"That is a North Carolina custom that I think I shall not soon learn," he continued, turning to his visitor, after the woman had gone out. "She was 'dipping snuff,' as they call it, sir. She chews the end of the stick till it is like a brush, and then dips it into the tobacco box, which is half full of snuff. It is the dirtiest form of chewing tobacco, but most all the colored women do it, sir."

"So you do your own washing, do you?" the visitor asked. "No reason why you shouldn't, and ironing too, and of course your own cooking. I see you have hooks on your shutter and door, and I noticed a good stout staple and hasp on the outside of the door when I came in, so you can lock everything up tight when

you go away for the day, as you must do sometimes. That's a good plan."

"Yes, sir," Hunt assented; "they say it isn't necessary to lock a door in this country, but I should hardly feel safe to go away and leave everything standing open, and I must go away sometimes, because I want to go to work whenever I can, to earn some money, sir."

"Well, you're quite a carpenter," the visitor said, stepping up to the open door. "I see you have used plenty of slabs in building the house, and some good boards for your doors and shutters and other things. Floated your lumber down the creek from one of the saw mills, I suppose?"

"No, sir," Hunt replied; "I was going to make a little raft of it and float it down, sir, but I found that would make it so wet that I could not well work it, so I got a colored man with an ox cart to haul me two good loads, sir. I used mostly slabs, sir, because they are cheaper. The walls and roof are all slabs, but they are very tight, sir, and I am sure they cannot leak. I used good boards for the floor, sir, and of course I had to use them for the door and shutters and shelves, and—"

"What's this, shelves?" the visitor exclaimed, stepping in toward the fireplace again. "Yes, here you have some shelves, on both sides of the chimney, as sure as the world. They'll come very handy to you when you go to housekeeping; and here are nails in the wall to hang your clothes on. Why, you're just as complete as possible. But here, what's this

thing?" he continued, turning to a little platform of boards in one corner of the room, raised about two feet above the floor, and supported at the free end by a joist on legs. "This is too low for a table, what is it for?"

"That is my bed, sir," Hunt answered, with some pride, as he stepped up to it. "My Hyde County bed, I call it, because I hear they use a great many of this kind over there. It is a very comfortable bed, too, sir," he went on. "You see it is made of three wide boards each seven or eight feet long, sir. This cleat nailed to the wall holds one end of the boards secure, and the other end rests on the joist. As there is nothing under the middle, sir, they are springy, of course, and very comfortable. You'd be surprised to see how comfortable it is, sir."

"Well that's an idea, to be sure!" the gentleman exclaimed as he sat down on the boards and threw himself back, thus testing both their strength and springiness, for his weight was considerable. "So this is a Hyde County bed, is it?" he continued, jouncing himself up and down. "It's a good bed, I'll warrant you. But I have become so interested in your house that I am wasting the day, and I came over here on a little matter of business. My name is Chatfield, and I am from the North too, though I have been spending the winter in New Bern. What is your name, my boy?"

"Huntley Robertson, sir," Hunt answered, "and people generally call me Hunt."

"Well, come outside here and look at my boat, Hunt, down in the creek. I brought her over because as soon as I heard about you I thought you would need a boat to go to New Bern in, and maybe I could sell her to you."

Both outside now, they walked down to the bluff, whence the boat could be seen tied to the shore below.

"Look at that, Hunt!" Mr. Chatfield exclaimed, pointing toward the pure white boat. "Isn't she a beauty? You cannot see her stern as she lies, but her name is the Maria Louise, and she's just the sort of boat you need, to carry stuff to and from the city. I made a sort of a trade with a man in New Bern, so she didn't cost me very much, and I can sell her to you for seven dollars, boat, sail, anchor, cable, cushions, and all. Don't you think you would like to have such a boat as that?"

"Yes, sir, I should like it very much indeed," Hunt replied. "But there are many things I should like, and I have to be very careful of my money, so I must ask you to give me a little time to think about it before I give you a definite answer, sir."

"All the time you want, my boy," Mr. Chatfield answered, patting him kindly on the shoulder. "I'll tell you what I'll do, Hunt," he went on. "I'll come over here again to see you to-morrow, so you can take all night to think it over. But I want you to show me the rest of that fine little house of yours before I leave you to-day."

Hunt was more than willing to show the comforts

of his cabin, and they were soon back in the main room.

"What's this!" Mr. Chatfield exclaimed, as he threw open an inner door near the foot of the bed. "Another room back here?"

"Yes, sir," Hunt answered, "I had to have two rooms, because my sister is coming down as soon as I get well started. There is another bed, just like mine," he continued, "in her room, and some shelves for her. But I can sleep in this other room, which will be our kitchen and living room. There are two windows in her room, sir, and one window and the door in the other room. I could not quite manage glass windows, sir, but these are good tight shutters."

"You have done nobly, Hunt," Mr. Chatfield declared. "Now you need a frying-pan and a coffee pot and some provisions in your kitchen, and you will have a jolly little home."

"Yes, sir, I intend to get those things next time I go over to New Bern," Hunt replied.

"Well, look for me to-morrow," Mr. Chatfield said, taking him by the hand; and in a moment his visitor was gone.

Although the November days were growing shorter there was still an interval of daylight after Hunt was left alone, and he went out and gathered up some more firewood that he had cut, for he knew by the chill feel of the air that he should need a fire for warmth that evening, and the wood in the lean-to was designed for use in winter, and must not be

encroached upon except when necessary. Then, darkness having come, he set a few sticks of light wood to blazing on the hearth, and took from his pocket a copy of a Northern daily newspaper that had fallen into his hands in some unexpected way when he was last in New Bern.

"Why, really, it's almost new," he said to himself as he opened it and spread it smoothly over his knees, "it's not much more than a week old, and that answers me just as well down here as if it had been printed this morning. It reminds me, anyhow, that I must have a fresh newspaper here occasionally, and a few books when I can get them, for I don't want to lose track of everything that is happening in the world. A frying-pan and a strip of bacon may be ornaments enough for a Southern negro's cabin, but a white fellow from the North should have the smell of printers' ink in his house when he means to make something of himself."

He was soon much interested in an account of an early "cold snap" in Central New York, in which the mercury had fallen several degrees below zero; and congratulated himself not only upon being in a region where the weather would permit him to continue his "clearing up" of his land through the entire winter, but also upon having a light by which he could easily read the fine print of the daily newspapers, without the expenditure of a cent.

Suddenly he became aware of a voice, evidently a man, shouting at no great distance outside, and

straightening up and listening, he made out a plain "Hello! Hello in the cabin there!"

When he sprang up he laid two more sticks of light wood upon the fire, to renew the light, and then hearing the call repeated nearer and louder, he went to the door and opened it.

"Why, Mr. Vincent!" he exclaimed to the gentleman who was approaching. "I am glad to see you, sir. Step in and warm yourself by the fire."

"Yes, I am your neighbor Vincent," the gentleman replied, as he stepped in and seated himself on the home-made bench that Hunt drew up before the fire for them both.

"I reckon you are not quite used yet to our Southern way of going up to a country house at night," the visitor continued. "When you get settled here and have a fence around your door-yard, as no doubt you will have, you will likely keep a dog or two to watch the place, as most people in the country do, and then anyone who comes to see you at night will stand out at the gate and call to you, and the dogs, of course, will set up a howl, and you will go out and call them off and bring the visitor in. That's the way we do in North Carolina, and pretty much all over the South," he continued. "It is not well to walk right up to the door of a country house and knock, as I believe you do in the North, for the dogs are likely to be ugly unless their master is called out."

"I am so glad you spoke about the dogs, Mr. Vincent," Hunt hastened to say. "I get a little lone-

some here sometimes, sir, and I have often wished for my dear old Rover and little Buster. Those are my two dogs up in Ontario County, sir, both fine watch dogs; and I must write to my sister to bring them with her when she comes down."

"Yes, you will need dogs," Mr. Vincent assented; "and you will need a great many other things when you get your little farm in operation. You have a good comfortable cabin here, and I am glad to see you so well situated so soon."

"I thought you might be a little lonesome here at night, at first, not being used to it," Mr. Vincent continued, stepping up to the fire and rubbing his hands near the blaze, "and I want you to know that you have a neighbor near by. But I came partly on business," he added, "because I saw Mr. Chatfield come up the creek in his boat to-day and tie her below the bluff here, so I thought maybe you might be talking about buying her, and I came over to tell you something about her."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Chatfield offered to sell her to me for seven dollars, sir, and I have till to-morrow to make up my mind about it," Hunt replied. "I should like very much to have such a boat, for I think I could make a little money out of it, sir."

"Ah, I was sure you had an eye to business if you thought of buying her!" Mr. Vincent said, with a laugh, "for you always look at the business end of a question. Seven dollars, eh? She's a bargain at that price. I know the boat very well, and she's

worth fifteen dollars if she's worth a cent. Mr. Chatfield got her just for a little sailing and fishing for pleasure, and she's tight as a drum, and newly painted. Just the sort of a boat you are going to need here to carry your stuff over to New Bern in to sell, when you get anything to carry."

"I have something now, sir," Hunt exclaimed. "I can cut a good deal of fireword on this little place, and that sells in New Bern, and I thought perhaps I could carry it over in the boat, sir, and soon make her pay for herself. I am very much obliged to you for coming over to tell me about her, sir."

"You have the right idea there, my boy," Mr. Vincent asserted, as he arose and stepped toward the door; "you need something right now to fetch and carry for you, and the boat will do it. By and by you will need a critter of some sort, because you will have plowing to do, as well as carrying. A mule would cost you fifty dollars at the least, but you can buy an ox for twenty-five, and an ox can do the work. Now good night to you, my boy," he added as he stepped outside, "and a good night's rest on that Hyde County bed I see you have there in the corner."

"Good night, sir, and thank you very much for coming in," Hunt answered; and he closed and hooked the door and put several sticks of hard wood on the fire, and was soon in the full enjoyment of the comforts of the Hyde County bed.

CHAPTER V.

THE CARGO OF THE MARIA LOUISE.

THE young owner of the cabin on the bluff on Brice Creek had been chopping firewood for several hours, and for some domestic purpose had returned to the house, when he heard a long-drawn-out shout, evidently from a considerable distance away.

"Hello-o-o there, in the cabin! Hunt, hello-o-o!" were the words that he made out when he listened carefully; and opening his door and running out he recognized the voice, though the owner of it was still invisible.

"Hello, Mr. Chatfield!" he called in reply; "I'm coming, sir!" and, so saying, he ran toward the edge of the bluff, thinking from the sound of the voice that Mr. Chatfield must be below the bluff, on the creek.

"Come down here, my boy, I want you to help me carry my bundles," the voice resumed when he reached the edge of the bluff, so that he was visible from below, and there sure enough lay the Maria Louise, again tied to the shore, with Mr. Chatfield sitting in the stern.

"Yes, sir!" Hunt called in reply, as he hurried a few steps along the bluff to the path down to the water; "I'm coming, sir!" and as he sprang down

the steep incline he noticed that the inside of the boat was painted a delicate light green, and that she sat gracefully upon the water.

"Why, she has a centreboard, hasn't she?" he exclaimed, when he reached the water's edge; "I didn't notice that yesterday."

"To be sure she has," Mr. Chatfield replied, tugging at the end of a bag that lay in the bottom of the boat and that seemed to be heavy. "I forgot to mention that yesterday, or the two pairs of oars, or the rudder. But she is all complete, and everything goes with her—even this swivel arm-chair in the stern, if you want it."

"I'm glad to hear it, sir," Hunt continued, as he took hold of the bow and pulled the boat in with her side to the shore, "for I've concluded to buy her, sir, if you still want to sell her."

"All right," Mr. Chatfield said, "then you'll get a good boat. But I want you to help carry my cargo up to the house—these two or three bags and bundles;" and so saying he lifted up a well-filled coffee-sack, which Hunt shouldered.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Hunt," Mr. Chatfield continued, reaching for some paper bags in the boat's bottom. "I'm going to make a sort of a picnic around here to-day, and walk over to the bluff on the Neuse, and then walk over and see my friend Vincent, and by that time I'll be tired and hungry, and I've brought some stuff to eat in these bags so that you can get me up a little supper about dark.

But hold on," he added, as Hunt showed signs of starting, and carefully handed out a large brown pail. "Don't slam the pail about," he went on, "for it has a lot of eggs in it, and some other breakables."

Hunt ran up to the house with the bag and pail, and returned for another bag, and then for another, and on the last trip carried up also a large basket, packed full of bundles.

"That's all," Mr. Chatfield said, as he stepped out of the boat. "Now you unpack all this stuff," he continued, when they were both in the house. "I guess you'll find enough here to make a supper for both of us."

"Why, here's a ham, sir!" Hunt exclaimed, as he pulled a paper-wrapped lump out of the first bag.

"Yes, that's a pig ham from Hyde County," Mr. Chatfield answered, as he seated himself comfortably on the side of the bed.

"A pig ham, sir?" Hunt exclaimed; "ain't all hams made of pig, sir?"

"No, they're not," Mr. Chatfield laughed. "Most hams are made out of hog, and are tough and coarse. But a pig ham, as they call it down here, is made of a little young pig a few months old; and you'll find it's as sweet and tender as a turkey."

Hunt stepped out and returned in a moment from the lean-to with a home-made table in his hands, for he saw that the contents of the bags and basket would more than fill his shelves.

"Why, here's a fine bright frying-pan, with a

cover!" he exclaimed a minute later, holding it up to admire it.

"To be sure there is," Mr. Chatfield laughed; "how could you cook our ham to-night without a frying-pan? Better hang that up on one of the nails, and the coffee-pot too, that you'll find in there somewhere."

Here the visitor sat up straight on the bed to watch the process of unpacking. "I want to see that they put in everything I paid for," he said. "Yes, that's right. There are some cheap knives and forks and spoons in those little packages, and in the longer package are some kitchen knives and spoons, for cooking with. Better set that square bundle outside in the cool, for that's butter. Be careful of that big paper bag, that's full of corn meal. The other big paper bag is full of wheat flour, and there's another one there somewhere, filled with hominy. Four or five round tins, you say? That's right, they are condensed milk. Look out for the teakettle in that other bag with the sweet potatoes," he continued. "You'll find a half bushel of them there, and they are prime to lay in the hot ashes and bake."

"Careful! careful!" he exclaimed, as Hunt moved the big basket, and something rattled. "A few plates and dishes in there, my boy, and some cups and saucers. Yes, the bundles are all right; one is coffee, another is sugar, and there should be some pepper and salt and matches. See if there ain't a pile of wooden plates down in the bottom of the basket?

Yes, they're there, and those tin pans below them are for cooking with. Now look out for the eggs, my boy, or you'll have an omelet before you want it."

"Why, there's enough stuff here to stock a big kitchen!" Hunt exclaimed, as he stepped back and surveyed the shelves and table, all covered with the new treasures. "I'm afraid you'll not be able to eat all this for your supper, sir."

"I hope for a good appetite," Mr. Chatfield answered, "but if there is anything left, there are more days to come after this, you know, and you must help me out with it. There ought to be a strip of bacon and a slab of fat salt pork in there somewhere."

"Yes, sir, here they are!" Hunt cried, taking them out and hanging them up.

"If you are going away for the day, sir," he went on, seating himself by his visitor, "perhaps we had better finish up the business about the boat now, for I have made up my mind that I had better buy her, sir."

The business was soon finished up and the money paid, and the Maria Louise became Hunt's property.

"I think you had better bring all the loose stuff up to the house," Mr. Chatfield advised, "or some of your colored neighbors may take a fancy to the oars, sails, cushions, or arm-chair. You will find those things very handy in the house, at any rate, now that they all belong to you."

"I will bring them up at once, sir," Hunt replied; and when Mr. Chatfield started off he went as far as

the bluff with him, and was soon busy carrying loads to the house.

"If he doesn't have a good supper this night," Hunt said to himself when he was again alone in the house, "then I am a poorer cook than I think. He shall have a good comfortable seat, too, for this arm-chair that has had its legs taken out will go nicely on one end of the bench, and one of the cushions shall go on it. But, speaking of cushions, I declare they're stuffed with cotton, and two of them will make beautiful pillows for my Hyde County bed."

Inclination would have kept Hunt in the cabin much longer, sorting out the wonderful stock of provisions; but duty called him outside to cut firewood, now that he had a means of taking it over to New Bern for sale, and the hole made in his purse by the purchase of the boat he was eager to patch up, and with him duty was sure to take precedence over inclination, so he kept manfully at the wood cutting and cleaving till the deepening twilight warned him that it was time to prepare for the entertainment of his expected guest.

"It's getting late," he said to himself as he hooked the door, "but he will be sure to be here. I don't believe that Mr. Chatfield is the man to disappoint me when he said he would come."

Though there were no stones on his land, some good genius, probably with a black skin, had left about the half of an old brick there, and this Hunt had picked up and carried in earlier in the day. He

now opened the longer bundle of knives and spoons; and taking out a long "butcher" knife with a wooden handle, sharpened it well upon the piece of brick. Before it was too dark to find the path down the bluff he carried the brown pail down to the creek, and took it back full of good clean water. Then he took the dishes out of the basket and arranged them neatly on his shelves, and untied the package containing the knives and forks and spoons for the table, after which he set the table carefully for two, as he well knew how to do from his long practice at it on the Warren farm. These things done, he would have been more than human if he could have resisted the temptation to look once more over the eatables, and consider what he should prepare for his first guest in his own house.

Suddenly he slapped one hand loud upon his leg, as if an inspiration had come.

"Those ashes are just hot enough to bake a sweet potato nicely," he said to himself, "and I'm sure Mr. Chatfield would like one or two, and I'll do one for myself."

This done, he filled the new teakettle and stood it over one side of the fire, taking care to lay on two or three small pieces of light-wood to illuminate the room, for night had now come.

"Hello Hunt! Hello in there!" he heard, and then two or three loud thumps upon the door, which he unhooked and threw open, the door almost grazing the outstretched hand of Mr. Chatfield.

"Why, Mr. Chatfield!" he exclaimed; you are late, and I was afraid you were not coming."

"Oh, I am coming, never fear," the visitor answered. "I have had a long hard tramp, and I am tired and hungry. I hope you are a pretty fair cook, Hunt, for I am famishing."

"Come right in, sir," Hunt replied; "here is the arm-chair all ready for you, with the cushion in it, and you shall soon have something to eat."

"Well, I declare, Hunt, this looks like living," Mr. Chatfield exclaimed, as he seated himself in the chair, and leaned comfortably back. "'The Hyde County incandescent,' I suppose you must call that light-wood blaze, but it makes a remarkably cheerful light. All we need now is the perfume of some supper cooking, to make this house fit for any king, and much too good for most kings. What are you going to give us to eat, my boy?"

"I thought that some of the pig ham fried and some eggs poached with it would make a very good basis, sir," Hunt answered, "with some coffee, of course, and I have some sweet potatoes baked."

"That will be capital!" Mr. Chatfield declared; "but I have made a botch of our banquet after all, for I ought to have brought some crackers or a loaf of bread," he added, giving the broad arm of the chair a hearty slap, "but I forgot all about them."

"No matter, sir," said Hunt, as he took up the sharp knife with which he intended to slice the ham, "for it won't take me long to make a pan of 'spoon

bread.' That is one of the best of the North Carolina dishes, and I have learned how to make it since I came down. Oh, good!" he added, "here are several tins of baking-powder. I didn't see these this morning."

"Then go right ahead, Mr. Cook," Mr. Chatfield said, half closing his eyes to rest, "and don't waste any time about it, for I am nearly starved. But first let me hear how you make the 'spoon bread,' for that is a dish I am very fond of."

"It is easily made, sir," Hunt answered, taking from his pocket a small slip of paper upon which he had written the recipe. "I have only to beat up four eggs, beating the whites and yelks separately, and add them to a cup of cooked hominy (I have some cooked hominy left from breakfast, sir), and then take four tablespoonfuls of corn meal, a pint of milk (which I can easily make from condensed milk), and add a teaspoonful of sugar, the same of salt, and the same of baking-powder, and a tablespoonful of butter, and after mixing, bake it in a covered pan over the hot coals."

"Correct, my boy! Now go ahead!" Mr. Chatfield exclaimed with a start, for he had been snatching forty winks of sleep.

Hunt soon had the coffee boiling fragrantly, four slices of the pig ham sputtering in the frying-pan, four eggs poaching to a turn, and the pan of "spoon bread" baking at one side of the fire.

"Here we are, sir," he said a few minutes later, as he set the steaming viands upon the table.

"Ah, you are fit to cook for the President, Hunt," Mr. Chatfield declared, now fully awake. "Turn the table right around, so that you can sit on the bed while I sit in the chair. Now draw up and fall to, my boy, as we say up in New England."

Hunt first stepped out to bring in the butter, and they were both soon in the full enjoyment of the savory repast. The pig ham was sweet and tender, the coffee was excellent, and the "spoon bread" good beyond criticism. "Fine as the fare is over at Mr. Burrus's, where I live," Mr. Chatfield declared, "this is the jolliest meal I have eaten in North Carolina."

"Thank you, sir," Hunt replied, helping them each to another poached egg and a smoking baked sweet potato.

The visitor was blessed with a fine appetite after his long walk, and his share of everything had disappeared before he paused for any extended conversation.

"Now put a little more light-wood on the fire, and tell me about yourself, my boy, what you intend to do with this place and what you hope for in the future," he said at length.

"What I first want is to make a living, sir," Hunt answered, when the fresh light-wood blazed up, and helping himself to more of the "spoon bread" and another cup of coffee. "A living and a home for my sister and myself."

"The home you have all right," Mr. Chatfield interrupted, "so tell me about the living."

"The living is all right too, sir," Hunt went on,

"for I am not afraid of work. There is plenty of work about here for anyone who is willing to do it, and I can have work nearly all the time in the cotton-gin house, or in one of the saw-mills, or for Mr. Vincent, who has a big truck farm and wants help. Then I have firewood to sell, sir," he continued, "and those things will keep me in ready money till I get my sister down and have some crops for sale. I have five acres of land, you know, sir, so I can raise anyhow two bales of cotton a year, besides some corn for my stock. I must have an ox to plow with, and I want a stock of poultry, and a lot of pigs, and a smoke-house kept full of smoked pork. You see I want to turn this land into a little plantation, sir, and of course I must have a good vegetable garden."

"Hunt, my boy, you have the right idea!" Mr. Chatfield declared, seizing him by the hand. "In less than five years you will be a prosperous North Carolina planter, my boy, and an independent man. Now I must leave you, for I must walk back to New Bern to-night, tired as I am."

"Oh, no, sir!" Hunt exclaimed. "It is a beautiful moonlight night, and I am going to run you down to the city in the Maria Louise."

Mr. Chatfield protested against this, but in a moment Hunt was out of the door with both oars on his shoulders, and his determination carried the day, or the night rather, and the Maria Louise with her two passengers was soon on her way down the river Trent to New Bern under the moonlight.

When Hunt again reached his home, the sun was shining, and he wrote a lead-pencil draft of a short but important letter that he intended to rewrite and send to his sister.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "PATCH" GRADUALLY BECOMES A PLANTATION.

THAT letter, carefully written by Hunt with pencil in the early morning, was the one that Mary Robertson waited long and anxiously for, but she had yet more waiting to do. Sometimes thoughtless people said to her:

"Oh, you're not going to hear from your brother. If he has made an opening for himself down South, he will leave you here, where he knows you are in good hands."

"I shall never be in good hands till I am with him," she answered to such speeches as that, "for he needs me and I need him. I guess you don't know Hunt, if you think he would go away from me and not send for me."

"'Not going to hear from my brother'!" she once indignantly exclaimed, when such a thing was said to her; and struggled hard to keep back the tears, and felt doubly hurt, for a little letter from him was at that minute in her pocket—not the important one, for that was not yet written in ink; but any letter from her brother was more precious than gold.

"Indeed, then, you are very much mistaken, for I heard from him yesterday!" she retorted. "He said so much about dear little Buster that I have begun to save my money to buy a basket or something, to take him down with me, when Hunt sends for me. You know Mr. Warren gave him to both of us, though he has always lived with me, and he is the dearest little doggy in the world. You just ought to have seen him lick my hands and face, and lay his ears back, when I told him Hunt was wishing for him in the new home."

"And Rover?" she continued. "Rover did belong to Mr. Warren, of course, but he was given to Hunt long ago, and he knows that he is soon to go to his dear young master. I wish you could have seen that big setter climb into my lap and lay his head on my shoulder and shut his eyes, when I went over to the Warren farm this morning, and told him that Hunt sent his love to him, and said he was a dear old doggy."

"Yes, dogs are all the better for a switch sometimes!" her mistress snapped; for it was her mistress to whom she said this. "So are girls," she added, "and you'd better stay at home and attend to your work, miss, or I'll have some business with you."

"Oh, I am so glad that Hunt is fond of dogs!" Mary replied, rather quickly, determined not to let her mistress see how the sharp words had cut her. "For I am fond of them, too, and Hunt and I are chums. Oh, yes, ma'am, Hunt will send for me, if

he is alive." Then her eyes did fill with tears, and she could not help it.

Many changes were made on the shore of Brice Creek while Hunt carried that pencil draft of a letter in his pocket, deliberating whether he had better send the letter yet.

"I feel as if it was selfish in me to be enjoying this fine little home all by myself, instead of sending at once for Mary," he often said to himself.

"And yet it cannot be selfishness," he always concluded, "because there is nothing I want so much in the world as to have Mary here, and dear old Rover and little Buster. Why, it will be like a new world for me when they come, and I really need them. But I want to have things a little more ready for Mary when she comes."

That was the secret of his delay, and all his hard work was a pleasure because it helped him to have things "a little more ready for Mary."

In the weeks that followed he had scarcely an idle moment, while late in the fall was changing into the depth of winter. Continuing his almost daily work about the cotton-gin, and in the saw-mill up the creek, and for Mr. Vincent on his truck farm, he still found time to continue the conversion of his "patch" into a small cotton plantation. This meant many days of hard work for him, some of which in January were so cold that his ears and fingers tingled, and once there was a little glaze of ice along the borders of the creek, and one night there was just a suspicion of a flutter

of snow, though nearly every chilly day was followed by a warm and pleasant one; and no day was wintry enough to hinder his out-door work.

The land had to be cleared and made ready for cultivation in the spring, which meant the cutting down of whatever large or small trees stood in the way; and the wood resulting from this chopping had to be cut to a size suitable for burning, and then had to be taken over to New Bern in the boat and sold, which was a work of time, though often of night time. He soon found that a quarter of a cord was the usual size of a load in the city, and the load best adapted to his boat. For that much wood he could get from sixty to seventy-five cents, ten cents of which he paid to the colored cartman who delivered it, for he could not take the boat up into the streets; but he went himself, calling at various houses, and selling the wood and seeing to its delivery, not forgetting to collect the money.

This little drain of ten cents a load for the delivery he was presently able to put a stop to, for he became the owner of an ox and cart, and did his own delivering.

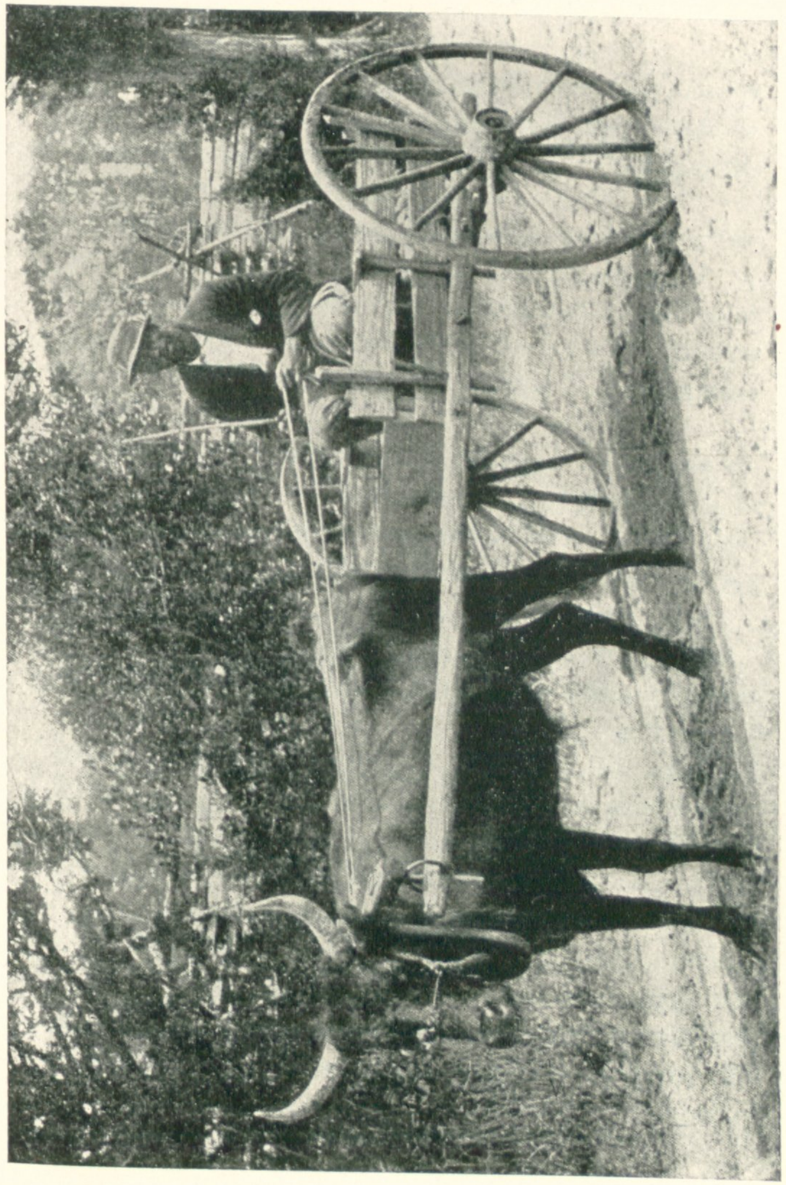
"An ox!" the idea of driving a single ox seemed very comical to him, when he learned that Mr. Vincent had one for sale, for he had always seen and heard of a yoke of oxen. But he should soon need an ox for plowing with, and with the ox went a good solid cart, and a plow somewhat the worse for wear, but still serviceable.

"He is a good critter, my ox Bob, and very gentle," Mr. Vincent told him; but Hunt had not much faith in the gentleness when Bob chased him through the woods on the day of the purchase. Thirty dollars at any rate was cheap for "the entire outfit," as Mr. Vincent called the ox, cart, plow, and harness; and Bob was the perfection of slowness and deliberation when between the shafts. So much work Hunt had done for Mr. Vincent on the truck farm, that he had only five dollars in cash to pay.

Dull as he was, Bob was at least a living creature, and Hunt took great pleasure in his company. His coming, too, made several quick improvements necessary, that greatly enhanced the appearance of the "patch." On one side, the creek was as sure a protection as any fence could have been, but Hunt soon thought it better to build a substantial fence about the other three sides. The posts he cut from his own timber and set solidly in the ground, and by nailing long slabs from post to post, one at top and one at bottom, he soon had his place securely enclosed.

But Bob also required a house, to protect him and his trappings from rain, and his residence, built without delay, was only the first of a home-like collection of out-buildings.

"The North Carolina barn is not handsome," Hunt said to himself, "but it is cheap, and easily built." The walls were of trunks of small trees and limbs of larger ones, laid one upon another something in the manner of a loosely-built log cabin, and the roof



THIRTY DOLLARS . . . WAS CHEAP FOR "THE ENTIRE OUTFIT."

was of slabs. Crude as it was, Bob stood very contentedly upon its floor of earth.

This was only the beginning, however, of many improvements that went far toward taking away the "back lot" air, and giving the more cheerful appearance of a young plantation.

With a house for the ox, Hunt set to work to provide one for the stock of poultry that he intended to establish. His poultry house required a roof over only a small part of it, and that more for the protection of the coming feed and nests than of the chickens or turkeys.

"There will be many a good meal for us," he reflected, "in the chickens, ducks, and turkeys that I hope to have, and their eggs." But about this time the necessary purchase of more salt pork set him to thinking about larger stock than poultry.

"I can't help buying a little pork in the beginning," he said, as he sallied forth with his hatchet. "But it would be disgraceful for me to be buying it after I have been here long enough to make a start. Instead of buying it I must have it to sell, and that's what I intend to do; and to grow pork I must have a pigpen, and here goes for the pigpen.

By the next evening a large and substantial pen was built for the pigs that had not yet arrived, at a proper distance from the house. Then the next step was to make a "door-yard" by erecting a strong and close fence around the house, with one large and one small gate in it, and at a sufficient distance on all sides

to make room not only for a vegetable garden of generous proportions, but also to give space for another building that he intended to erect.

That other building took much of Hunt's attention for several days. When he next went to New Bern with wood he returned with a bottle of ink and other writing materials in his pockets, and with a large pair of strap hinges, a strong hasp and staple, a padlock that looked large enough and strong enough for a jail, and a bundle of nails.

It was on account of this other building that he harnessed Bob to the cart, and went to the saw-mill up the creek and returned with a load of slabs and some three-by-four joists. The new building proved to be nearly as large as the original house, but somewhat higher and with no floor but the earth; and long poles reached across from side to side high up under the roof, about where the ceiling would have been if the plan had included a ceiling, which it did not.

"There, nobody can see either in or out, for I have covered every hole and crack," he reflected, as he surveyed his nearly finished work. "This table inside will do for my poor convict's bed, and I am sure he cannot get out when I have the big padlock on."

But this was only a whimsical fancy of Hunt's, to help keep him merry while he labored; for his new building was not a jail, but a smoke-house, made strong not to keep people in, but to keep intruders out; and the strong table inside was to cut and salt the pork upon.

The smoke-house was completely finished within a week, although its young builder was away for several days, earning a little money on Mr. Vincent's farm. At his first good opportunity he stood upon the bluff, and surveyed his settlement with great satisfaction, counting the little buildings upon his fingers.

"There's my house, that's one;" he counted. "And the smoke-house is two, and Bob's barn is three, and the poultry house is four, and the pigpen is five. None of them likely to start a new style in architecture, I reckon, but all very useful. And my bit of a farm is cleared and fenced, and the house has a good door-yard and a place for a garden. Now what I need next is a woman here to help make home happy; and the only reason my best girl isn't here is because I haven't sent for her, and I think the time to send for Mary has come, for now I can make her comfortable, and I am sure she will enjoy being in our own home."

The kitchen table was soon cleared off, and the bottle of ink was produced, and some sheets of paper and other materials necessary for the making of a letter.

"This is the fifth of February," the young planter said, reflectively, and after making several false starts, for it was harder work for him to write than to chop wood; "and winter, according to the almanac," he continued, "but spring according to to-day's warm sun. And it is a happy day for Hunt Robertson, when he

can look forward to having Mary here, and good old Rover and Buster, and a good home for them all."

"Dear Mary, I want you to come home," he wrote, at length. "The home is ready for you, with its five buildings; none of them very large or handsome, but all my own—and yours. And your brother is more than ready for you, he is anxious for you, dear Mary.

"Take this letter over to Mr. Warren's and show it to him, and he will hand you twenty-five dollars on my account, for he is keeping one hundred and forty-five dollars for me. Then go to New York, and buy your ticket right through to New Bern, by steamer. The twenty-five dollars will pay your way and some over, and when the boat lands you at New Bern, I will be at a near-by wharf with my own boat, and yours, to bring you the rest of the way home—think of that, sis, to our own home. You will know our boat when you see her, because she is a beauty, painted white outside and light green inside, and her name is the Maria Louise.

"When you see Mr. and Mrs. Warren, please tell them that I send my best respects to them and should like to see them and all my old friends the horses and cows, though I have such a comfortable little home down here that I should not like to leave it. Tell them that I like North Carolina very much, sis, and that as my land is cleared and planting-time is coming, I expect to be a real cotton planter before you have been here three months. I wish you would tell Mr.

Warren that I have one ox, named Bob, to plow the land with; and that will make him laugh, but that is the North Carolina way. If he does laugh at my Bob, tell him a much funnier thing is to see a team composed of one cow and one mule. I have seen several such teams, and they draw very well together.

"But here's one thing, sis, that I hope you will be sure to remember. The steamships to Norfolk carry dogs free when they are with passengers, so you can bring Rover with a chain, and put little Mr. Buster in a basket or something. Do be sure to bring them both, for I should feel very bad to lose either of them. They will be useful, too, to help watch the place, and always great company. I should like to tell you more about our little home, only I'm afraid you might be disappointed when you see it. But the trees are beginning to look green, dear girl, though it is only February; and if you are as fond of flowers as you used to be you can begin to start some flower beds soon after you get here.

"Now I reckon I have told you everything," he went on, "except how lonesome I have been without you, and how I expect to enjoy having you here. I wish you would mail me a letter from New York the day your steamer sails. As that will come down by rail, I will get it in time to be sure to meet you when you arrive. Remember the name of the boat you are to look for in New Bern, the Maria Louise. She ought to be named the Mary, in your honor, for I expect you to have many a good time fishing and

sailing in her; but she already had her name when I bought her.

"I think you will enjoy it here, sis," he continued, "but it is only fair to warn you that there is plenty of hard work for us both to do. We won't mind that, though, as it will be working for ourselves. I work out by the day as much as I can, to earn some ready money till I get well started, but that is nothing when I come back at night to my own home. Without boasting, I am more than satisfied with the way things have gone so far, and every year our work will make our place worth more and more. We have something to look forward to now, sis, and if you are hungry when you land in New Bern you can look forward to having a pan of spoon bread and a slice of pig ham for your dinner. I reckon you never heard of those things, but you will soon learn to like them in No'th Ca'line. Here's Bob bellowing out to me to send his love to you; though maybe he is asking me to bring his dinner, but he is a fine old fellow, and I respect him more and more every day. He will have an important share in producing our first bale of cotton, and you will not be here long before you will see the seed go into the ground. That will be a great sight for you, but not nearly equal to seeing the fleecy stuff in the bolls ready for picking. What I most want to see is our first crop on its way over to the gin house.

"Do you know why I think so much about having our cotton planted and harvested, little 'un? Because that is where the bulk of our money is to come from.

You will soon learn that it is the cotton that produces cash. Our plantation will insure plenty always to eat, but we must have cotton to bring us money. However, sis, don't you mind about money, for you'll not need much of it here. Just you remember to bring Rover and Buster to help us keep what crops nature gives us, and write me before you sail, and keep an eye open for your big brother in New Bern with the Maria Louise. I send you my love, sis dear, and hope soon to have you here in your own room, which has a real Hyde County bed in it. You don't know yet what that is, but a Hyde County bed and a pig ham are two of the sweetest things in life.

"Now don't you disappoint me, sis, and don't forget Rover and Buster."

"Why, you must be writing a letter to your girl!" a hearty voice and a footstep upon the floor interrupted Hunt in his literary labor, and when he looked up he saw the pleasant face of his neighbor Vincent.

"Yes, sir, I am," he answered. "The only girl I have or want is my sister, and I am just writing to her to come down. It will be a happy day for me, sir, when my sister gets here and helps to enjoy our little home. It is not very much of a place, yet, but it is all our own, and I think we can make each other happy here. I am afraid I am rather an awkward fellow when it comes to writing, for I wanted to tell her that everything we have here I have earned since I came to North Carolina. Then I wanted to explain that although I still work for wages here, for you and

at the cotton gin and in the saw-mill, it is only to get more money to turn the little place into a plantation that I do it, and a fellow doesn't mind wage-earning when the wages go toward improving his own home; but I didn't get that in either."

"No matter about that," Mr. Vincent said, with a laugh. Your sister will soon find out about all those things, when she comes. I hope you have got in the most important part, I mean the money to pay her way down here, if she needs it."

"Yes, sir, I have told her where to go and get the money," Hunt replied, folding his sheet and putting it into the envelope. "I didn't leave out quite everything, sir."

"And you told her about the crops you intend to raise, I suppose?" Mr. Vincent asked.

"Yes, sir, I told her that I hoped soon to have my cotton planted," Hunt answered.

"That's a matter I want to speak to you about, young man," Mr. Vincent continued. "You were a farmer in the North, I understand, so you know that when you want to get a crop you must fertilize the ground. No doubt Mr. Burrus told you this, for he knows how to grow cotton. But you must have money enough to buy fertilizer to put on your cotton land to make the crop grow. No fertilizer, no cotton, that's pretty sure. So don't make the mistake that some newcomers make, of trying to grow cotton without giving it something to feed upon."

"No, sir, I am not going to make that mistake,"

SOME OF HUNT'S "COLORED NEIGHBORS."

Hunt replied. "I am going to fertilize the land, sir, and I have earned money enough to buy the fertilizer."

"Then one more thing, my lad," Mr. Vincent went on, "for you are so industrious that I want to see you succeed. All our planters are talking about diversified crops; but don't you be led astray by that talk. Growing corn and many other crops, instead of all cotton, is a very good thing when a man has plenty of land, as most of them have; but remember that you have only five acres, and that your greatest profit will be in cotton. After awhile you can branch out, but in the beginning cotton is your friend."

"That's just what I thought, sir," Hunt exclaimed. "Of my five acres I intend to plant four acres in cotton, for I can't grow everything on five acres. When I get more land, as I hope to have after awhile, perhaps I can grow my own corn to fatten my own hogs; but in the beginning a bale or two of cotton will buy corn for the hogs. And all the time there will be room enough for plenty of 'garden stuff,' for our own eating."

"Ah, you will have a good plantation here almost before you know it," Mr. Vincent laughed, "for you know what you are about. But I see you are going to do some more building with the fresh-cut sticks out by your little barn. What is it going to be this time, my boy?"

"I am only putting up a lean-to against the barn, sir," Hunt replied. "It is no secret, but I am going to keep something in it that is intended for a little

surprise for my sister, so I should rather not speak of it until she comes, sir."

"Ah, this looks like a woman in the house, or a woman expected, which is the next thing to it," Mr. Vincent exclaimed, as he stepped up to the table to look at a flower box which stood upon it, in which some fragant violets were blooming. "Been making a flower box for your sister, have you?"

"Yes, sir, I want to make it as comfortable for her as I can," Hunt answered, "and she is very fond of flowers. It will be something she has never seen before, when she finds the grass full of blooming violets, in February."

Soon after Mr. Vincent's departure, Hunt went to work at the lean-to beside the barn, for that was something to be finished without fail by the time of his sister's arrival. While he was cutting one of the long slender timbers, the sound of a footstep caused him to look up, and he saw before him the colored neighbor who had hauled several of his loads of slabs from the saw-mill.

"Mawnin', boss," said the man, with a pull at the peak of his cap, and a scrape at the ground with the toe of one ragged shoe. "You's a-gitten quite a place here, boss, an' I hear you's fixin' up, 'ca'se you 'specs yo' sistah heah to lib wid you.

"My ole woman she done yeah 'bout yo' sistah comin' an' she glad you goin' ter have some company yeah. She say she reckon yo' sistah's teefe done need a powerful lot o' cleanin' 'gin she gits yeah, so she

sen' ober dis yeah box an' toofe brush fer de gal. Dat yeah brush de rale black gum wood, I done cut it myself, fer de ole woman."

As he spoke he held out in one hand a tin tobacco box, much the worse for age and rust, and a small dark brown stick, opening the box to show that it was partially filled with snuff.

"Why, that's tobacco!" Hunt exclaimed, as he recognized the requisites for dipping snuff. "It's very kind of you and your wife to think of it, Uncle Henry, but I think I had better not give them to my sister, for she never uses tobacco in any form, and even the smell of it would make her sick. Girls don't dip snuff in our country, you know, Uncle Henry."

"Bress yer heart, she needn' be skeered of it, boss, de brush ain' done been chawed none yit; but she'll soon learn ter chaw de sweet little brush, w'en she done come inter dis yer country," Uncle Henry retorted, as he returned the treasures to his pocket.

"Indeed she'll not!" Hunt declared. "I'll try to find her something better to chew on than a little snuffy stick, Uncle Henry, that's what I'm here for. But I'm just as much obliged to you and your wife for your good intentions, as if I could take it. You are all good neighbors, here on the creek, white or black; and I will tell my sister about your kindness, when she comes. I am building something here for her, but I can't tell you yet what is to be kept in it."

"Yah, yah, yah! w'ite gals up Norf don' chaw de stick, eh?" the black neighbor roared from a distance, on his way back to "the ole' woman." "Den I reckon dey ain' got no black gum up deah! but she soon learn to shine her teefe down yeah."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAMILY IN THE BRICE CREEK HOME.

PINK ribbons make no part of the usual outfit of a cotton plantation; but Hunt bought a number of yards of cheap pink ribbon in his frequent visits to New Bern after he sent for his sister. The answer from her he received necessarily at New Bern, that being his post-office.

"Now hold up your head, Bob," he told the patient ox, after the letter had come announcing that Mary was about to sail; and as he spoke he tied a streamer of the ribbon to Bob's horns.

"There's a young lady coming to see you, and I want you to look your best, old fellow." He had talked so much to Bob in his solitude that it almost seemed as if the reflective animal could understand him. Then leaving Bob wholly unmoved by his new splendor, the young planter went into the lean-to beside the barn and decorated a handsome little animal there with a strip of ribbon around its neck, and as shapely a bow as he could tie under the throat. "Keep still, Fanny, your mistress is coming," he said to the new animal; but "Fanny" might have been the name of a cow or a dog, and the mystery of the lean-to was still Hunt's own secret, and none other's.

There was still a long strip of the ribbon left after this bow was tied, however, for Hunt had other uses for it.

There had never been a moment's doubt in his mind about his sister's coming when he sent for her; but the letter saying that she was actually on the way had come before he could use the reserve envelope and sheet of paper to write her once more to be sure to bring Rover and Buster.

It was well for him that that was a bright moonlight night, for he had much work to do in the Maria Louise before daylight. In the ordinary course of events Mary should arrive in New Bern in the steamboat Neuse next morning, and the boat must be in good trim to carry her over to her new home.

He unscrewed the arm-chair from his bench and put it back in the stern of the boat, put the cushions in their proper places, carried down the mast and sails and the oars, and wiped the boat as dry as the floor of his house. It was barely past four o'clock in the morning and still bright moonlight when he hoisted the sail and set out for New Bern, for the Neuse was due at eight o'clock.

Never before had his own little settlement looked so handsome to him as it looked that morning under the soft light, nor the pine bluff bordering the creek, nor the creek itself, nor the broad river Trent. It was all the better that the wind was unfavorable for him at the start, for that gave him a valid excuse for warming himself by using the oars. What cared he

for the labor of rowing, when Mary was coming, and perhaps Rover and Buster?

He had timed himself so well that he was past the Trent River bridge when the steamboat Neuse swung in from the broader river toward her wharf. Scores of people, colored people, were crossing the long bridge, and other scores were gathered on the wharf, and he sympathized with them because they had no share in his joy over the coming of Mary and Rover and Buster. How commonplace the world must seem to them, he thought, to see the boat coming in without any expectation of greeting a loved sister.

The Neuse's bow swung in, but he saw no sign of Mary among the people on her upper deck. No matter, she would be busy below, he knew, getting her baggage ready for landing. And as she must come out through the big gate with the other passengers, he must land himself, at the next wharf, to be ready to greet her.

He sprang ashore, and tying his boat, went up toward the gate of exit to wait for his sister. The gate was open when he reached it, and he had stood among the hackmen only a few moments when he was almost knocked down. A big black-and-white setter dog with a chain attached to his leather collar made a dash through the crowd, dragging helter-skelter a girl who held fast to the other end of the chain with one hand, and carried on her other arm a big square brown basket with a cover.

"Why, Rover, dear old fellow!" Hunt cried, in-

stantly recognizing his dog, and at the sound of his voice Rover sprang lovingly upon him, putting one front paw upon each shoulder, and licking his face. Then Mary came with a rush, still holding the chain, and the next moment Hunt had her in his arms.

"Welcome to New Bern, sister and chum!" he exclaimed, giving her an embrace and a hearty kiss. "You don't know how glad I am to see you, Mary. And dear old Rover, too. But where is Buster? I hope you haven't forgotten little Buster."

"Why, here is Buster, in the basket, Hunt," Mary replied, returning her brother's salute with interest. "You never saw such a little traveller as he is, Hunt. I kept the basket in my stateroom on both boats, though the notices say dogs are not allowed in state-rooms; and I guess he knew where he was, for he did not open his mouth the whole way."

"Good for little Buster!" Hunt exclaimed, as he took the basket. "And Rover knew me the minute he saw me. Come, Rover! that's one of our most influential hackmen you have just tripped up with your chain. We must get out of the way, here. Come, Mary, right over here to our own boat."

"Oh, and then to our own home!" Mary cried, delightedly, trying to drag Rover after her.

"Here, Rove!" Hunt called, when they were a little to one side; and Rover made another dash for his master, and the chain caused the sudden downfall of a colored boy who was admiring the top of the steamboat's smokestack, with his hands in his pockets.

"Get right into that arm-chair in the stern," Hunt directed, as he pulled the boat around and helped his sister in. "You can hold Buster in your lap there, and let him enjoy the scenery of the Sunny South. Here Rover, amidships is your place. Now for home, Mary; and a new home I tell you it will be for me, with you and Rover and Buster. We'll be away from the crowd in a minute. Oh, yes, here is your satchel all safe; I nearly forgot that in the commotion. Down, Rover; lie still, sir; I am going to introduce you to a dear old ox when we get home."

"Why, what a fine place!" Mary exclaimed, as she worked at the fastenings of Buster's basket. "This is New Bern here, I suppose, of course."

"Yes, this is New Bern," Hunt replied, as he hoisted the sail; "and that is James City across the river, where three thousand colored people live, all in cabins. And this is the river Trent we are on, and right ahead of us is the Trent River bridge. What do you think of this warm sun for the last of February, Mary? You begin to see now that you are down South, don't you? Isn't this handsome around here?" he continued. "We have just a nice little sail now up the Trent, to the mouth of Brice Creek, and then home."

"It is like beautiful spring," Mary replied; "and I can appreciate it, for I had to wade through snow when I left the farm. And to think that you and I are going to our own home, Hunt! Now sit still, Buster!" she cried, for by this time Buster was out

of his basket and in her lap, and was evidently determined to learn his new surroundings, for he was stretching his little yellow neck to look in every possible direction.

Mary's excitement made itself manifest when the boat sheered into the creek; but when the little settlement became visible she could hardly keep her seat.

"Why, Hunt!" she exclaimed, clapping her hands; "that your place, with all those buildings?"

"No, not my place, our place," Hunt answered. "That is our home, and the place where we are both to do plenty of hard work, to make it homelike. It makes quite a showing from the water, but the five buildings are all small. Our house, you see, is a bit of a place, but it is large enough to hold us both. By the time we have grown larger, maybe the house and the plantation will have grown larger too. There is plenty of room all around, you see, for growth. We can add to our land, perhaps, when any of our neighbors want to sell; and we can add to our house whenever we have the boards and the time to give it. That is a thing that depends entirely upon ourselves; it's not like working for so much a month, where improvement must depend upon other people. Here we can be whatever we make ourselves, Mary. But look out, now, little 'un, for we are almost home. Do you see that path up the bluff? that's the spot. And the little tree at the foot of the bluff, down by the water? that's where I keep the boat tied. Look out

for a little tipping, now, when I unchain Rover, for he will surely jump."

"Here Rove, old boy." Hunt stepped out with the painter in his hand, the sail having been lowered when they entered the creek, and in an instant Rover was ashore, wagging his tail with great vehemence, and barking to show his pleasure at being on firm land again. Hunt tied the painter to the little tree at the water's edge, and by the time he held out his hands for Mary, Rover was at the top of the bluff, digging holes in the sand and barking gleefully.

"Welcome home, Mary!" and as Hunt said the heartfelt words he reached forward and lifted his sister bodily out of the boat, with Buster still in her arms.

"Now, then, little Bust, this is home for you too, old fellow," he exclaimed, as he set Buster carefully down. And the little dog seemed to realize it, for he made desperate efforts to spring upon the shoulders of both master and mistress, barking furiously all the time. By the time the brother and sister had reached the summit of the bluff, both dogs were frisking about the door-yard, and barking at nothing. Hunt ran ahead and unlocked he door, and threw it open.

"It is the finest house I every saw in my life, Hunt," Mary exclaimed, as she stepped in. "Because it is home, I suppose, and because you built it. But there are two of us now to work, and you will not have everything to do alone.

"Why, I declare!" she exclaimed, "here is a coffee

pot hanging against the wall; and if there is some coffee I will soon have some made, for I am the cook now, you know."

Any boy would have been proud to show his sister what he had made and earned, and Hunt was no exception; but he had much to do. First he built a roaring fire of light wood, and then ran down to the creek with the pail, for he must have water for the teakettle, and the arm-chair must he brought up for Mary.

It was a pity, by the time he returned Mary had found and examined her own room, and could hardly find words to express her pleasure. When he came back the boat cushions were in his arms.

There were two cooks for the breakfast that morning, for both brother and sister insisted upon doing the work; and in an interval the beauties of the Hyde County beds had to be exhibited.

"They're just splendid, and so springy!" Mary exclaimed. "I never slept on such a good bed in my life. And the cushions are stuffed with cotton! There must be plenty of cotton around here, Hunt, and we can have not only cushions, but mattresses and quilts and pillows. Why, we can soon live here like a king and queen. I see a few little things that a girl's hands can do. Some little cheap sash curtains for the windows would look well, Hunt, and we need some dish towels and dish cloths. I'd like to have some cotton cloth to make our mattresses of, too, for I must be at work. I suppose you have to go over to

New Bern when you want to buy anything? Would it take too much of your time to sail me over in the boat to-day?"

This was while Mary was eating her first bite of pig ham, and Rover and Buster were making short work of the poached eggs. The brother and sister were too full of joy to care much for eating, and Mary's question gave Hunt the chance he wanted to introduce a very important subject.

"The boat is very useful, Mary," he said, but we do not have to depend upon that entirely for going over to the city. Step outside a moment till I show you the live stock."

Mary was half wild with joy as she followed Hunt out, for she was fond of all living things.

"This is the smoke house," Hunt explained, as he paused in front of it. "Here our bacon is to be cured, when we get our pigs."

"And this is the stable," he continued, leading her on. "There is nothing in it yet but an ox; but he is a very useful companion. Wait a moment till I bring him out."

When he returned leading the ox, Bob stood pawing the ground, and by throwing his head up waved his long ribbons grandly. Mary clapped her hands and fairly shouted for glee.

"But what is in here?" she asked. "There is some other animal in this lean-to, isn't there?"

"There is something here that a fellow I know has bought for a little present for his dear sister," Hunt

answered, as he opened the door of the lean-to and entered.

"Come, Fanny, come out and see your mistress," he went on, leading out a handsome bay pony about twelve hands high. And Fanny neighed, and stepped up and rubbed her nose against Mary's hands.

"This is your very own pony, Mary," Hunt continued.

"She is what they call a 'banks pony' in this country, and is gentle as a kitten and doesn't have to be shod. They are cheap here, Mary, and very useful. You can ride her over to the city when we do not go in the boat, and I can go with you in the ox-cart. I could not afford a saddle and bridle, Mary; but this rope bridle answers the purpose, and as I know you are a good rider you can get along with this folded blanket strapped on with the surcingle."

By this time Mary was on Fanny's back, and Fanny was whinnying her pleasure.

"If you are in a hurry to make your purchases," Hunt continued, "I will harness up the ox and cart at once, and we will go over to New Bern 'right now,' as the North Carolinians say."

As Rover and Buster were such strangers, it was determined that they should be left in the house while the brother and sister were absent; but they were both decorated with what was left of the pink ribbon.

In a few minutes both ox and pony were ready; and, the door having been locked, the little procession

WITH MARY ON THE PONY IN THE LEAD, AND THE OX-CART BRINGING UP THE REAR.

started, with Mary on the pony in the lead, and the ox-cart bringing up the rear.

"I suppose everybody will laugh at us," Mary laughed to herself, turning toward Hunt just before they reached the bridge over Brice Creek.

"Indeed, this is very stylish," Hunt retorted. "Now, if you were riding the ox or driving the cart you would be in true North Carolina fashion. It is nothing unusual to see a woman driving an ox-cart into town with a load of wood or pork. But I hope you will not get so far into the style as to smoke a corn-cob pipe while riding, or to chew a stick dipped in snuff."

"Never fear about that!" Mary laughed again. "I want to be a real North Carolinian with cotton, but not with tobacco, which I think is very dirty stuff."

"But what kind of a settlement is this?" she asked, for they were about to enter the outskirts of James City, and the long rows of half ruinous cabins attracted her attention. "Why, our own house is quite a mansion compared with any of these," she went on. "I don't see how people can live in such tumble-down shanties."

"These are all colored people living here," Hunt explained, "and they can do almost anything that requires no labor. You see what we should soon come to if we grew too lazy to keep things neat."

"Well, we'll not do that!" Mary exclaimed; and she could not say more at the moment, for the pony

had struck into what they both thought the most perfect saddle gait ever seen. But she called, "I'll wait for you at the end of the bridge," for the bridge was now visible through the long, narrow, muddy, shanty-lined street.

Bob could not be hurried into a fast walk, but when he reached the bridge he found Mary and Fanny waiting impatiently for him, and they all soon crossed the long bridge into the city of New Bern.

A gentleman whom they encountered, when over the bridge, took off his hat so gallantly to Mary that at first she thought he must be ridiculing her. But as another gentleman soon did the same thing she saw that it was real politeness, not irony.

With one or two turns they were soon in Pollock Street, and in front of the post-office, where Hunt stopped Bob and ran in to inquire for mail.

"Most of the stores are in this street," he told Mary, when he returned; and as Fanny was indulging a fondness for standing on her hind legs and pawing the air, she was glad to see that she was not the only girl on a pony without a saddle, nor Bob the only ox come to town with a cart.

They went into store after store in Pollock Street and then in Middle Street, leaving Bob standing contentedly outside and Fanny hitched to an awning post. When that part of the business was concluded there lay in the cart a large parcel, and a great paper bag.

"Now we have the dry goods we need," Mary said,

"and large and small needles and a pair of scissors, and cord for the mattresses; but for stuffing the mattresses and quilts and pillows, we must have some cotton. I suppose there must be plenty of cotton in New Bern; how would it do to buy a bale and take it home with us?"

"A bale of cotton!" Hunt exclaimed, aghast. "Well, you are not a true Southern girl yet, that's plain. Why, child, a bale of cotton weighs five hundred pounds, and at six cents a pound is worth thirty dollars. That would be enough cotton to make a dozen mattresses."

"But I'll show you a better way than that," he continued. "We will go right down Middle Street, and then down an alley, to the cotton gin where I work sometimes, and where I can buy some of the uncleaned cotton, just as it comes in from the plantations, at less than half price; and a feed bag stuffed full will be plenty for us."

"Oh, I should so like to see a cotton gin!" Mary declared, and they were soon in front of the gin house, and inside she was delighted to watch the loose cotton rush up to the mouth of a big tin pipe, like the register pipe of a furnace in the North, and so travel rapidly to the top of the building, she not knowing, of course, that the air was exhausted from the other end of the pipe for that purpose. When they left the cotton gin, a big feed bag stuffed tight with cotton lay in the cart beside the other things.

"Now I want to go to Burrus & Gray's for a

minute," Hunt announced, "for as we have animals we must have something to feed them with."

They turned down South Front Street, and then into Craven Street, and were soon in front of Burrus & Gray's office, where they stopped and Hunt went in. In a minute two porters came out bringing a bag of oats and a bag of corn, and "Fanny behaved beautifully," as Mary thought, for she stood up on her hind legs and pawed the air like a circus pony.

The New York girl was an experienced horsewoman, and as she kept her seat with ease she became aware of two gentlemen standing on the curb beside her, taking off their hats and bowing as politely to her as if she had been some fine lady of distinction. They were Mr. Burrus and Mr. Gray, as she soon learned.

"How do you do, Miss Mary?" Mr. Burrus asked, taking off his hat to her. "Hunt tells me that you are his sister, and I bid you welcome to North Carolina, and hope you will enjoy yourself here in the South. Your brother is a worker, and that is a comfortable home he has made for you both."

"Good evening, Miss Robertson," Mr. Gray said, as he also removed his hat and bowed; and Mary was surprised, for she did not know yet that in the South afternoon is always called evening. "That is a fine boat your brother has," Mr. Gray continued, "and no doubt you will have some great sport fishing, over on Brice Creek. I see you have nothing to learn about riding from the North Carolina ladies," he added, and again removed his hat.

"Now when you want anything that you can't find in a new country," Mr. Burrus said, "be sure to come to me, Miss Mary, for your brother and I are old friends."

After a few words of thanks and farewell the odd little procession turned down South Front Street again, and continued until the end of Trent River bridge was reached.

"I never saw such polite people!" Mary exclaimed, as they crossed the long bridge. "Why, those gentlemen treated us as if we were real planters, instead of only a poor boy and girl trying to make a living."

"Just what I have been telling you," Hunt answered. "I think they are the most polite and most accommodating people in the world, and I am glad we are here."

"But look here, Mary!" Hunt called, for by this time they were in the narrow lanes of James City, where their way was often obstructed by droves of pigs, large and small, and countless chickens and turkeys.

"These things are a nuisance in the streets, but I am interested in them, for I suppose any of them can be bought, and we shall want to buy some of them before long to stock our pigpen and poultry house that I have not had time to show you yet."

"Oh, that will be splendid!" Mary cried, as Fanny dashed ahead. "I am so glad we are to have pigs and poultry; and you shall not have one bit of bother with them, for I will feed them every day."

"There's the right girl for a poor planter's sister!" Hunt said to himself, Mary being far out of hearing, and out of sight around a turn.

In due time they crossed the bridge over Brice Creek and reached their own premises, where they were greeted by the joyful barking of two dogs in the house.

When Hunt opened the door to carry their purchases inside, both dogs sprang out, and capered like mad about them.

"Hunt!" Mary exclaimed, when the cart was empty, "as you can drive that ox, I believe you can ride him. What do you say to a race up and down the bluff, after you unhitch him from the cart? I want you to see how beautifully Fanny goes."

"But you don't know how beautifully an ox goes, when you wake him up!" Hunt laughed. "However, I'm willing to try, and a little sport will do us no harm."

The arrangements for an impromptu race along the bluff were soon made, and when Bob was freed from the cart, Hunt straddled his back and seized him by the horns.

"Come on!" he cried, and both dogs entered fully into the spirit of the occasion. Rover sprang playfully at the ox's nose, and Buster tried his best to mount Fanny's lowered head, both barking furiously.

"Then come on!" Mary echoed, when they reached the bluff; and at a word Fanny started at a great pace over the soft ground.

"Ah, I'm beating you already!" she called back; and as this was painfully evident, Hunt used his heels to pound the ox's sides, and slapped him with his hand upon the haunches. The sight of the pony galloping in advance, the excitement of Rover snapping at his nose, the annoyance of Buster frisking and barking around and under him, the kicking against his ribs, the slapping of his haunches, Hunt's shouts and Mary's laughter, with perhaps his unaccustomed freedom from harness, combined to stir the ox's usually sluggish feelings, and to awaken in him a degree of enthusiasm that in the North Carolina ox is seldom reached, and that once reached, portends trouble. Hunt knew nothing of the volcano that was beginning to smoke behind those gentle eyes, however, and continued his kicking, slapping, and shouting, and the unwieldy ox was soon going at a furious pace.

When Mary reached the end of the cleared space at the edge of the bluff, Fanny running her prettiest, instead of turning back, as Hunt expected, she swerved off to the left in a segment of a great circle, toward the fence inclosing the plot, looking about and shouting to Hunt,

"I'm going to try the pony at a fence," and in an instant Fanny leaped the fence almost as gracefully as a deer could have done it.

The ox, not to be outdone without a struggle, redoubled his speed, raised his head as high as his thick neck permitted, and shook it as if he would shake off his horns. They were well secured against being lost,

however, for Hunt had a life-and-death grip upon them both, Bob's horns and tail being his only securities.

When Bob reached the point where Fanny had turned he was at the very top of his speed, and swerved to follow the pony's footsteps. Seeing only too clearly what was coming, Hunt shouted to Mary, who was now safely over the fence,

"Look out! look out! Keep out of the way, for Bob's going to try the fence, too. I can stand the fence, if he don't try to jump the stable!"

Bob "took" the fence in more senses than one, for he struck the top rail, and the dear knows how many panels of it came down with a crash, and Bob came down too, and Hunt with him. But before the young planter could escape from the general wreck the ox was on his feet and away again. The excited ox paid no more attention to the bluff, but struck off across the plantation at his best speed. Hunt's warmest wish was for a third hand, that he might hold to both horns and the lashing tail at the same time.

To slide over the ox's head was impossible on account of the horns, but it occurred to the uncertain rider in the nick of time that there are two ends to an ox. Once he was off and dragging alongside, still holding to one horn; but again Bob was brought to his knees, and the rider regained his precarious seat. Then away again, and as they passed the stable door for the second time at a mad run Hunt slid back over Bob's haunches and slipped to the ground on his feet,

almost as glad to reach solid land as when he landed at Norfolk from the steamer.

"The ox is a gentle animal, and very good to draw wood, but no use for a saddle horse," he called to Mary, who now came slowly up on the pony. And Bob, seeing his master at the stable door, thought of his supper, and walked back as sedately as if nothing could induce him to move faster than a walk.

"I like him for his spirit," Mary laughed, "and I am going to get Fanny some corn for supper. You feed Bob, will you?"

"Yes, I will feed this battering-ram," Hunt replied, "and after we have fed 'the critters' we must have some supper ourselves."

Both of the young planters were hungry, and both looked forward with pleasure to the supper, remembering the fat roe shad that Hunt had run over to the Market Wharf to buy as they passed it, and that had come home in the cart between the cotton and the feed. That shad was worth from seventy-five cents to one dollar in the market; but as Hunt had given the fisherman more than a dollar's worth of assistance with his boat one day when the fisherman's seine was in a tangle, it cost nothing.

CHAPTER VIII.

"CONE-PLANTIN' TIME."

THE materials for the spoon bread were thoroughly mixed when Mary cooked the supper after the race on the bluff; her hands shook so with laughter that they could not help being well mixed. Hunt read the recipe to her, and she had no trouble with it.

"Shad in February!" she exclaimed, as she turned the well-browned fish in the frying-pan. "Sometimes we used to get one up in Ontario County by June, but never many of them at any time of year."

"Ah, there is no Neuse River flowing through Ontario County," Hunt answered, "nor Trent either, nor Brice Creek. They had shad here by the last of January; but this is not February, Mary, this is March. You are sure to get a little mixed about the months when you first come into this warmer climate, as I did. I can hardly realize that our winter is fairly over, for we have hardly had any yet. Sometimes in January," he continued, "I needed a fire to keep warm by; but did you notice the buds on the trees as we came up the road from James City? You know what that means, Mary; a few more days of this warm weather will turn those buds into leaves, and that means spring. The grass is turning green,

too, what there is of it. There's not much grass about here compared with what we have up in New York State, but there are plenty of other things."

"You're almost a farmer yourself, Mary," he went on, "and you know what corn-plantin' time means, don't you? Only down here you must say cone, and speak of the Cote House when you mean the Court House, or people won't know what you mean."

"Of co'se I know cone-plantin' time!" Mary laughed. "Up No'th it's the tenth of May, if you have an almanac. If you have no almanac, you put yo' han' on de groun', an' if de groun' gives it heat 'stid of takin' de heat away, den begin to plant yo' cone."

"Why, you're getting the North Carolina dialect already!" Hunt declared; "but you must get the hang of the No'th Ca'line plantin' seasons, and that's what I want to explain to you. Down here we plant corn by the last of March, and you know what that means, for when you plant corn you want to have your peas, beans, and all the rest of your garden truck in the ground. I want to get that done, so as to have our garden all made before cotton-plantin' time. We plant cotton by the first of May, and that means plenty of work."

"Sit right down to your supper, Hunt, dear!" Mary answered. "You can't plant any garden or cotton in here to-night, but we've got a lot of work to do making mattresses and pillows and things."

The supper was soon disposed of, but it did not

take the brother and sister long to find that making two mattresses and a number of pillows was work for more than one evening.

For two days Hunt was at work at the cotton gin in New Bern, and when he returned at the end of the second day the mattresses and pillows were neatly made, and there were sash curtains to both the windows, and another curtain over the pans that hung upon the wall. The cabin had never looked so homelike before, and that night Mary in her room and Hunt in the other thought the Hyde County beds the most comfortable sleeping machines known to man.

"But you ought have let me help with all this sewing," Hunt called through the open door, a blaze of light-wood sticks illuminating both rooms.

"You have enough to do outside," Mary called back, "and I want to do my share of the work."

Hunt had brought some very large spikes home with him from New Bern, and next day he took Bob and the cart to the saw-mill, and returned with several large two-inch planks, which in due time were converted into a home-made harrow. "I bought a plow long ago from Mr. Vincent," he explained, "and now with that and the harrow we are ready to prepare the ground for the first planting."

A few days later Hunt brought Bob into the kitchen garden hitched to the plow, and plowed it as smoothly as he could, and after harrowing it, raked it down neatly with the iron rake he had brought from New

Bern, and then plowed and harrowed a small part of the ground outside of the garden.

This done, both the young planters went over to New Bern with the ox and cart, Mary carrying Buster's big basket, which, when they returned, was filled with early cabbage plants, lettuce plants, and tomato plants. And in the cart lay two bags, not quite full, of commercial fertilizer. There were some packages of beans and peas, too, in the basket, for seed, and between the bags of fertilizer lay part of a bag of white potatoes, for planting.

Mary worked beside her brother like an experienced farm hand when they began to plant the garden, and set out a large share of the plants after Hunt had marked and fertilized the hills and rows.

"I don't quite understand this, Hunt," she said, when they rested before the fire of light wood after supper. "We are planting a little garden stuff for our own use, but no feed for the animals, much less any to sell. Why don't you plant the rest of the land?"

"Because that is for cotton," Hunt answered. "I am saving nearly all of it, fully four acres, for cotton. It is cotton that we must look to mainly for our ready money, and the feed we must buy till we are able to buy some more land."

"On four acres of land," he continued, "we should raise two bales of cotton, with good luck and good management; and the price of two bales of cotton will buy lots of feed, and maybe some more land."

"Then I think we ought to have more land!" Mary exclaimed, putting on another stick of light wood.

"I am keeping my eyes open, Mary," Hunt answered, "but we must feel our way. There is a patch of seven acres of woodland adjoining this, belonging to a colored man, and he wants to sell it to me for five dollars an acre. This patch was a great bargain, you know, at two dollars an acre, and we can't expect to get any more at that price. I should like to buy the woodland at five dollars an acre, for I think I can cut enough wood on it almost to pay for it; but I must have the money for our coming cotton before we can afford it. Then my plan would be to clear and fence it next winter, and plant more cotton next year. We could fence off a place there for our hogs to run, too—the hogs that we hope soon to have."

"That will be splendid!" Mary cried. "That begins to look like growing into a real plantation. And I want to find some way to make my share of the money, Hunt."

By the last of March the rows of early peas were up, and Hunt had put sticks to them, and some sweet corn for their own use had been planted. The potatoes were just beginning to show.

"But why do you plant white potatoes, Hunt?" Mary asked, one day. "Everybody about here plants sweet potatoes."

"Correct!" Hunt answered. "Everybody plants sweet potatoes, and that makes them very cheap. So

I plant white ones, which cost much more. Every bushel of our white potatoes will buy half a dozen bushels of sweet ones, if we want them."

In the interval between the time of making garden, and the time for plowing the ground to plant his cotton, Hunt was at work for wages nearly every day, increasing as far as possible his little hoard of money. There was not as much to be done now at the cotton gin, because the cotton of the last crop had been pretty well brought in and sold off; so the gin itself had many idle days. This was fully made up, however, by the spring activity on Mr. Vincent's truck farm, where work was now to be had nearly every dry day. The saw-mill on Brice Creek was another chance for employment; and Hunt extended his field of operations in New Bern, where the shore of the Neuse River is almost lined with large saw-mills. To enlarge his field still further, he applied successfully for work at the cotton-seed oil mill, where, while earning his daily pay, he saw the shapely cotton seeds pressed till pure oil flowed from them, and saw the husks remaining ground into cotton-seed meal, an oily substance much liked by cattle, and a fertilizer much in demand. It surprised him to learn that the product of a given area of cotton land is twice as much in seed, by weight, as in the cotton fibre itself, so that if ten acres produce two thousand five hundred pounds of cotton, the weight of the seeds is five thousand pounds, which are worth usually twelve dollars a ton.

The cotton-seed oil mill is far up East Front Street in New Bern, up beyond the Neuse River bridge and the ice factory, and when Hunt was walking down the street one afternoon on an errand for his employer, he was surprised to see a pony that looked remarkably like Fanny coming up the street, ridden by a girl who looked remarkably like Mary, and who carried in one hand, holding it out as far as possible from her, something wet and shiny, that was unmistakably a string of large fish.

"Why, Mary!" he exclaimed, when within speaking distance, and stepped into the street to her side.

"Hello, Hunt!" Mary answered, holding her fish higher to let him admire them. "Not going home yet, are you? If you are you can take the pony, and I'll walk."

"No, we don't close down till six," Hunt answered; "but where in the world did you get your fish, and what are you going to do with them?"

"Caught them, to be sure," Mary laughed, "and I'm going to sell them, because that's what I catch them for. I bring some over to New Bern nearly every day to sell, and take them to the white people's houses. They sell well, and I am doing quite a business. You know what they are, I suppose?"

"Of course I know," Hunt replied. "They are what are called here Welshmen, a great big black bass, and Brice Creek is where they live. But I don't understand this."

"It's very easy," Mary laughed. "I take the

Maria Louise out into the creek in the early morning, but never into the river, because I know you wouldn't want me to go there. First I catch some 'shiners' for bait, and the fish are fine big fellows, weighing from four to six pounds. I'm not going to have you do all the work and I stay at home doing nothing, so I bring them over here to sell to the white people. I have sold more than twenty of them in the last week, at from twenty to thirty cents each. They are a fine fish for the table, and they sell better than shad, because shad are so much dearer."

"But you don't mean to say that you have been catching and selling fish for a week!" Hunt exclaimed.

"Don't I, then!" Mary laughed, "and I expect to sell the rest of these, before I go home. It's my little mite toward the plantation, Hunt, and here it is;" and as she spoke she held up and shook her little purse, in which the silver jingled.

"Well, that beats me!" Hunt retorted. "I declare I don't know what to say about it. I didn't know you understood baiting a hook, much less catching a fish."

"We want a plantation, Hunt, and we've got to earn it," Mary laughed. "Don't you be alarmed about my going in the boat, for I never use the sail, but just take the oars. I'm going to learn how to manage that boat, though. The creek and river are both full of money, and we may as well have some of it. Come home as early as you can, Hunt, for I have saved a big Welshman for our own suppers, and you will find they are good eating."

"Mary, you are a trump!" Hunt declared; "and I am glad to have you for a chum. How well Fanny is looking. I hope Rover and Buster are all right."

"I thought they would tear the house down when I locked them in," Mary replied. "Buster gives his approval to the Hyde County beds, and sleeps in mine every night. Rover was testing the quality of one of your pillows when I shut the door. They both go fishing with me nearly every morning, and I don't know what we should do without them. Now do try to be home early, Hunt."

"I'll be in time for the Welshman, never fear!" Hunt called back, he having resumed his way down the street. "I shall have to stop a few minutes in James City, for I have a little business with a prominent citizen there about a litter of pigs."

CHAPTER IX.

GENERAL MILES EATS A WELSHMAN.

"WHAT was the queer name you gave the fish you had to-day?" Hunt asked, when he returned to the budding plantation for supper. "It was not Dutchman or Frenchman, but something like that."

"No, Welshman," Mary laughed, touching a match to the light-wood to prepare for cooking the Welshman that was to make their meal. "You got the wrong country, that was all. It is a queer name, isn't it? But that is the only name by which black bass of that species are known about here. Sometimes when I go along the street with a string of them, a colored man or woman stops to look at them, and says, 'Dat a nice string o' Welchmans you got dah dis mawnin', missy.'"

In the morning Hunt tried to persuade his sister not to go fish-catching and fish-selling that day, and the little dispute that followed ended in a compromise, as disputes between them generally did.

"I ought to have a chance to make some of the money we are sure to need, Hunt," Mary urged.

"You are a brave little sister to want to do it," Hunt retorted; "but I think it is my place to make the money, and I don't half like your going fishing

alone. It is not because I have any foolish notions about your selling fish. We are working people, both of us, and we must be money-making people as far as we can. But I know you do not know how to swim, and if anything should happen, you might be drowned. You must learn to swim when the water gets warm enough, and then there will be less danger."

"Rover would pull me out fast enough if anything should happen," Mary replied, "for he always goes with me, and he is a great swimmer. But the oars are always in my hands, and they would support me."

"You are late to start for the oil mill this morning, Hunt," she continued, "or I should ask you to go fishing for Welshmen with me."

"No, there is no work in the oil mill to-day," Hunt answered, "or I should have been off long ago. But that will give me all the better chance to go fishing with you this morning, if you really want me."

"Of course I want you," Mary assured him; "you know I always like to be with you. And you are just in time to do me a great service, if you will, and help my little 'fishery' very much. We will have to go after bait first, and maybe you will make me a leaky box that I can keep the bait alive in. If you will, I will make a little coffee for our breakfast while you are about it."

"It is easier to make a leaky box than a tight one," Hunt replied, "and I have some bits of board that will do very well. But tell me about the bait, so that I will know what you want."

"Any sort of box that will let the water run through," Mary replied, as Hunt took up his hatchet and saw and started out. "The bait are only the little fish we call 'shiners,' as small as sardines, and I catch them with a small hook and line, with a crumb of bread for bait. They should be kept alive, and I want to keep them in the box, which we must anchor in the creek, of course. And we must catch some 'shiners' this morning before we can catch any Welshmen, and maybe there will be enough left for me to use in the future."

By the time that the coffee was made the crude box was ready, and after drinking their coffee they carried the box down to the creek and "anchored" it with a stout cord to a bush on the edge.

Then with great glee they stepped into the boat and shoved her off, and fell to fishing for "shiners" with a tiny hook and line. This took them to many different places in the creek, and back to the box, and the sun was high above them before they were ready for the more serious fishing.

Hunt insisted upon doing the work with the oars, and they tried this spot and that, up and down the creek, clear water and dark, deep water and shallow, without getting a single bite.

"You're the old fisherman!" Hunt exclaimed after awhile, "and you ought to know the best places for them. Can't you pick out some choice spot where we are sure to hook a big one?"

"I think I am fisherman enough for that," Mary

answered. "Do you see that stake that somebody has left in the water over there close by the other shore? Go over there close to the stake as quietly as you can, and there I think we will catch our breakfast, for the Welshmen are fond of huddling around a stake or a stump or any immovable thing."

Hunt drew the boat noiselessly over to the stake, and for a few minutes neither spoke above a whisper, for fear of frightening away the fish. Then it was Mary who gave the cry of delight, for she drew in one of the largest Welshmen she had yet caught, a monstrous fellow weighing fully six pounds, they thought.

Then Hunt took up the oars again, for that one fish was more than enough for their breakfast or dinner, and the boat was soon back at their landing-place. Mary carried the fish up to the house, Hunt declaring that judging by the sun it must be close to ten o'clock, and they shut the door and wound their lines neatly upon reels, after which the fish was cleaned and hung up.

"I wish we could always fish together, Hunt," Mary said, after all the work was done; "then fishing would be only a pleasure."

"Hark! what's that?" Hunt exclaimed, holding up a warning finger; for both the dogs, having run out when the door was opened on the couple's return, had set up a furious barking outside.

"Bow, wow, wow!" they heard in the deep bass

voice of Rover, and then a prolonged "wow, wow, oo!" in the scarcely less loud voice of Buster, and immediately afterward a human voice, calling:

"Halloo! halloo there, in the house!"

"Hist!" Hunt warned his sister, and springing up, opened the door.

"Here, Rover, here, Buster, come here, sir!" he called, and both dogs sprang in, but Hunt stepped out. The barking had prepared him to see a stranger on the premises, but he was not prepared to see such a stranger as he did see. When he looked about he saw walking along the bluff a tall, erect, well-dressed, soldierly-looking gentleman, whose equal in bearing he had seldom if ever seen. Without stopping to wonder what so fine a gentleman could want on the little plantation, he ran down through the garden to the bluff to greet him, and when he reached the bluff saw a strange boat in the creek below, containing a colored man who had evidently rowed the gentleman over.

As Hunt stepped up to the distinguished-looking stranger, the latter turned toward him and raised his hand to his head as if to give a military salute, but changed his mind and raised his hat.

"Good morning," he said. "Mr. Jerome's place is somewhere about here, I believe; can you tell me where it is?"

"No, sir," Hunt replied, taking off his own hat as politely as he could. "I am a stranger here myself, and do not know much about the places."

"Oh, you are a stranger here, are you?" the gentleman asked, with a smile. "And, judging from your accent, I should say you were from the North," he continued, "so perhaps you can tell me where I can get a bite of breakfast in this neighborhood, as I am from the North too."

"Is this the first time you have been in the South, sir?" Hunt asked.

"No, my young friend from the North, I have been in the South before," the gentleman answered, with a significant smile that the young planter did not understand.

"But when I was here before," he continued, "I had some very good guides, and this time I have lost myself. I came over from New Bern early to visit my relative, Mr. Jerome, expecting to breakfast with him, and as I cannot find his place I shall be glad if you can tell me where I can get a bite to eat."

"I do not know of any place but my own house, sir," Hunt replied, waving his hand toward the cabin. "It is only a small house, but we have a good fat Welshman there ready to be cooked, and I should be glad for such good company to breakfast, sir."

"Oh, thank you very much for your hospitality," the gentleman said with a merry little laugh, raising his hat again. "You are very kind indeed, and it will be an agreeable novelty to help eat a Welshman, for I don't remember that I have ever eaten one."

"Then if you will lead the way, my friend, I will help devour the foreigner with great pleasure. By

the way, perhaps it would be as well for us to know one another's names. My name is Miles."

"Thank you, Mr. Miles," Hunt answered, "my name is Huntley Robertson, sir, and I am trying to build up a little cotton plantation here, sir."

"Then I wish you every success, Mr. Huntley Robertson," the stranger answered, with a bow and another smile, "and I believe that you will have it, for your place has every appearance of thrift and industry."

Hunt led the stranger straight up to the door of the cabin, which he threw open, and invited him in.

"Oh, you have a lady with you!" the visitor exclaimed, as he caught sight of Mary.

"My sister, Mary Robertson, sir," Hunt explained. "Mary, let me introduce Mr. Miles, from the North, who is going to eat breakfast with us."

"Good morning, Miss Mary, I am very happy to meet you," the gentleman said, stepping in and removing his hat. "Your brother has been good enough to invite me to stay to breakfast, and I am very glad to accept the invitation. You have a snug little home here, Miss Mary."

"We are very comfortable here, sir," Mary answered, "and if you will take a seat, I will have some breakfast ready in a few minutes, sir."

"Mr. Miles" seated himself upon the bench, and somehow it seemed to Hunt as if the cabin looked larger and grander than it had ever looked before, with so fine a gentleman sitting in it. Mary soon

had the coffee boiling and a pan of spoon bread made, and the Welshman browned nicely for the table.

When all was ready the table was spread, and the visitor did full justice to the smoking Welshman, making, as he ate, some humorous remarks about eating a subject of a friendly nation.

"This is altogether the jolliest meal I have eaten in North Carolina, Miss Mary," he declared; but before either of them could answer their attention was attracted by something that sounded remarkably like the music of a brass band, and Hunt, excusing himself for a moment, stepped outside to see what such an unusual demonstration could mean. He was just in time to see a file of about thirty marines in uniform and with muskets, commanded by an officer with a sword, and accompanied by a band of six pieces, march through the gate into his garden patch, the band playing.

It was the most imposing military display he had ever seen, and the sight almost took him off his feet, and made him reflect for a moment that the Civil War was surely over.

By this time the officer with the sword was almost up to the door, with the marines and the still-playing band only a few paces behind.

"Good morning, sir," the officer said to Hunt, stepping forward and giving a military salute. "Is General Miles in this house?"

"There is a gentleman here named Miles," Hunt answered; but before he could say more the visitor

himself stood in the doorway, attracted by the noise.

Instantly the officer's cap came off.

"Right about face!" he ordered, and the marines and musicians turned as one man, to face the doorway.

"Shoulder arms!"

"Present arms!" and up went the thirty muskets like one.

"General Miles," said the officer, drawing his sword, "we are from the Revenue Cutter Boutwell, sir, and Captain Howison has brought her over to carry you back to New Bern when you are ready to go, sir. She now lies in the river Trent at the mouth of this creek, sir, and we have several boats below the bluff to take you aboard when it suits your convenience, sir."

The gentleman's head was bare, for his shining hat still lay upon the Hyde County bed; but with the instinct of a soldier he instantly drew himself up to his full height, which was considerable, and ordered:

"Ground arms!"

"At rest!"

"Thank you, sir," he said to the officer, as these orders were executed. "We are just finishing an excellent breakfast, and as I have a hospitable host here I am sure he will be glad to have you step in and take a cup of coffee with us."

"I am afraid, sir," the officer replied, following the general, who had stepped up to the bed to get his hat, "that your young host does not know that he has had

the honor of breakfasting with Major-General Nelson A. Miles, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army."

"Oh, never mind about titles," the general answered, with a laugh. "My young host has given me a Welshman for breakfast, which I have enjoyed thoroughly. But I must not keep Captain Howison waiting, if he is in the cutter below. I shall bid my new friends good-bye with great reluctance."

As he spoke he stepped outside, followed by the officer from the cutter; and at the word of command the marines again presented arms.

"Ah, these colors belong to the cutter, no doubt," the general exclaimed, as he noticed that one of the men carried, instead of a musket, a small brass-tipped staff, to which was attached a beautiful silken American flag, ornamented with gold fringe.

"The colors of the captain's gig, sir," the officer answered, with a salute, and the marine stepped forward.

"I am sure that Captain Howison will allow me to take them," the general continued, as he took the flag and staff that the man held out toward him.

"Huntley!" he called; and when Hunt ran out with a prompt "Yes, sir!" the general put the staff into his hands.

"Do me the favor," he said, "to accept this testimony of my gratitude for your hospitality and an excellent breakfast. Take it, my boy, it is the flag of your country. When you establish a plantation

here, as I am sure you will, let these colors fly over it. Love and respect these stars and stripes, Hunt, and let them never see you do an unworthy action. Do not think yourself surrounded by enemies because you are in the South, but remember always that North Carolinians are loyal citizens of the United States, who will help you to honor her flag. Now with renewed thanks and good wishes I must bid you and your sister good morning."

"Thank you, sir!" Hunt managed to say, as in obedience to an order the marines formed a double line, and escorted the general toward the bluff, the band playing.

"Mary! Mary! see here!" Hunt cried, standing in the open door-way, where his sister hastened to join him. "Do you know what tune that is the band is playing?" he asked.

"That is 'The Girl I left Behind Me!'" Mary answered, blushing furiously, and bowing her thanks as the officer turned and waved his sword. But there was more to come, for at the very edge of the bluff General Miles stopped and turned also, and removing his hat, made his young hostess a polite bow.

In the excitement, Mary still bowing and smiling, Hunt waved his flag, and they heard the order to "halt!" Waving his cap, the officer ordered, "Three cheers for the young cotton planter and the flag!" and, still cheering, the procession made its way down the steep hillside to the boats that lay in waiting in the creek.

"See!" Hunt cried, as a little cloud of smoke and fire burst from the distant cutter's side. As General Miles stepped into the captain's gig, the cutter fired one gun and dipped her colors.

Hunt and his sister ran down to the edge of the bluff, and were just in time to see the procession of row-boats approaching the revenue cutter. All the marines left on board were drawn up at "present arms" at the head of the gangway, and as General Miles set foot upon the deck the little ship fired a salute of fifteen guns, the salute required for a major-general commanding the army, and a few moments later the cutter was steaming leisurely down the river Trent.

"It seems like a dream, that the commander of the army should have eaten breakfast with us in our little cabin," Mary declared, when they returned to clear away the remains of the meal.

"Yes, but dreams don't leave silk flags trimmed with gold fringe!" Hunt exclaimed. "Of course you saw Mr. Vincent pass us as we were bringing the flag up. But did you notice that he took off his hat to it? He is a southern man, you know. Ain't I glad that I took off my hat before the monument to the Confederate soldiers, when I was in the cemetery over in New Bern a few days ago? They were brave men, sis, and I am glad that old trouble is all over. We're not here to make war, you know, but to grow cotton."

"And to eat Welshmen," Mary laughed, as she drew some ashes over the smouldering embers on the hearth.

CHAPTER X.

FIRST COTTON PLANTS.

After the entertainment of their distinguished visitor Hunt's work went steadily on, in the cotton-seed oil mill or wherever he could make daily wages, and Mary continued to increase her little store of money by selling fish in New Bern. Sometimes when the Welshmen failed she had speckled perch, white perch, or chub to offer. This daily task, however, did not prevent her from ornamenting the yard with the flowers of which she was fond, nor did their united labors hinder Hunt and his sister in their efforts to procure the smaller live stock which was so necessary to them.

As the two drove in the ox-cart through James City one day Mary had a particular reason for feeling grateful that the eye of General Miles was not upon them at that moment. "It would be dreadful," she laughed, "if he were to see this."

"No, that would be nothing," Hunt answered, laughing in his turn, "we are doing no more than our duty, as he always does himself; these pigs and chickens would be just as likely to run away from him as they are to run from us."

It was the pigs and chickens that caused the delay

in returning home. They had visited James City expressly to buy enough small stock to inhabit their poultry yard and pigpen. Six well-grown hens and two roosters and four full-sized ducks and a drake lay on the bottom of the cart with their legs tied, and in the basket were an old hen and a brood of a dozen little chicks; these alone they might have controlled, but there also lay on the bottom of the cart two large pigs of the variety known as "razor backs," and a litter of six young pigs, all black as coal.

It was not Hunt's fault that the two old pigs freed themselves from their fastenings and scampered like mad through the narrow streets of James City and across many unkempt back yards, or that the little ones dashed away after them squealing. In the excitement several of the hens loosened their fastenings and joined in the run, making it necessary for both Hunt and his sister to chase them until caught.

This made great sport for the James City citizens, watching a white boy and girl chase chickens, and they had much advice to give and many remarks to make, but on the whole they were civil and respectful in manner, except in the cases of several young colored men who had only too evidently been tasting the wine of the country.

These young fellows managed several times to put themselves directly in Hunt's way to obstruct him, and when he was far enough away for their safety they shouted uncivil remarks at Mary about "po' white trash from the No'th wukkin' like niggahs an' takin'

the bread from da moufs;" but seeing that they had been drinking, she paid no attention to them.

When the runaway animals were all restored to their proper places, Hunt told his sister that she was invariably to let him know if any of the residents of James City were uncivil to her.

"They are always civil when they are sober," he added, "but the corn whiskey sold in these little shops sometimes makes them ugly, and one of these fine days some fellow will go just about far enough to make him regret it."

"Oh, I hope you won't have any trouble with them!" Mary exclaimed. "They are always very obliging when sober, and the drunken ones are not worth paying any attention to."

"I am not looking for trouble, sis," Hunt laughed. "If they want to see a white fellow work they might come around some day when I am planting cotton."

With the fowls in their places and the pigs in the pen, much enlivening the little place, Mary had less time for fishing and selling her catch, as she insisted upon taking entire charge of them; but both she and Hunt looked forward to the day when the pigs, having grown both in size and in numbers, should be ready to ornament the smoke-house.

"Ah, Hunt, Hunt, do come here!" she cried, one morning after going out to the pen to feed them. "There is a yellow pig with the black ones, and now we have seven little piggies instead of six; just come and see them."

"Oh, you can't fool me in that way!" Hunt laughed. "Of course you know that the yellow little piggy is Buster, and he seems just tickled to death."

"Yes, that is Buster," Mary admitted, half smothered with laughter, "and I am so glad for him, for he has had no little companions. I think he recognizes long-lost brothers in the black piggies."

The daily feeding of corn to the live stock was a constant reminder that their own corn should be growing, and by the first of April as much land as could be spared for the purpose was plowed and planted in corn, which, with plenty of fertilizer and under the warm April sun, soon showed its tiny green blades.

In the month's interval between corn-planting time and cotton-planting time Hunt put up some shelves in the cabin to hold the books that he intended to buy. This and hoeing his smaller crops took much of his spare time, but by the first of May all was ready for the first venture in cotton.

"What funny times for planting things!" Mary exclaimed one day while they were preparing the corn ground.

"Only a little earlier than ours at home," Hunt answered. "We plant corn here by the first of April and cotton by the first of May. And, by the way, sis," he continued, "I am going over to town to-day to buy the fertilizer for the cotton; there's no use trying to grow cotton without fertilizer Mr. Burrus tells me, and we shall need two hundred pounds to the acre; that will make eight hundred pounds for

our four acres of cotton, which will cost us eight dollars, as it sells for twenty dollars a ton."

"And how much cotton ought that make us?" Mary asked.

"Half a bale to the acre is a good average for new land," Hunt answered. "So our four acres ought to produce two bales if we have no bad accidents."

"Why, what do you mean by accidents?" Mary asked. "Isn't cotton a sure crop after it is once planted?"

"No crop is sure," Hunt replied; "a long dry spell soon after planting would damage it very much; dry weather does not hurt it so much after it has grown a little, for the cotton plant has a long tap root to draw up moisture from the lower ground, but too much rain may hurt it then, and, besides that, it may be injured by a nasty little insect called the cotton louse. So you see cotton is no more sure than any other crop, but we must do our part toward making it grow."

When the cotton land was prepared for planting it was smooth and level, for Hunt had learned that the deep "water furrows" needed in rolling land were wholly unnecessary in that flat country. He made the drills three feet and four inches apart and sowed the grayish white cotton seeds much like planting peas. When the plants were a few inches high he made a "scraper," in imitation of the one used by Mr. Vincent, and scraped the ground on both sides of the rows to destroy the young weeds. Then a fort-

night later, with Mary's help, he went over the rows with a hoe and cut out the superfluous plants, leaving the "hills" about sixteen inches apart and three plants to the hill. This, as he knew from what he had been told, was entirely different from the more southern cotton culture, but was the method in use in North Carolina.

"Aren't they beautiful little plants?" Mary frequently asked, as she joyfully watched their increase in size, "and they are going to do more to increase our little stock of money than all the fish and all the firewood and all the working in the mill."

When the plants began to bloom, before the middle of July, Mary declared that their beauty fairly eclipsed her choicest flowers, but amid the cotton hills and the corn hills the little weeds appeared at such a rate that Hunt was left little time to work for wages, although at that season there was an almost constant demand for his labor on Mr. Vincent's truck farm.

By that time there were books upon the shelves, and whenever either of them visited New Bern a copy of the New Bern daily *Journal* was waiting for them in the post-office, for Mary had subscribed for it for three months, out of her fish money, that Hunt should be kept informed of the market price of cotton and the crop prospects, and perhaps having a little curiosity of her own in the matter.

"I am just pleased to death, Hunt," she said more than once, "to see this cotton growing. You say we ought to have half a bale to the acre, and that will

make us two bales from our four acres; it is worth about five cents a pound now, and as a bale weighs five hundred pounds, that is twenty-five dollars a bale, or fifty dollars for our two bales."

"Yes, but do not count your chickens before they are hatched," Hunt laughed. "That is very much like a girl's figuring. We may not get two bales, or the price may go below five cents, for it varies very much; and, anyhow, there are a good many expenses to be deducted from what we may get for it. There is the picking, for instance, and the ginning and baling."

"Oh, the picking!" Mary exclaimed. "That is something that has bothered me very much. We could pick it ourselves, only we know nothing about such work. How in the world are we to get so much cotton picked?"

"Wait till we get the cotton before you worry about picking it," Hunt laughed again, "for all the darkies about here are expert cotton pickers and want that work in the cotton season. They sling an old bag with a slit in it over their shoulders to pick into, and get forty cents a hundred pounds for the picking."

"'Forty cents a hundred pounds'!" Mary exclaimed. "Why, I should think it would take anyone a week to pick a hundred pounds of such light stuff as cotton."

"Don't you believe it," Hunt answered. "You see the seeds and the cotton are all in the bolls together, and are picked at the same time; that makes what is called seed cotton before it is ginned, for I suppose

you know that ginning is separating the cotton from the seeds, but probably you do not know that in a field of cotton the seeds weigh just twice as much as the cotton, so that the cotton for a five-hundred-pound bale weighs fifteen hundred pounds while in the form of seed cotton. Thus the pickers make very fair wages, you see, even at forty cents a hundred pounds."

"Well, I am glad to know that," Mary retorted, "and if we can get anything like fifty dollars from our first crop of cotton, that will go far toward paying for the adjoining piece of land that I know you want to buy so that we can raise more cotton next year."

"Well, that depends," Hunt said, reflectively. "We'll see first how this crop of cotton turns out. Of course I should like to have the money to buy the land, but as it is woodland, I think I can sell enough firewood from it to pay for it. Anyhow, it's better than working for wages," he added; "isn't it, sis—with nothing to look forward to? Whatever our cotton may sell for, we have our comfortable little home."

Fast as the cotton and corn and smaller crops grew, the little black pigs kept pace with them, and every day made it seem more likely that there soon would be both smoke and pork in the smoke-house.

Fires for warmth had long been a thing of the past, but, in their determination to save every possible cent, the evening light still came from what the colored neighbors called "lighter knots," which answered the purpose admirably.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH DRUNKEN NEGROES.

With his daily work in his own fields Hunt was now a real southern planter on a small scale, and both he and Mary were well browned by their constant exposure to the North Carolina sun. There seemed to be no end to the ploughing and scraping and hoeing in corn and cotton fields, but as the weather favored and the precious plants increased in size every day they worked cheerfully, watching the daily growth as carefully as a mother watches her child. Hunt's work for wages was, of course, much interrupted while the growing crops needed his attention, but the river and creek still afforded an abundance of fish, and rather than let their income cease entirely, he assisted his sister with her little fishery, and soon took a leading part in that industry, for he found that by taking the fish over to New Bern to the fish-market wharf in the Maria Louise he could sell them in considerable quantities to the market men, and so save his sister the labor of peddling them in the city. To make time for this both brother and sister were frequently at work in their own fields before the sun had risen, and continued their labor till the darkness made its further continuance impossible.

As the season advanced the large Welshmen became scarce in their own neighborhood, but by watching the native fishermen, who were mostly colored, they found that they could still be taken in paying quantities several miles up the Trent River, particularly near a beautiful place that the fishermen called their "hotel," where a thick pine grove on a bluff on the river bank afforded shelter from both sun and rain, and near which large quantities of speckled and white perch and chub and catfish could also be taken. It did not take them long to learn that as the catfish brought a very low price in the market, they could most profitably be taken home to eat while the others were sold. Mary at first had some hesitation about handling the giant catfish with their great mouths and spike-like horns, but as she was determined to be a real fisher-girl she soon overcame this, and Hunt gallantly insisted that, as she was the originator of the fishing business, the fish profits should all belong to her.

One day when they had earned the liberty to fish for almost the entire day by working extra hours on many previous days, they went up the Trent as far as the "hotel," and were returning with the Maria Louise well loaded with fine fish to land Mary at the plantation before Hunt went over to the market to sell the catch. They had just reached the mouth of the creek when they saw a boat approaching manned by three young colored men, who plainly showed by their boisterous actions that they had been drinking. There was no doubt that these young men were going fishing,

and Hunt thought he recognized in at least one or two of them men who had sometimes jeered at him as he passed through James City.

His relations with his colored neighbors had, on the whole, been extremely friendly, and he was sure that these men in the boat would not molest them if they were sober, but the vile form of whiskey made from corn is sold very cheaply in James City, and as the men headed their boat toward the little sloop, singing and shouting and rocking their own boat, he determined that the present was a good opportunity to show these tippling youngsters that he and his sister were not to be insulted with impunity.

"Now don't say a word to them," he said to his sister, "for they may go on up the river and 'tend to their business;" but they were not left long in doubt as to the intentions of the three young colored men, for the boat rapidly approached them, and when near by it stopped and the youngsters began to jeer at them.

"Pore white trash," they shouted, pointing at them. "Dey takes de bread outen de pore niggahs mouf. Got kicked outen de Norf, did you; couldn' make no livin' at home, eh? so come down yere to rob the pore niggah; dey's worser dan niggahs, sich pore white trash."

"Don't pay any attention to them, Mary," Hunt cautioned his sister; "and if they don't keep civil tongues in their heads, I'll give them something they won't want."

"He say he give niggah somethin'," one of the youngsters shouted, overhearing the words. "He give nothin'; he only white trash hisself, niggah give white trash somethin'."

Words had become too tame to give vent to their feelings, and all three began to splash water with their hands and oars, directing it as nearly as possible so that it should strike both Hunt and his sister.

"Now you stop that," Hunt shouted, stepping up into the bow of his own boat, leaving Mary seated amidships with the oars.

"Stop that this minute, or I'll give you something you haven't had in a long time."

The splashing and jeering were redoubled at this, and Hunt turned his head in time to see a great splash of the water strike Mary almost squarely in the face.

"Pull up one good stroke," he called to her. The row-boat lay broadside on with the sloop's bow pointing directly toward it, and the few feet between them was rapidly lessened under Mary's stroke.

"Steady now," he cried, and the words were hardly out of his mouth before he sprang forward into the air and came down with his whole weight and force of motion upon the rail of the narrow row-boat. There could be only one result to his unexpected attack, and under his weight the row-boat capsized like a shot, and the negroes were thrown into the water. Hunt, of course, went overboard also, but two or three vigorous strokes carried him to the bow of his own boat.

The three negroes were not sobered by their sudden immersion, but forgetting their enmity to Hunt, they began to quarrel and fight among themselves, and during the struggle one of them approached near where Mary sat, and took hold as if to clamber aboard.

"Let go of that," Mary shouted, springing to her feet with an uplifted oar in her hands. "Let go of that or I'll break your arms."

"For de Lawd's sake, missy, doan' kill a pore niggah, we kan't none of us swim, some of us niggahs are a going to drownd, missy, if you doan' help us."

Another of the negroes was evidently sinking, shouting lustily all the while for help.

"Here, take hold of this oar," Hunt cried, as he took up the other oar and pushed an end of it toward the sinking man.

The overturned boat was now well within reach, and holding fast to the oar with one hand, he reached forward with the other and righted it; by this time, however, all three of the men were shouting for help, and seemed to be in danger of drowning, and as he was already wet, Hunt instantly sprang overboard and went to their assistance. One by one he helped them to their own boat, and held it steady while they climed in over the stern.

Then as they were all safe, and realizing that he had left Mary alone, he swam back to his own boat and climbed in over the bow.

The thanks that he then had to receive gave him

more embarrassment than any other part of the episode, for the negroes, finding themselves safe, were profuse in their thanks.

"T'ank you, boss, t'ank you berry much," they shouted each in turn. "You done save pore niggah's life, boss, and pore niggah he not forget you."

"Very well," Hunt answered, "that's all right, I'd rather do you a favor than an injury, but if you ever bother me or my sister any more I'll chuck you into the Trent River again ; now you remember that."

"We will, boss," the men shouted, in unison. "You ain't no white trash, an' yo' heart's as white as yo' skin. We'se you' frien's now, boss, an' we'se goin' on a fishin'."

"It's nothing at all under this hot sun," Hunt answered, when Mary urged him to hasten home for dry clothes; "these clothes will be dry in five minutes, and they may as well dry on me as anywhere. I'll just set you ashore and then go over to the market." But Mary insisted that if Hunt was going in his wet clothes, she was going with him, and each took an oar and the boat was headed for the market wharf.

Before they reached the wharf the powerful summer sun of North Carolina had dried them both, and Mary was delighted when Hunt steered the boat up into the slip where lay many little fishing craft, and some larger boats with both fish and turtle. The slip was what would have been about fifty feet of the lower end of Middle Street, but dredged out to give an

entrance to boats. The sidewalks of the street continued down to the river on both sides of the slip, and partly on these and partly in the half ruinous wooden buildings that lined them was the fish market.

"And is *this* the fish market you talk so much about?" Mary asked. "Why, it looks as if it might fall down any day. The only building on the slip that is painted or kept in repair is that uncomfortable-looking one with the big signs reading 'Palace bar-room.' It does not look much like a palace, and I think its signs must be bigger than its business."

"Very likely they are," Hunt replied. "I do not think that any bar-room in New Bern does much business. It always seems to me that there is very little drinking here. To be sure, we have seen a few of the colored people drunk, but you must remember that out of six thousand colored people in New Bern and two or three thousand in James City, we have never seen more than a half dozen drunken ones."

"But I don't see what becomes of all the fish that is brought here," said Mary. "We bring enough ourselves, I imagine, almost to supply the city of New Bern, and the colored fishermen and these large fishing boats are always bringing them in."

"This is a great market for fish," Hunt replied. "The people of New Bern use a very small proportion of what are brought in. Great quantities are shipped from here to the large cities of the North, principally to New York. That is why we generally get good prices for our fish ; if we had only New Bern to sup-

ply we should get very little, but the dealers charge the people as much as they could get from the wholesalers in New York, after deducting the freight. That is the reason that shad early in the season sometimes sell in this market for seventy-five cents and often for one dollar a pair. We have not quite got up to shad catching yet, as they will not bite at a hook, but have to be caught with a seine; but we may come to that some day if we ever need to depend largely on our fishery."

"This market, you see," he continued, "is at the foot of Middle Street, and the steamboat landing is at the foot of Craven Street, one block way, as we should say in New York, or one square, as they always say here. Middle Street is well named, for it runs right through the middle of the city. It is only a few steps from here to the cotton gin where we hope in a short time to have some cotton to sell."

Hunt stepped ashore and in a few minutes disposed of his fish to one of the dealers, after which he tied the boat and asked Mary to come ashore, saying that there were one or two places he wished to show her.

When she came he took her up Middle Street past some handsome brick business buildings.

"There, I want you to look at that one," he said, pointing to the Citizens' Bank on the opposite side of the street. "Mr. Burrus tells me that if we do well with the cotton I ought to open a bank account in New Bern, and he has introduced me to Mr. Thomas Green, the president of the Citizens' Bank. I feel

almost at home when I pass it, because Mr. Green is a cousin by marriage of a gentleman we both know of in New York."

"I don't know anyone in New York," Mary objected.

"No, but you have heard of the New York Central Railroad, I suppose," Hunt laughed. "The main line runs six or eight miles north of our old home in Ontario County, and the old line, or Auburn branch, as it is called, goes right through Phelps, which is very near us. Mr. George H. Daniels, the general passenger-agent of that big road, had charge of a government steamer on the Neuse River for several years during the Civil War, and while here he married the daughter of Captain Gates, who still lives in Broad Street. As this lady was a cousin of Mr. Green, that made Mr. Daniels his cousin by marriage."

"Why, this looks like a graveyard right in the middle of the city," Mary interrupted.

"That is just what it is," Hunt answered. "And this is one of the things I brought you here to show you. This is the churchyard of the large Episcopal Church, where the great parish church was built by the British Government many years ago, when North Carolina was a British colony. I want to take you right through the churchyard, where you will see by the old tomb-stones that many of the people buried here came from Connecticut, as many of the early settlers of New Bern were from that State."

"Here, you see," he continued, "is a gate leading from the churchyard into a private garden. I want to take you through the private garden into Broad Street, for it belongs to Major Graham Daves, and he has invited me to visit it whenever I can."

"This immense house," he went on, "belongs to him. Major Daves is the president of the Roanoke Island Association. I am very much interested in Roanoke Island, which is in the sound, not far from here, for on it was established one of the very first settlements in America, even before Jamestown was settled. The first colonists all disappeared, and for a long time it was thought that they had starved; but this was a mistake, for they were massacred by the Indians, and a great many of the early settlers in New Bern were killed by the same savages."

"I am interested too in Roanoke Island," Mary said, when they reached Broad Street, "but I am more interested just now in the plantation on Brice Creek. Let us go home before we are tempted to spend any of our fish-money in the stores."

CHAPTER XII.

A GREAT RISE IN COTTON.

ALL through the summer Hunt and Mary were in expectation of very hot weather, because they were far enough south to be among the cotton fields; but the hottest days of summer were no warmer than the weather they had been accustomed to in the North, for there was nearly always a refreshing breeze from the rivers and sounds. When the crops attained such height and size that their foliage prevented the weeds from growing, and much less labor was required on the plantation, at Hunt's suggestion Mary made herself a bathing-suit of cheap flannel, and, when not at work for wages, he frequently took her down to the creek, where, under his tuition, she soon became an expert swimmer.

These comparatively restful days, however, were not to last long, for, with the coming of September, the cotton bolls were beginning to open, and both the young planters became impatient to turn their first crop into a bank account.

"Just see how white the cotton field is, Hunt," Mary often exclaimed. "It is surely time to begin picking, but I don't see how we are going to get the pickers."

"That is easy enough," Hunt retorted; "if I tell

one or two of the darkeys that we want pickers they will soon all know it, for news spreads among them very fast. What you tell one colored person you might as well tell every negro in Craven County. I believe it is the same over in New Bern, only the white people there have telephones in their houses, and news that can't travel fast enough by word of mouth goes over the wire. I will tell one or two darkeys to-morrow, and you will see plenty of pickers here before the week is out."

He was correct in this prediction, for the negroes are fond of roaming by night and visiting one another's cabins. Before the week was ended, the pickers who applied for work were enough almost to make a regiment. There were able-bodied men and cripples, women both old and young, and boys and girls of almost all sizes, ranging in color from light yellow to the deepest black, and all ragged and slouchy. Fortunately for Hunt, cotton-picking was such an established industry, and the price so well understood, that no special bargain with them was necessary.

After a few days the picking began, and Mary kept a close watch upon the movements of the pickers, for, as she said, she had not been able to earn much money recently, but she was determined to save a little by doing some of the picking herself. Hunt also slung a bag over his shoulders and fell to picking, but at the close of the first day's work it became apparent that some means of weighing the cotton picked by each picker was needed.

A YOUTHFUL COTTON-PICKER.

Mr. Vincent, like the good neighbor that he was, drove over with his own scales in the cart.

"I know you are going to need them," he said, "and you can just as well use them as not, for I have others."

Hunt did the weighing and paying-off himself every evening, having the pickers empty their bags, after weighing, into a number of empty barrels that he had provided, and that he kept under cover in Bob's stable.

"See here, Fannie!" he called to the pony one evening, after examining the little book in which he kept account of the number of pounds picked, "you're to have a double feed of oats to-day, old girl, for I have paid for picking nearly seventeen hundred pounds; that means plenty of feed for you next winter, Miss Fannie, and maybe an extra bite for the rest of us. Here, Rover! here, Buster!" he called to the dogs that were in the barn and much interested in the work, "I am going to bring you a lot of nice bones from New Bern; just remind me of it next time I go over, for I shall be going soon to sell cotton."

Nearly a month passed before the cotton was all picked, the fields stripped clean, and the pickers all dismissed. Then, at length, came the eventful day when the cotton was to be ginned and disposed of. The little book by that time showed a record of nearly three thousand pounds picked.

"Now, Mary," Hunt told his sister, "I am off for the cotton gin to-morrow, and if you want to make

yourself useful while I am away, you hire a darkey to pull up all those old cotton stalks and throw them in a heap, so we can burn them, and you watch him or he won't half do the work. I know the custom is to let the stalks stand and rot, but I don't like that, for there is no reason why an old cotton field in the South should not be kept as clean as our old corn field in the North.

Bob had been comfortably munching grass and leaves and corn for some months, but there was work before him when the hauling of cotton began, for at least two trips to New Bern must be made. For containing the loose cotton the barrels were used, and some bags or anything that would hold it.

Never before had Hunt watched the operations of the ginning-machinery with such interest as when it was his own cotton that was drawn up in the big pneumatic tube; but he felt himself a cotton planter, indeed, when the big compressor had to come down twice to press his cotton into two bales, and when fully a ton of the grayish-white seed was ejected by the machine.

"I do not need to ask you the price," he said to young Mr. Burrus, the proprietor, when the two snow-white cubes of pressed cotton lay before them.

"No; it is the same old price," Mr. Burrus answered, "and you have worked here often enough to know what it is: forty cents a hundred pounds for the ginning, and one dollar and twenty-five cents a bale for the ties and cover; but you have here a ton of

seed, which is worth twelve dollars, so that you owe us four dollars for the ginning, and two dollars and fifty cents for the two bales, making a total of six dollars and fifty cents: there is a balance in your favor of five dollars and fifty cents if you leave us the seed."

"Well, I will leave you the seed," Hunt answered, as he pocketed the five dollars and fifty cents.

He then went down the dusty stairs to the street, and drove Bob and the cart up to the door to receive the two bales of cotton. After they were loaded he drove down Craven Street toward the cotton exchange to sell them, but as he was passing the office of Burrus & Gray, Mr. Burrus stepped out and hailed him:

"Hello, here, my young planter!" he said, "that looks like cotton; you don't mean to say you got both those bales off of your land the first year, do you?"

"Yes, sir, both of them, and some good silver besides," Hunt answered proudly, slapping his pocket where his five dollars and fifty cents lay.

"Well, you know I deal in cotton," Mr. Burrus told him;" but whether you sell it to me or to some other dealer you will get just the same price for it, because cotton has a standard market price. But see here, young man, do you know the price of cotton to-day?"

"I think it has been in the neighborhood of five or six cents for a long time, sir," Hunt answered.

"Ah! I thought maybe you did not know the

great cotton news of to-day, and that is why I stopped you," Mr. Burrus laughed. "The price of cotton is nine and a half cents to-day, and if you want to sell those two bales to me at that price, drive right over to the scales till we weigh them, and I will take them."

He drove over to the scales, and, with the assistance of several of Mr. Burrus's porters, the bales were soon found to weigh exactly one thousand pounds.

"Good enough!" said Mr. Burrus, who had stepped over to inspect the weighing.

"Then the bales are mine, and if you will come right over to my office the check for them shall be yours."

Hunt drove back to the office, and soon came out, bearing in his hand a narrow slip of paper, which read:

New Bern, N. C., Oct. 8, 1900.

Citizens' Bank,

Pay to Huntley Robertson ..... or Order,
Ninety-five ..... 00/100 Dollars.

$95 00/100 *Burrus & Gray.*

"Thank you, sir," Hunt said, as he folded the check and put it carefully in an inner pocket. "I might have remained a farmer's boy a good many years before I should have had a hundred dollars in my pocket. Good day, Mr. Burrus."

"Good day, Hunt!" Mr. Burrus called after him;

"I shall hope to see you come in next year with twice as much cotton."

"I am going to try for that, sir," Hunt answered, driving on. But his business was not completed, for he turned Bob into South Front Street, and then into Middle, where he stopped at the Citizens' Bank, and when he came out the check and the money in his pocket had been exchanged for a bank-book giving him credit for one hundred dollars on deposit.

Then he went home, after stopping a moment at the post-office, where he received a letter, which he pocketed without opening.

When he reached home he whistled lively airs while he unharnessed Bob and put him in the stable, and Mary ran out, anxious to know the result of the day's business.

"Well, did you sell your two bales?" she asked.

"I sold *our* two bales," he answered gallantly. "What do you think cotton is worth now?" But before Mary could reply he had his arm around her waist, and was waltzing her about the barn.

"Has it gone above six cents?" she asked, half-breathless.

"'Six cents'!" he exclaimed. "You never heard of such a price for cotton since you were born. I got nine and a half cents, or exactly ninety-five dollars for the two bales, besides five dollars and fifty cents for the seed. Look at that once, will you?" and he put the bank-book into her hands. "That shows that we

have one hundred dollars in the bank. Give all the animals a double feed to night, Mary."

When they went into the house, both filled with pleasure at their good fortune, Hunt was glad to see that supper was waiting for him.

"I ought to have brought some good provisions from town," he said, while Mary was preparing the table for him; "but I was very busy, and I declare I never thought of it."

"No, I am glad you did not," Mary answered. "We must not begin to spend money foolishly because we have a little."

"Now let us see how we stand, Hunt," Mary said, after they had finished their supper.

"Well, that will not take long," Hunt answered. "To begin with, we own this comfortable little home, and a pony and ox and some other stock, besides a good boat. Then Mr. Warren still has in his hands one hundred and twenty dollars belonging to me. Besides that we have a little money in our pockets, earned by my labor and your selling fish and our sale of firewood; but I cannot tell you the exact amount of that without looking up our accounts; however, I think that is not doing badly for the year or less that we have been working for ourselves. And I think, sis, that since I have opened a bank account it would not be a bad idea to write to Mr. Warren and ask him to send me a check for the one hundred and twenty dollars, so that I can put it in the bank here and use it when necessary."

"I think that would be the better way," Mary answered.

"And, by the way, speaking of letters!" Hunt exclaimed, "reminds me that I brought one in my pocket, which I have not opened yet."

He took out and opened the letter, which proved to be from Scotty Watson, and he read it aloud. Scotty wrote that he had been having hard times, for he had been sick so much that he had lost his job, and the doctors told him that he must not expect to recover his health unless he could go into a warmer climate for the winter.

"Ah! you have the best of it, Hunt," he wrote, "for you are working for yourself, while I am working for other people, and I am just as poor every Saturday night as I am every Monday morning. If you know of any chance for me to get work near where you are, I wish you would write me about it, for I am afraid I shall soon be a goner if I stay in this cold climate."

Mary had been drumming on the table with her finger tips while Hunt was reading, and when he concluded she looked into his face and asked, "Hunt, does that letter suggest anything to you?"

"That letter suggests a great deal to me," Hunt answered slowly and seriously.

"We always try to do the right thing as nearly as we can, don't we, old chum? We never work on Sundays, because we think it wrong, and we go over to church as often as we can; but that isn't enough, it

seems to me. Now that we have some money we shall certainly buy that wood lot, and I shall need some help in cutting the wood. I think a great deal of Scotty Watson, poor fellow, and I do not see why he should not have that work as well as let some of these darkeys have it. What do you say to my writing to Scotty, partner, and telling him to come down here to work for us?"

"I think you ought to do it, Hunt," Mary replied. "We have been prospered ourselves, and we ought to help the poor boy along; but where can he sleep, Hunt? He will need a bedroom if he comes, and we have none to spare."

"I will manage that," Hunt declared, "and I am glad that you feel the same about it as I do. I will get some more slabs and build a little addition to the house, and if Scotty comes that shall be his room."

"Good for you, Hunt!" Mary exclaimed, patting him upon the shoulder. "You are a good brother and a good friend."

"Then Bob shall haul the slabs over to-morrow," Hunt announced; and by the light of the lighter knots they both soon retired.

CHAPTER XIII.

SCOTTY WATSON IN NEW BERN.

THE two letters that Hunt contemplated were both written, and, as he was busy drawing slabs and boards from the mill, Mary, on Fannie, took them over to the post-office. Hunt was hard at work for several days with the addition to his house, which he built on the side farthest from the creek, in such a way that by building a little piazza in front of his window on that side, which he converted into a door, he made an easy entrance both to the new room and to the main living-room. The question of heating the new room troubled him at first, but he was not the boy to do things by halves, and when he considered that Scotty would come largely for the sake of his health, he determined to build a chimney and fireplace for that room also. This work kept him busy for several days, and it was hardly finished before the mail brought answers to both of his letters. Mr. Warren's letter inclosed his check for one hundred and twenty dollars, with his best wishes for Hunt's continued success. Scotty wrote that Hunt was his best friend in the world, and that they might expect to see him before the Northern weather began to grow cold, as he could not let so good an opportunity escape.

"Now then, Mary!" Hunt exclaimed, after reading Scotty's letter aloud, "I am ready to buy that adjoining land if you think it wise, for you know we are partners in this business. You know what the case is, don't you?"

"You said the piece contained seven acres adjoining our own land, and that you could buy it for five dollars an acre. Now that cotton is so high, I think that seven acres more is little enough land for us to add," Mary replied.

"I think so, too," Hunt cautioned her, "but I don't want you to expect such a high price for cotton next year, for you know the price is always going up and down. We want more room for the hogs to roam, though, for, now that the little piggies have grown large, and both the old and young ones are fat as possible, pork is an important matter with us. I want to see our smoke-house full of bacon."

"I will take Mr. Warren's check over to town and put it in the bank," he went on, "and I may as well deposit the money we have in our pockets, which I think amounts to about twenty-five dollars."

"Are you sure we can get a good title to the new land?" Mary asked.

"That is another thing for me to attend to," Hunt replied. "Mr. Pearsall, who examined the title to this land for me, has gone to Raleigh to be private secretary to the governor; but Major Daves is a lawyer, and as I know him, I will ask him to examine this other title and make it all straight."

"Now, Mary, I am going over to the city in the Maria Louise, and I think you had better go along. You must remember that half of what we have belongs to you, for you have helped to earn it. We don't have to spend much money for clothes over here, but I think it is too bad for a girl to go so long without any new dresses. You go to some of the stores and buy whatever you want."

"I know exactly what I want," Mary answered, "and I will go along with you and buy it. It is two wash-tubs and a washboard, for we have needed them for a long time. I would not give a fig for new dresses here in the woods, for I do not need any, and the tubs will not cost much."

The Maria Louise made a quick voyage down the Trent River to the foot of Middle Street, and when Hunt went up to the bank and to see Major Daves and returned he found the two tubs and the washboard in the boat. It was not without some pardonable pride that he opened his bank-book and showed Mary that it contained a credit of two hundred and forty-five dollars.

"Now let us hurry home," Mary urged, "for I have a little treat in store for us both."

"No, it is not in that bundle," she added, laughing, as Hunt looked suspiciously at a big paper bag in the bottom of the boat. "I have been up to the Oaks Market and some other meat shops, and, as I had a little silver left in my pocket, I bought some scraps for Rover and Buster. The poor fellows must be

tired of living on fish and hominy. My surprise is entirely different from that. You know it was not all field corn we planted, but some of it was sweet corn, and there are some fine ears just ready to eat."

"I believe I am getting to be a regular North Carolina girl, Hunt," she went on, as they were sailing homeward. "I know wild ducks now, anyhow, and I have seen hundreds of them to-day. Don't you think it would be a good plan for you to buy a gun and shoot some ducks and quails and other wild things for the table and for sale?"

"I can't quite make up my mind to that," Hunt answered. "You know what we see in the winter—sportsmen coming down from the North, travelling a thousand miles with guns and dogs, to kill a few little innocent birds, tramping over the country and working twice as hard as they would at home. I don't want to go into that kind of business; but as they are always wanting to hire boats and guides, I think maybe we can make a little money out of them in that way next winter."

When they reached home Mary picked a dozen fine ears of corn, which, with some sliced bacon and boiled hominy, made their supper.

Several days later Hunt again visited Major Daves, according to appointment.

"The title to that land is good, and the deed is drawn up and signed," the lawyer told him. "It has been left in my hands with the understanding that I am to deliver it to you whenever you pay me the

thirty-five dollars for the owner; so you have only to hand me thirty-five dollars, and I hand you the deed and the land is yours, and you can bring me the deed whenever you like to be recorded."

"We may as well settle it up now, sir," Hunt answered, and he took his check-book from his pocket and drew a check for thirty-five dollars, which he exchanged with the major for the deed.

"Now you are a greater landed proprietor than ever," the lawyer said, laughing. "That makes you how many acres?"

"Twelve, sir," Hunt answered. "Seven acres in this piece and five I had before, so I shall have about ten acres for cotton next year, sir."

"Ah! you cotton growers will be the aristocrats if cotton remains so high," the major laughed; "but whatever success you have you fully deserve, for you are a hard worker, and I wish you all prosperity."

Hunt went down Broad Street to return to his boat, and when he reached East Front Street his progress was arrested by a shout of

"Hello, Hunt! ain't you going to speak to a fellow?" which came from a young man on the opposite corner, and in an instant he was shaking the young man's hand like a pump handle, for he recognized Scotty Watson.

"I came down by rail," Scotty explained, "and I'm awfully glad to be here and to see you again."

The Maria Louise carried two young men to the

plantation instead of one, and Mary was as much pleased as her brother. Scotty was delighted with everything, and was glad to take a short rest on the Hyde County bed that had been put up in his room, with cotton mattress and pillows complete. But what promised to be a delightful evening, when after supper they were all together in the main room, was marred by the bad news that Scotty brought.

"It is too bad about your old friend, Mr. Warren," he told them.

"About Mr. Warren!" Hunt exclaimed; "why I hope nothing bad has happened to him."

"I don't see what you could call it but bad," Scotty answered. "He is sick for one thing, and the farm is going to be sold by the sheriff. He has gone all to pieces financially. The farm was mortgaged, you know, and he could not pay even the interest on the mortgage, so he has lost it. I hope he has none of your money in his hands, Hunt, for he cannot pay anything."

"No, he has not a cent of mine," Hunt declared, "for I drew it all and put it in a New Bern bank; but that is a small matter, if he has lost that fine farm. I am not able to do much, but he was a kind master, Scotty, and he shall never want for a home while I have a roof over my head."

"Say, that's the real Southern planter talking!" Scotty cried, springing up and seizing Hunt's hand. "If you had kept on working for wages you would never have been able to offer anything to anybody.

Now, here you are on your own plantation, independent as a lord. There's nothing like it, Hunt, and if I can earn some money down here I want to buy a little land of my own. By the way, what kind of work is it that I am to do for you?"

"Stand alongside of me and chop wood," Hunt answered, with a laugh. "I have just bought seven acres of woodland, and to fence that and cut the trees into firewood will keep us both busy all winter. Then on spare days one of us can take it over to town in the ox-cart to sell it. I suppose you never drove a single ox, Scotty, with a rope harness? But you'll learn lots of new ways here in North Carolina, and whenever you get tired you can rest on the sunny side of the house."

After a short time Hunt concluded that chopping trees continuously was too hard work for Scotty until he got used to it, and he sent him frequently to the mill with Bob to draw loads of boards and joists and shingles that he had ordered. The appearance of this lumber on the place naturally aroused Mary's curiosity, and she asked Hunt whether he intended to build a mansion.

"Not exactly that," he answered, "but I think that such a good girl deserves a little better house to live in; besides, I have another reason," he added. "Now, as we are partners, I want to know whether you would object to my spending a little of our money to help an old friend?"

"Now, Hunt, I know what you are coming to,"

Mary answered, laying her hands upon his arms. "Of course, I should not object, for I am sure that you have heard from Mr. Warren, and that he is the man you want to help."

"Yes, I have heard from Mr. Warren," Hunt admitted, "and the blow has struck. The farm has been sold by the sheriff, and he is homeless and poor and sick."

"Now, lumber is very cheap down here, you know," he added, "and a little board house of two rooms, which we need, anyhow, will not cost more than I can pay for out of the firewood."

That evening Hunt devoted largely to literary and artistic labors, and in the latter he was willingly assisted by Mary and Scotty. After writing a letter to Mr. Warren, in which he said he was very much pained to hear of the latter's misfortune, he told him that he and his sister had met with at least moderate success, and now owned a small plantation and a comfortable home, with good prospects.

"I shall never forget your former kindness to me," he wrote, "and if it is really true that the farm has been sold, I am proud to have a comfortable home to urge you to come and visit us in. This is only a cabin that we are in, but we are just about to build a snug little board house of two rooms, and Mary joins me in asking you to come to us and occupy one of them as long as you can. Our pigs are fat and the smoke-house will soon be full of bacon, and we have plenty to eat. Please do not say no, Mr. Warren, but

come and see us and let us try to repay a little of your kindness."

This was a considerable effort for Hunt, who was no great letter writer; but when it was finished he drew a rough plan of the house that he had designed. This plan provided for a plain little house of one story, with two rooms, each about fifteen feet square, and a hall ten feet wide between them, besides a broad piazza across the front and down one end. The only questionable things were the two brick chimneys and fireplaces, one at each end.

"Yes, we must come to brick chimneys sometime or other," he explained, "and we may as well have them now. You may wonder at the piazza at the end," he went on, "but there is a reason for that; my idea is to put the new house by the side of this, toward the water, so that this shall be an annex to it. Then that end piazza will come right up to this door, and if we enclose it a little with lattice work it will really make one building of the two. I suppose you don't know Mr. Dickenson, in New Bern," he went on; "he is partly a fisherman, but mostly a carpenter, and a very good one, and he tells me that he can build such a house, with my help, in about twenty days, at a dollar a day. So I estimate that the house will not cost us much more than forty dollars, for materials and labor are both cheap here, you know."

CHAPTER XIV.

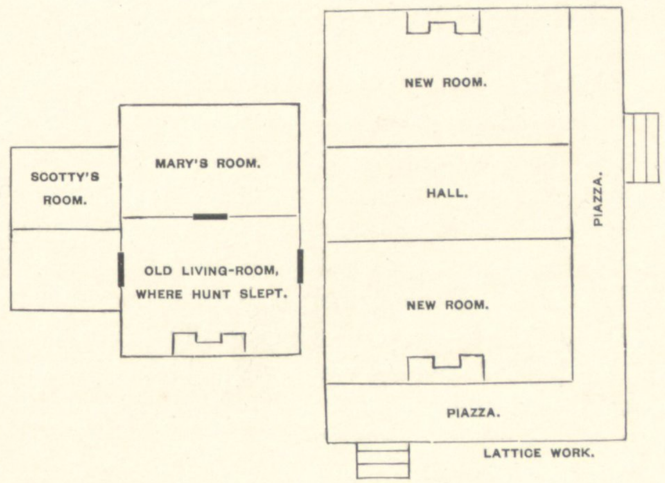
A COTTON CONTRACT.

THE rapidity with which one of the light houses of the South can be built was surprising to the three young Northerners. That the bricks of which the chimneys were constructed had all been used before did not detract from the appearance of either the chimneys or fireplaces. Hunt had brought the bricks over from New Bern in the Maria Louise, and carried the necessary lime from the kilns in the ox-cart, and in three weeks the new building was completed, even to steps to the piazza, glass windows, and lattice work at the end.

Scotty Watson took so much interest in it that he begged Hunt to bring some paint and brushes, and when they were brought he and Hunt gave the building two coats of white, and the shutters two coats of dark green. When this was done the result was as neat and trim a little cottage of five rooms as the county contained, only two of the rooms being new, and three in the old house, after the plan on page 159.

One improvement that Hunt had in mind for the premises he said nothing about, for he wished to give Mary a little surprise. When he went next time to New Bern with the Maria Louise he returned with

such an odd-looking instrument that both Mary and Scotty became curious about it. As nearly as they could make out, the central part of it was about six



feet of iron pipe, with a small pump attached to one end, and something that looked like a perforated cone at the other.

"What in the world is that thing, Hunt?" Mary asked.

"That is a well that I have been buying for you," he answered. "It is too much labor for you to carry our water up from the creek, and I am a little doubtful about creek water being wholesome for us to drink; so I have bought a well."

"Bought a well!" Mary cried, holding her sides with laughter. "Whoever heard of buying a well? Anyhow, that is no well."

"Ah! but remember you are in North Carolina, and that is a North Carolina well," Hunt answered. "It is a very simple and suitable kind of well, too, as you shall see. The soil is well soaked with water because there is so much water all around us. You see that little cone at one end of the pipe? That is what they call the point, and from its shape it is easily driven into the ground. When the pipe is driven in to nearly its full length, the water trickles in through those holes in the point, and, of course, the pump draws it up. Now just wait an hour or two, and you shall have one of the greatest improvements you have had yet. These iron wells are generally driven out in the lot, but I do not see why we should not have the water right in the house."

"That will be grand," Mary agreed.

Without waiting for further conversation, Hunt got his hatchet and saw and proceeded to cut away a square of about two feet in the floor of the living-room, not far from the fireplace. Then he drove the pipe and point into the ground, and after arranging a long trough, made of two boards, to carry away the waste water, he called Mary to see that she had good, pure water ready to hand in the kitchen.

"Why, you are a real inventor, Hunt!" she cried. "You will be having gas and electric lights in the house next."

"No; we are North Carolinians, and must be content with lighter knots, but it is always handy to have water in the house," Hunt laughed.

With the new house all complete, even to water in the kitchen, Hunt was anxious to hasten the sale of wood, for he desired to give Mr. Warren something better than a Hyde County bed to sleep upon, and did not wish to draw further upon his bank account for the purchase of a bedstead. So a few days later he sent Scotty over to New Bern to get the expected letter from Mr. Warren, believing that, with his longer experience, he could make greater progress by doing the chopping himself. Scotty returned in due time with the expected letter, in which Mr. Warren said that Hunt's kindness in such a time of adversity touched him very much, and that they might expect to see him on the plantation within a week or two.

With the stimulus of Mr. Warren's expected arrival, the chopping and selling of wood went on faster than ever. Two loads a day could be carried to New Bern now, Hunt taking one load in the boat and Scotty another in the cart, and, after a large number of loads had been cut and sold, Hunt returned one day with an inexpensive wooden bedstead and a set of springs in the boat, which were promptly put up in the room that Mr. Warren was to occupy.

"Now it is my turn to do something," Mary declared, "for I want to help a little toward making Mr. Warren comfortable. The next time you go to the city, Hunt, I want you to bring me a great lot of cotton, and I will go over on Fannie to-morrow and buy some blankets and sheets and a little stuff to make a mattress and pillows of."

All these things were accordingly procured, and within a few days as white and soft a bed as man could wish for was ready for the expected visitor.

"See here, Mary!" Hunt exclaimed, as he first looked delightedly into the room, "you did not know that when I first came to New Bern I slept in a little shanty in Mr. Burrus's back yard, did you? Well, I did, though, and that shanty was filled with furniture that was not in use, and I believe I could buy some of it very cheap. A little furniture would not come amiss in this Fifth Avenue mansion we have now, and I think I will ask Mr. Burrus about it."

"We do need a little furniture," Mary admitted, "and I should much rather have that than new dresses, which I care nothing about."

When Hunt took a load of wood to New Bern next day he took pains to see Mr. Burrus to ask him about the furniture.

"That furniture belongs to my son-in-law, Mr. Lumsden," Mr. Burrus told him; "and you will have to see him about it. He is next door here, with J. E. Latham & Co., cotton brokers, where you can see him at once if you wish."

Hunt accordingly went into the cotton brokers' to see Mr. Lumsden.

This visit led to a stroke of business that was entirely unexpected by the young planter, and business of such importance that the purchase of the furniture was only a small part of it.

"You know what furniture I have there," Mr. Lumsden told him, "for you have seen it, and, as I have no earthly use for it, I shall be glad to sell it to you for almost nothing. If you want the whole lot for ten dollars you can take it home whenever you are ready."

"I will take it," Hunt answered without hesitation, for he knew that the furniture included chairs, tables, bedsteads, and many other articles that he needed.

"Well, that business is soon settled," Mr. Lumsden laughed; "but Mr. Latham asked me to find you several days ago and speak to you about a more important matter than furniture, and I may as well speak now." At that moment a door from the inner office opened, and a gentleman, whom Mr. Lumsden introduced as Mr. Latham, came out.

"Oh, you are Huntley Robertson?" Mr. Latham asked; "you sold two bales of cotton this year?"

"Yes, sir," Hunt replied.

"And, no doubt, you expect to have more to sell next year," Mr. Latham continued. "Of course, you got nine and a half cents a pound this year, but the price is liable any day to drop to the old point of five cents."

"Now, this is what I wanted to see you about, young man," he continued. "I am always ready for a little speculation in cotton, and I make you this definite offer. The price next year may be nine cents or it may be five, and no man alive can tell which it will be; but I offer you now in advance eight cents

a pound for your entire crop next year, in the hope of making a cent or two a pound profit."

"Remember," he continued, "if we make this agreement and the price goes away up to ten cents, you are still bound to sell to me at eight."

"Yes, sir," Hunt answered, "I understand that, and I accept your offer; but please put it in writing, and, whatever the market price is, my next year's cotton is yours at eight cents a pound."

"Ah! you're a careful business man," Mr. Latham declared, "and you are quite right to want your contracts in writing. Wait a moment," he added, "and I will prepare an agreement in duplicate which we both can sign."

A moment later Mr. Latham returned with two copies of an agreement, one of which he had signed, and Hunt very willingly signed the other, which bound him to sell his next year's cotton at eight cents.

"I think you have done a great stroke of business," Mr. Lumsden told him, as Hunt turned to go, "for now the state of the cotton market need not trouble you."

"Hunt had ten dollars in his pocket, mostly from the sale of wood, which he paid for the furniture after taking a receipt; and, when he reached home several hours later, Bob and the cart made only a small part of a procession of several carts which he had hired to carry his furniture home, and he was much surprised himself at the quantity of it.

"Why, Hunt, you must have bought out half of

New Bern!" Mary cried, as the men were carrying the articles into the house. "Why, here is an oak extension table," she added, "and a very handsome one, too; and here are bedsteads and rocking-chairs and other chairs, and bed-springs and two dressing-cases, and many other things. I never saw such a lot of furniture, and it will make the new rooms look very grand. Oh, here is a nice mirror!" she cried; "so we can see how fast the sun turns us into darkeys."

"I have sold our next year's cotton to J. E. Latham & Co. for eight cents a pound, and here is the agreement," Hunt told her, "so if cotton goes down to five cents you need not worry, for ours is already sold for eight."

"Oh, Hunt!" Mary cried, "I hope you have not mortgaged our next year's crop. I know the cotton growers do that sometimes, but it is a bad plan."

"No, indeed," Hunt answered, "I have mortgaged nothing. I have agreed to sell at a certain price, but I would not take the money for it till I can deliver it. Not I."

CHAPTER XV.

A BEAR IN THE CORN.

THE arrival of the new furniture and the possession of two new rooms led to the first friendly dispute between Hunt and his sister that could not be settled by compromise. Hunt desired Mary to occupy one of the new rooms for her own, but she put her foot down flatly and declared that the old room was just to her liking, and that the new room opposite the one reserved for Mr. Warren should be the parlor and general sitting-room, where visitors could be taken. As she was immovable in this resolution, the new room was furnished to that end, and very comfortable and homelike it looked when all was ready.

The disposal of the new furniture about the house took some time, but most of that work, except the lifting of the heavy pieces, fell to Mary, for Hunt was unwilling longer to delay his labors in the new wood lot, it being more than ever desirable now to make money from the wood.

"Mary is a girl, after all, if she is a young planter," Scotty said, to account for her several mysterious visits to the city and her returns, loaded with bundles of dry goods. But under her labors the house soon began to bloom like a cotton field in July, with its

fresh new curtains to the windows, and bright covers to the tables.

Mary could not give her whole time, however, to this needed decoration of the house, for she took entire charge of the poultry and feeding the stock. The corn patch she considered under her special charge, and with delight she watched the ripening of the great ears.

One morning, when Hunt and Scotty were chopping as usual in the wood lot, she went out to examine the corn, followed, of course, by Rover and Buster, who were seldom willing to let her out of their sight.

"Hark!" Hunt said to Scotty, pausing a moment before he let his ax descend; "what can be the matter with those dogs? I never heard them howl so savagely before."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before they both saw Mary running toward the fence like mad; but they had no chance to ask questions, for, before either could speak, both saw a great black animal moving deliberately toward her, with Rover hanging to his throat, and Buster, generally the gentlest of little doggies, holding bravely to one of the creature's hind legs.

Hunt was instantly filled with apprehension, for he saw that the intruder was a black bear, and he feared that Mary might be deceived by its deliberate movements, as the dogs evidently had been. He knew that even in anger the bear moves slowly, but that it is a terribly dangerous customer.

"Mary!" he cried, "Mary, jump the fence!" And, as the bear was now within ten or twelve feet of her, Mary needed no second bidding.

"Come, Scotty!" he cried. "Come with me and bring your ax, there's a bear after Mary!" He led the way and Scotty followed, both with their sharp axes in their hands, and both ready for a hard fight. They sprang the fence toward the bear, Hunt saying quickly to Mary, as he passed her, "Keep right behind us;" but to their surprise the big black creature, still munching an ear of corn, turned at sight of them, and tried to make his escape. His progress through and over the corn-stalks, however, was somewhat checked by the dogs. He was now bellowing with pain; for Rover, whose bleeding side showed that he had been struck by one of the powerful paws, had a firm grip upon his nozzle, and Buster held to the hind leg.

Even thus hampered, however, the powerful beast waddled almost as fast as the boys could run, and despairing of reaching his head and when he was near enough, Hunt gave the bear a powerful blow with the blunt side of his ax on the back, near the end of the spine. This was a stroke in the solar plexus which disabled the beast, who immediately stopped and sat up on his haunches, growling ferociously, and beating the air savagely with his front paws.

This was the boys' opportunity, and they were quickly on both sides of his head; but the question now was how to attack him with their axes without hurting the dogs.

There was little time for consideration; but as Rover let go of the nose and stood out of reach of the great paws, barking as if challenging his antagonist to come on to single combat, Hunt dealt the brute a heavy blow fair between the eyes, again with the blunt side of his ax.

With a long, deep growl of anguish the bear fell over upon his side.

"Give me your ax, Scotty!" cried Mary, who now came up; and she struck the animal again between the eyes, but this time with the sharp edge of the ax.

Seeing that the conflict was evidently over, for the bear's mangled head sank helplessly to the ground, Mary ran to the back and tore Buster away, keeping him in her arms, fearing that her little pet might yet be injured by the deadly claws.

It was still a question how the bear was to be handled, for, although he was certainly vanquished, he might at any moment strike out with his powerful paws, a blow from which might prove disastrous. Hunt settled the question, however, by taking out his big pocket knife, and, with one skilful stroke, driving the long blade into the bear's throat. Instantly the blood began to flow, and in a minute or two the bear straightened out, and with a groan gave up his life.

"Look how he's trampled my corn!" Mary cried. "Let me have another whack at him."

"No, don't cut him any more," Hunt answered, "for we must save his skin as a trophy; he is dead enough now, and he only came in to steal corn. I

am rather sorry for the poor fellow, but he should not have stolen corn, and we need the meat."

"We will drag him into the smoke-house, Scotty, when he's surely dead, and then skin him and cut him up, and smoke what we can't eat fresh."

"What a big bear for Buster to kill!" Mary exclaimed, stroking her little favorite's head.

"Buster!" Hunt laughed. "Do you think Buster killed him?"

"Well, I reckon you killed him," Mary admitted, "but he would have made his escape if Buster had not clung to his leg. Here, Rover, old boy, you did nobly, too! Oh, this is only a scratch on Rover's side, that will soon be well!"

Hunt and Scotty remained on guard for some time with their axes, half fearing that the enemy might still revive; but the pool of blood by his throat soon showed that he would never steal corn any more, and, at Hunt's request, Mary brought a rope from the stable, with which Hunt and Scotty dragged their prize into the smoke-house. There Hunt took his first lesson in skinning game, and the handsome black hide was soon nailed, hair inward, against the sunny wall of the old house, and well salted, and the carcass was cut into quarters. Then some fine steaks and roasts were cut, and the remainder, after being thoroughly rubbed with salt, was hung up to be smoked.

"Well, I built this house to smoke pork in," Hunt declared, when the fire was lighted on the earthen floor, "but this is North Carolina, friends, and bear

meat is as good as pork. Pig hams are good," he added, "but we'll soon have a chance to try some bear hams." Then they all returned to the house, when their conversation was interrupted by the furious barking of both dogs.

"Why, there's a horse and buggy outside," Mary announced, after opening the door a crack and looking out, "and I think there are two men in the buggy; somebody has come to see us."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PLANTATION GROWS.

THERE was a buggy on the premises beyond a doubt, and the gentleman who stepped out of it and looked about him, as if undecided which way to turn, was no other than Mr. Warren. Hunt had peeped out of the door, and at his exclamation, "Here's Mr. Warren!" all three ran out to greet him.

"Why, Hunt, you don't mean to say this is your place!" he exclaimed, taking Hunt's outstretched hand. "I had no idea of finding you so well settled. I am glad to be safely here, and glad to find you so prosperous; but who do you think this is who brought me over from New Bern in the buggy?"

The gentleman did not wait for any guesses on this point, but stepped smilingly out, and Colonel Andrews stood among them. Then there was a general hand-shaking, and many more assurances of welcome were given to both by Hunt and Mary.

"Well, you have shown the wisdom of my prophecy, Hunt," the colonel said, shaking hands with all three of the young cotton planters. "I remember telling you that you could do well in North Carolina, and your place here proves the truth of my words. Been at

work in the cotton fields?" he asked, noticing the confusion of their dress.

"No, sir; we have been killing a bear," Mary answered.

"Then you have been doing a public service," the colonel asserted. "The bears are a great nuisance in this part of the world. Where there is a corn field they are sure to find it, and they do a great deal of damage. I see you have some corn here, and no doubt this one came to steal it. Mr. Warren, here, used to put scarecrows in his corn fields to frighten away the birds, but the best scarecrow for a bear is a good gun."

"We have no gun, sir," Mary replied, "but we have two good dogs; one of them caught the bear by the throat, and the other one by the leg, and Hunt and Scotty killed him with their axes."

"Then I am in luck," the colonel laughed, "for I am very fond of fresh bear meat. It must have been good fortune that took me up to Ontario County a few days ago. Finding that Mr. Warren was soon coming to visit you, I induced him to come down with me, and when we reached New Bern I hired this horse and buggy to bring him over. I had heard that you were doing well, Hunt, but I really did not expect to find you quite as well situated as this. I know you take good care of your animals, and if you will let somebody give my horse a feed, we will all go inside and try some of your chairs."

"You remember Scotty Watson, Colonel Andrews?"

Hunt asked. "You know we had a little talk with him one day in Geneva. Scotty is working for me now, and I think he likes North Carolina almost as well as I do."

"Oh, yes, I remember Scotty!" Colonel Andrews answered," and I am glad he has been wise enough to profit by your example."

In another minute they were all in the new sitting-room, and Mr. Warren's satchels had been carried into his sleeping-room.

"Well, I declare, Hunt!" that gentleman exclaimed, "it does my old heart good to be sitting in your house. No mortgages on it, I hope?" he continued.

"No, sir, I have never mortgaged anything; what little we have is all our own," Hunt answered.

"That's right; that's right!" Mr. Warren exclaimed; "they are dangerous things, Hunt, and they have given me a heap of trouble; but I am not quite on the road to the poor house yet."

"No, sir, nor won't be, while Mary and I have a home," Hunt declared.

Mary did not forget that she was the housekeeper, and, much as she desired to sit with their visitors, she soon withdrew to prepare the dinner; and it was not long before a white cloth was spread over the extension table, preparatory to her bringing in a steaming dish of spoon bread and two smoking bear steaks, nicely browned. Both of the visitors ate heartily, and both declared that nowhere could they better enjoy a dinner than in the home of Hunt Robertson.

The dinner naturally opened the floodgates of conversation, and Scotty had the good sense to retire when it was finished, to continue his chopping. Then both the gentlemen showed a great interest in Hunt's affairs.

"I have been hearing things about you over in New Bern, Hunt," the colonel said. "You know everybody knows his neighbor's affairs in small towns; as I come from near Goldsboro' I have the privilege of calling New Bern a small town. I hear that you have been earning money by working for wages ever since you came here, and that is much to your credit. But I hear, also," he continued, "that you have made a contract to sell your next year's cotton at eight cents a pound. I suppose you know that such a contract is of great importance to a planter, and may mean a great deal of money to you if you manage properly."

"I have been thinking of hardly anything else for the last week, sir," Hunt answered; "and I am very glad to have the chance to consult with you and Mr. Warren about it. I think I see in it an opportunity to do the best stroke of business I have ever done."

"That's good!" Colonel Andrews exclaimed. "You have been making a little money with your hands, but you can always make more money by working with your brains, if you use them in the right way. If it is true, as I hear, that your contract is with J. E. Latham & Co., you have a certainty of eight cents for your next cotton, because that is a responsible firm."

"Yes, sir; I made the contract with Mr. Latham himself," Hunt replied; "and I have been thinking a great deal about it."

"There is a large piece of land of about one hundred acres adjoining me here, on the side away from the creek, which belongs to Doctor Primrose, and which he has offered to sell me for five dollars an acre, as his large practice in New Bern keeps him very busy. I have no five hundred dollars to buy land with at present; but as the land is only a burden to the doctor, I think he would sell it to me for a present payment of fifty dollars, with the understanding that I am to pay him the balance and take the title in one year."

"As I averaged half a bale to the acre this year, I estimate that on the hundred acres I could produce fifty bales, which, at eight cents a pound, would be worth nearly two thousand dollars."

"That is a large speculation for me to undertake, sir," he went on, smiling, "but I can hardly call it a speculation, for at the lowest price of cotton the land would more than pay for itself in one year, and Mr. Latham has contracted to buy all my cotton next year at eight cents, no matter what land I raise it on."

"Hunt, there is a brilliant opening for you!" the colonel exclaimed. "You and I both know that cotton at eight cents means wealth for the planter. I hope you will not let such an opportunity escape."

"I know very little about cotton," Mr. Warren interjected; "but in my many years of farming in the North I never had such a chance as that. It looks to me as if Hunt had prosperity right in his grasp if he manages well, and I am rejoiced at it."

Colonel Andrews was not able to make a long stay, and soon drove back to New Bern, and, for many days and weeks thereafter Hunt and Mary found their chief pleasure in making Mr. Warren comfortable and happy. The first oil lamp that had ornamented the little premises was bought for his room; but in the cool autumnal evenings there was always a fire of lighter knots on his hearth.

It was through Mr. Warren that Hunt was able to open negotiations with Doctor Primrose sooner than he anticipated. Having a slight increase in his ailment, Mr. Warren desired the attendance of a physician, and Hunt could do neither more nor less than suggest Doctor Primrose to him, for he had been hearing, since his arrival in New Bern, repeated accounts of Doctor Primrose's skill. These accounts were verified in Mr. Warren's case, for the doctor cured him, while many another physician would have been deciding whether he should take the trouble to drive so far into the country.

John Green, the doctor's dog, accompanied him on all his visits, and soon struck up a friendship with Rover and Buster. On the occasion of one of the visits, after the doctor had concluded his professional work, Hunt made opportunity to speak to him about the land, and he soon found that the doctor was willing to accept the terms proposed, to make an immediate

sale on payment of fifty dollars down, with the understanding that Hunt should pay five dollars an acre for the land in one year, when the deed should be drawn.

"I am willing to sell you the land on such terms," the doctor said, "because the only benefit I derive from it is the privilege of paying the taxes, for I am kept much too busy to think of growing cotton or anything else."

"Of course, I will not give you the deed," he added, "until you have paid for the land; but as soon as you pay me the first fifty dollars you can take possession at once; and under our agreement it will practically be your own land from that moment."

"Then this will be a good time to make the first payment, doctor," Hunt said, and he took out his check-book and drew his check for fifty dollars, which he handed to the doctor.

"Pine Ridge Plantation is growing," the latter said, with a laugh, as he took the check. "Five acres you bought first, I think; then seven, making twelve; and now you have added one hundred acres, giving you a total of one hundred and twelve acres. With that much land, and next year's cotton sold at eight cents, you ought to do well, as I am sure you will."

Mr. Warren was so much better that he was able to walk over the new purchase with Hunt, and he pronounced it excellent cotton land, all the better for having grown no crops in recent years.

"Yes, sir, it is new land," Hunt agreed, "and for that reason will require less fertilizer, for old land that has borne frequent crops is often exhausted. I am sure I can look to it for half a bale to the acre."

"And this piece," he added, "gives new force to the name we have selected for the little plantation. We named it Pine Ridge Plantation long ago, on account of the bluff along the creek with a growth of pines; but this, you see, is a still higher ridge, and it also is dotted with pines."

"This new purchase," Hunt continued, "is going to make some change in my plans; when I had only twelve acres my idea was to use most of the seven-acre plot for cotton. But now that I have plenty of room for cotton, we can increase the stock of pigs, and give more room to corn, for I do not half like the idea of buying corn for the stock when I can just as well grow it."

"You have a larger place now, Hunt, than I had in Ontario County," Mr. Warren told him, "and a better chance to make money."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE OLD FERRY HOUSE.

WITH the cool days of late autumn, the time for "hawg killin'" arrived. The six little pigs had grown as large as their parents, and the carcasses of the eight went far toward filling up the smoke-house as Hunt desired.

Mr. Warren was a treasure while the killing was in progress, for Northern farmers as well as Southern planters know something about killing pigs and curing pork; and his advice was valuable. With Scotty's help Hunt cut each carcass into six parts, which he piled in salt upon the table in the smoke-house. In this condition he let it remain for two weeks, by the advice of Mr. Warren and Mr. Vincent, and then the pieces were hung up, and the fire was kept smouldering to make a good smoke.

"How long must we keep the fire burning to smoke the pork, Hunt?" Mary asked.

"Three months is the shortest possible time, and six months will be better. I hope to see the big lot green with little cotton plants before we should let it go out," Hunt answered.

With bear meat, new hams, poultry and eggs, and plenty of fresh fish, the Pine Ridge Plantation table

was always well supplied. The cutting and selling of wood continued unremittingly, and before really cold weather came the wood lot was almost converted into an open field.

"Do you never take a holiday, Hunt?" Mr. Warren asked him one day. "You have such a good boat, and there is so much water all around us, that I think we ought to make a little picnic some day when you are not too busy."

"I should enjoy it very much, sir," Hunt answered, "and, as plenty of wood is cut for Scotty to take over to the city, I should like to take you out to-morrow, if it is a pleasant day."

Mr. Warren gladly agreed to this, and early the next morning Hunt and Mary were busy provisioning the boat for a day's picnic.

"If we cross the Neuse River," Hunt explained, "keeping well to the eastward, or toward the entrance to the sound, we shall find a beautiful white beach, which is in Pamlico County, and that will answer our purpose nicely."

When they set sail later, the boat contained both bacon and bear's meat, and a frying-pan to cook them in, and before they rounded the point into the Neuse, they stopped at the fish market, where Hunt bought a bushel-basketful of oysters for twenty-five cents, promising to return the basket. Then they sailed into the Neuse, and steered diagonally across it, toward the white beach, which they could just see. The sun shining bright and warm soon made them

thirsty, and they discovered, when too late, that they had neglected to add a jug of drinking-water; but the sky soon became overcast, and a fresh breeze sprang up from the northeast, under which the broad Neuse became rough. Presently the breeze freshened to a gale, and Hunt became alarmed for the safety of his passengers, for, notwithstanding the lowered centre-board, the Maria Louise more than once shipped water.

"I am not much of a sailor, Hunt," Mr. Warren expostulated, "and I don't like the idea of going nearer the sound, where it must be still rougher. Why not turn about and go up the river instead?"

"Just what I was going to propose," Hunt replied. "We came for pleasure, and it would be no pleasure to be drowned;" and so saying he put the boat about.

"You see that bridge ahead of us?" Hunt asked, pointing to the long bridge. "That was built largely for the accommodation of the farmers in the interior, who brought their produce to New Bern. Before it was built there was a ferry, and, as the farmers generally came with their teams, and often had to spend the night before crossing, there was a little country hotel at the end of the road, called the ferry house. It is still there, as you can see, but is no longer used, and stands empty, so we can have our picnic there, if you like, and there is a well back of it."

"To the old ferry house by all means!" Mr. Warren exclaimed; "but with this gale blowing and the

water so rough I am afraid you will find it hard to land us there."

"I think I can manage that, sir," Hunt replied. "In North Carolina we learn a good many little tricks about managing, and I reckon I can set you ashore with dry feet."

This looked rather doubtful to Mary and Mr. Warren, however, for, although both jib and sail were down, the wind was carrying the little boat up stream at a tremendous rate, and the old pier was so dilapidated that, even if they could reach it, it would not serve them for a landing-place, most of the flooring having disappeared.

While the passengers were still in doubt about the landing, and when well in toward shore and directly opposite the old house, Hunt suddenly brought the boat about into the wind, and, with the painter in his hands, he sprang overboard, standing in water up to his armpits, and laughing a little at Mr. Warren's consternation.

"It's all right!" he shouted, "both of you sit in the stern, and I will soon have you ashore."

When they were both seated astern he towed the boat shoreward, and soon pulled the uplifted bow well up on the sand, so that they could both land dry-shod. Then he made the painter fast to a young tree near the water, and they all started for the abandoned house, which was half a ruin; but they had gone only a few steps when Scotty Watson ran down the path to meet them.

"I saw you put in here as I was going up East Front Street with my load," he said, in explanation of his unexpected appearance, "and, as I was afraid you might be in trouble, I ran across the bridge. There is a little darkey in the house," he added, "who says he knew you in the North."

"In the North!" Hunt exclaimed. "Not standing on his head, is he?"

"That's just what he is doing," Scotty answered. "He is a queer little chap, and he says he came over here fishing, and only ran into the house when he saw me coming."

A queer little darkey, standing on his head, reminded Hunt at once of Nathaniel Brown, the promising son of Mose, the "boy" of Colonel Andrews, who had long before frightened Mrs. Warren half to death by standing on his head in her kitchen; but it seemed impossible that he should be again in North Carolina. His doubts upon this point, however, were soon set to rest by the appearance of Nathaniel himself, who came spinning down the path, arms and legs extended, and rolling himself like a cart wheel. Suddenly, with a handspring, he resumed his feet, and, pulling off his cap, he bowed and grinned and asked:

"Mawnin', leddies an' gemmen; is dey anythin' wat I kin do fer you?"

"Why, this is Nathaniel, large as life, or rather small as life!" Hunt exclaimed. "This is the boy whom Mrs. Warren found behind the kitchen stove,

Mr. Warren. How in the world did you get back here, Nathaniel?"

"I come in de choo-choo boat, boss," the boy answered. "W'en Kunnel Andrews come back he bring me dad along, an' me dad he bring me;" and he clapped a hand over one ear as if his father had dragged him back by the ear.

"Too much wuk up Norf for me, sah. Has you got some wuk you could give a pore little niggah, sah?"

"Why, that is the boy, sure enough, who was up on the farm one day when you were only a boy yourself, Hunt. I remember him now, and I should think a little shaver of his size might be made very useful to you over on the plantation," Mr. Warren said.

"Maybe he might be taught to help Mary in the house," Hunt answered, "if he is good for anything."

"Yes, sah, I'se bery good, sah!" the little darkey exclaimed. "I wuk good fer you if you give me de chance."

"Well, I have a mind to give you a trial," Hunt replied, "if my sister likes you; but I'll tell you one thing, boy, no handsprings over there, and we'll not call you Nathaniel, for we're not going to give you a name that's longer than you are yourself. Jim Crow will be a good name for you, and you may as well begin now, so you can help carry this stuff up to the house."

"T'ank you, boss!" and, so saying, the new Jim Crow seized a basket and trotted up to the house as fast as his little legs and big feet would let him.

They soon found that they had reached shelter just in time, for they were hardly on the shaky piazza with their goods before rain began to fall in torrents; and just as they were about to open the rickety front door and step in it was opened from the inside, and a colored man stepped out, whom Hunt had seen before.

"Mawnin', boss!" the man said; "I'se Kunnel Andrews's boy Mose. De kunnel he lef' me in New Bern w'en he go back to Goldsboro', an' I glad if dey anythin' I kin do to help you."

"If there are any more in your family I suppose they are in the house," Hunt laughed, "for the whole family seems to be turning up; but I think you can make yourself useful, Mose; if you know how to open oysters you can bring that big basket of oysters up from the boat and open them."

Mose had been well trained, and, with a cheerful "Yes, sah!" he ran down in the rain to the boat and brought the oysters, and immediately began to open them on the piazza into a dish that had been brought, throwing the shells into the front yard in true Southern darky fashion.

The preparation of dinner was soon under way, and, as Mose waited on the table, or rather on the two barrels covered by a board that answered for a table, Hunt told him that he thought of taking his hopeful son home to work for him.

"Den make him wuk, boss, for he a wuthless little niggah, sah!" Mose replied. "I hope you lick all the han'springs outen him."

This was a poor recommendation from the boy's father, but Hunt was sure that the trouble with Jim Crow was ignorance rather than viciousness, and that he might be trained into something useful; so, after the dinner was eaten, the rain having ceased, the party returned to the boat to go home. Their walk down the path was enlivened by the sight of Jim Crow hotly chased by a big black billy goat, one of five or six that roamed in the yard; but when Mose came up with the boy, the goat having retired, he first took him by the ear and held him fast; then picked him up neck and heels and threw him bodily into the boat, where he landed lightly on his hands, and made comical faces at the rest of the world, feet upward.

This throw was something of a little journey for Jim Crow, for the boat was now four or five feet from the shore, a rise of the water having entirely changed the situation.

There is no tide worthy the name in the Neuse River at New Bern, but the wind makes great changes in the water. A strong wind from the west frequently blows so much of the water out into the sound that long sections of the bottom become visible; but on this occasion, on the contrary, the easterly wind had blown much water in, and materially raised the level.

Mose was equal to the occasion, however, and, without trying to pull the boat ashore, he first took Mary on his broad shoulders and waded out to the boat with her, returning then for Mr. Warren, and last for Hunt, so that all the party were put aboard

with dry feet. The boat was then headed for the point, and was soon sailing up the Trent River and Brice Creek, and landed the picknickers safely at home.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FISHING THROUGH THE ICE.

It was evident at this period of Hunt's career that his mind was busy. He was always thinking about something, even when at work, and one day, when opportunity offered, he went over to the city without anything for sale, and returned some hours later with a new outfit of clothes, not expensive, but well-fitting and much more presentable than those he had been wearing. He also brought an outfit of writing materials, and from this time on, the smaller table in the sitting-room was known as Hunt's desk, the paper and pens upon it being in frequent use.

This change in his clothing, and the unintentional change in his manner, brought about, no doubt, by the new responsibilities which weighed upon him, made a great outward change in Hunt. He was no longer the poor boy working for to-morrow morning's breakfast, but a well-dressed young man of affairs, with a family to provide for, and every prospect of being able to provide for it amply.

The change was too great to escape Mr. Warren's watchful eye, and he found an opportunity to have a few words alone with Hunt.

"You are fast growing up to the occasion, Hunt,"

he told him, "and I am glad to see it. I see a great change in you since you made your latest land purchase. Of course, I was glad before to see you take right hold of any work that would pay you a little money, but I did not want to intrude my advice, and it is all the better that this change in you should have been of your own motion.

"There is always a little money to be earned by daily labor, but there generally comes a time with a young man, as it has now come with you, when he can derive more profit from his head than from his hands. A cotton plantation of one hundred and twelve acres is enough to occupy any man's head and hands, and if you were now to sell your time to any employer you would be robbing your own plantation of just that much brain and muscle. With this land venture on your hands, I think you are entirely right to give your whole time and attention to your own property.

"Besides," he went on, "it is an important matter to keep up appearances, especially for a stranger in any community; people can only judge of you by what they see of you. If they see you peddling fish and working in the saw-mills they will naturally think of you as a fisherman or a mill hand; both very honorable occupations.

"But on the scale of cotton planting at which you have now arrived, it is better that you should be looked upon by your associates as a young cotton planter and the owner of land, for such little things

have a bearing upon a man's credit, and you should always keep your credit high. The short of it is, Hunt," he concluded, "that you are no longer a farmer's boy nor a fisherman nor a mill hand, but a cotton planter with excellent prospects, and I am delighted to see the change in you."

"I hope you will not think that I am going to set up for a fine gentleman and stop working because I have bought more land," Hunt answered, with a smile. "It is only a change in the form of work, for the plantation needs my whole attention. It is not a small matter to have a hundred acres to pay for, and I know that I must be on the lookout. I realize the importance of what you tell me about keeping my credit up, and I think that so far it is very good."

"As it should be; as it should be," Mr. Warren assented.

Hunt found on his next visit to the city that he had not in the least overrated his credit, and found it even better than he thought—so much better that at least one of the little furrows of care disappeared from his face.

He thought it only honorable to tell Mr. Latham that he had largely increased his holding of land, and that his next crop of cotton would probably be much larger than was anticipated when the eight-cent bargain was made.

"Oh, I know all about that," Mr. Latham told him, "and now that you are such a planter I want your steady custom. You know I not only buy

cotton, but sell fertilizer to grow it with, too; how much fertilizer are you going to put on that hundred acres?"

"Ten tons, sir," Hunt answered.

"That's it, exactly!" Mr. Latham exclaimed; "ten tons."

"Now, I want to sell you that ten tons," he continued, "because that ten tons a year will be going on every year for say twenty years, which means two hundred tons. I know that a young man who does business in the way that you do intends to pay for what he buys, and, as I want your steady custom, I want you to run a little bill with me. Whenever you are ready for the fertilizer, send me the order, and it shall be on your place the next day; and you can pay me for it when convenient."

"Thank you, Mr. Latham," Hunt answered; "I don't like the idea of running bills, but in this case it seems necessary."

"Of course it is," Mr. Latham replied; "nothing venture nothing have, you know."

It was the settlement of this fertilizer question that eased Hunt's mind, for two sets of figures had been constantly dancing before his eyes. "Ten tons of fertilizer, at twenty dollars a ton, equals two hundred dollars," was one set. "At least one mule, with a wagon and harness and plow, equals say one hundred and fifty dollars, for I cannot, with any decency, ask old Bob to do all the work alone for a hundred acres of cotton. He is a patient old chappie, but he must

have help in the spring." That was the other set, for he was so used to paying cash for his small purchases that he did not stop to consider that credit is sometimes as good as cash, and that his credit was excellent.

There seemed no end to the work for himself, for now he had much more wood, and when the timber was all cut into firewood, not only on the seven-acre lot, but also on the larger purchase from Doctor Primrose, he made a contract with one of the wood dealers in New Bern, and in a few weeks delivered to him fifty full cords, at three dollars a cord.

"A cotton planter has more than cotton to think of, doesn't he?" Mr. Warren asked him one day.

"Yes, indeed, sir," Hunt answered; "he has to give some attention to corn and pork, and part of my ambition is to make Pine Ridge Plantation bacon a favorite in the market, and to have plenty of it to sell."

"Corn and cotton should always go together," Mr. Warren laughed, "with pork to grease the way."

The smoke-house fire was kept constantly burning, and the whole family were agreed that even in that land of good hams and bacon no better could be found than their own.

"How delightfully warm this early December sun is!" Mr. Warren exclaimed, one day, as he came in from the stable. "This is more like September at home, and I don't wonder that you like the sunny South. How would you and Mary like to take me

out for a little fishing-trip to-morrow? We might as well have some more of those fine fresh fish for the table, and I want to sun myself a little."

This was readily agreed to; but Hunt laughed quietly to himself as he and Scotty carried several extra armfuls of wood into the rooms. This was all needed that night, for the wind turned to the North, and nothing short of roaring fires sufficed to keep them warm.

Jim Crow was deputed to visit each fireplace every half-hour during the night to pile on more wood, and he did his work well until after the first trip, when he was found snoring in front of the kitchen fire, which, like all the others, had gone dead out.

"Well, I thought a North Carolina darkey would, at least, keep himself warm!" Mary exclaimed, when, awakened by the cold, she stepped into the kitchen.

"In most cases he will," Hunt retorted; "but when it is a choice between warmth and sleep he will take the sleep, as you see. Anyhow," he added, laughing, "you always know where to find a Brice Creek darkey when he is asleep; but you never know when he is awake."

Hunt went himself into Mr. Warren's room and started a new fire, and he and Scotty kept the others going, Hunt believing, not without reason, that the labor of keeping fires going was less than the mental strain of keeping an untamed and untrained darkey up to his work.

When breakfast was finished next morning, the

three set out for their fishing, but Hunt, it was noticed, carried an ax over his shoulder instead of a pole.

"You don't usually fish with an ax, do you, Hunt?" Mr. Warren asked.

"Look at the creek," Hunt replied, for by this time they had reached the edge of the bluff, and he pointed toward the boat.

"In the sunny South it is sometimes well to take an ax along to break the ice," he laughed.

Then the others saw that the creek was fairly frozen over, the ice in the middle being a mere skimming not much thicker than a pane of glass, but much thicker along the shore; and when Hunt ran to the boat with his ax he had to break the ice with forcible blows before the boat could be moved.

Mr. Warren sunned himself by buttoning up his overcoat tight and tying a handkerchief around his neck, and with numbed fingers they were all satisfied when one large Welshman was caught for dinner.

By three o'clock that afternoon, however, the air was warm, and the ice had all disappeared.

CHAPTER XIX.

TRIALS OF A "GENTLEMAN SPORTSMAN."

A SHORT time after the wintry fishing, Rover and Buster, who had been let out one morning, as usual, both made a great outcry, denoting the presence of a stranger on the premises. When Hunt opened the door to call them off he saw on the bluff a man, who might, judging from his burdens, have been a peddler of clothes, hardware, ammunition, eatables, and many other things, for he carried a dress-suit case, a large box of cartridges, and a lunch basket; but the gun over his shoulder and the two dogs that frisked about his feet showed him to belong to the anomalous class known as "gentlemen sportsmen." When Hunt went out and approached him he let the gun down with a thud, as if it weighed something like a quarter of a ton, and leaned wearily upon it.

"That's the heaviest gun I ever did see," he said, when Hunt drew nearer.

"It is a dreadful weight, that's a fact," Hunt replied, picking the gun up to "heft" it. "You must get good big wages to carry such a weight as that."

"'Wages'!" the man exclaimed, "I do it for sport, my friend. I live up in Maine, and I have come here to enjoy a little of your fine sport on the sounds.

Capital bird-shooting, I understand, you have about here in winter," he continued. "By the way, if you have no objections, I should like to shoot over your land," he went on.

"I don't think you will find anything here," Hunt replied; "but I don't care how much you shoot over my land, so long as you don't shoot my ox."

"Oh, I don't take big game!" the man laughed. "I am after quails, you know. I see a great many wild ducks all around, but I don't care for anything but quails. I see you have a good boat here," he went on, "and I shall want to hire the use of a boat and the services of a guide. What would you charge me by the day for the boat and your own services?"

"To tote these traps?" Hunt asked. "I should want ten dollars a day, anyhow, to lug the gun and this stuff, though I believe the usual price is two dollars a day for boat and guide. I haven't much time for such work, but either the young man who lives with me or I could take you out nearly any day."

"Well, I haven't much time to lose," the stranger answered. "You see it is getting well into the quail season, and there are about as many gentlemen sportsmen in the fields and woods as there are quails. I wish my other dogs would hurry and get here," he continued. "I only have these two now, and one other over at the Chattawka House, in New Bern; but the other two are on their way down by rail, in a crate. Now, if you are going to be my guide and

take me out in your boat, we will call it a bargain, and I will be over here early to-morrow morning; but mind, you must take me to good places if you go out with me, for I have promised a dozen fat quail to my friend Hood, in Bangor, another dozen to my wife's aunt, who rather sneers at my going shooting; and several more dozen to other people, so I've got to have them, you know, and no mistake, and the only thing I've got so far is a rabbit, which the dogs stole over in New Bern."

"Do you get good prices for quail, sir?" Hunt asked.

"'Prices'!" the man cried. "Why, my friend, you don't seem to understand that I'm a gentleman sportsman. I am no marketman to sell them, but give them to my friends."

"You give them away, sir?" Hunt asked again. "You pay your own expenses all the way down here from Maine, and then, after all your trouble, you give the birds away? It doesn't seem to me that that can be a profitable occupation for a steady job."

"Ah, but the sport!" the visitor almost shouted. Think of the sport of it, my young friend. There's nothing in the world like it. Say," he asked, suddenly changing the direction of his remarks, "would a dollar be any object to you to help me carry this stuff down to the boat and then sail me over to town? I've carried these things six or eight miles to-day, and I declare I am just about done up; but it's all in the interest of true sport, my friend."

"And what did you get, sir?" Hunt asked, as he began to carry the things down.

"Not a thing," the stranger replied, "because luck has been against me to-day, but I got two splendid shots, and I should have got at least one of the birds if he hadn't hidden behind the river bank; you know what a trick they have of getting behind a bank just at the critical moment. One of those birds I followed over four miles, and twice, I give you my word, I almost got within range. My name is Peters," the passenger concluded, when they landed at the market wharf in New Bern; for Hunt, partly for profit and partly from pure good nature, sailed him over.

"Peters, remember," he called back as he left the boat, whistling for his dogs, "and I will be over early to-morrow morning."

"I wonder why his wife's aunt sneers at his going shooting?" Hunt said to himself with a quiet laugh. "I should think she would recognize the need of gentlemen sportsmen."

"Say, boss!" he was hailed by a colored man on the wharf, who had overheard the last few words, "you aint agwine take dat fellah out shootin', is yer? kase you better not, I ken tell yer; I had him out yistidday, an' I wouldn' do anodder stunt wid sech a yearthquake on legs, not for nawthin'. You don' heerd o' de sebben-league boots, ain't yer? He wear um, dat boss Peters do; he tramp nine mile yistidday and den miss fire, an' most of de white gemmans dey

drives him off dey places, kase dey say he scare de cattle."

When the "gentleman sportsman" appeared at the plantation early next morning, according to promise, Hunt could not send little Jim Crow with him, as he had determined to do, because the young darkey was entirely unable to carry the gun and other heavy materials necessary for shooting quails. Scotty was sent with Mr. Peters, however; and when he picked up the gun, the dress-suit case, the lunch basket, the cartridge box, and the bag containing some extra shooting-clothes, he declared, with some reason, that carrying them was much harder than carrying wood.

Mr. Peters had only three dogs with him when he reached the house, but the other two soon came bounding up; and, when the five setters were loaded in the boat, none too much room was left for the sportsman and his guide.

When they set out, Mr. Peters insisted upon going up the Trent River, the shooting being better, as he said, in that direction, and Scotty willingly sailed the boat up the Trent. Before they had gone far, the sight of a flock of quails, about half a mile inland, decoyed the sportsman ashore with the gun and all the dogs, but he left the other baggage behind. When Mr. Peters was far enough inland to put the quails between him and the river he followed them up, till, with the instinct of their kind, they flew down behind the bank, and so safely skirted the shore. The sportsman soon got a glimpse of one of the feathered beauties passing

like a flash between himself and the boat, and, instantly bringing the gun to his shoulder, he fired on general principles, and so much at random that Scotty felt sure that his time had come.

"Lookout where you're shooting!" he shouted, and the next moment a scattering charge of bird shot marred the starboard bow of the Maria Louise.

"Hadn't you better come aboard again?" Scotty asked; "I'm afraid you'll get bigger game than you are after if you keep shooting toward the boat;" and when he drew in to the shore Mr. Peters clambered aboard. They then proceeded up the river, leaving the dogs to follow on the bank; but the animals had no desire to run when they might ride, and in a short time all five plunged into the water and swam to the boat, where, after climbing in, they shook themselves thoroughly, greatly to the damage of the baggage.

They were up almost as far as the fishermen's "hotel" when one bird flew along the bank, so much to the excitement of Mr. Peters that he nearly capsized the boat in his frantic efforts to reach the gun. Scotty steadied her as well as he could, and handed the gun to the sportsman, who sprang to his feet and brought the gun up to his shoulder, resting, at the same time, one foot upon the starboard rail.

The appearance of another bird skirting the bank caused him to lean well forward while aiming. This began to look like real work to the five dogs, and when the sportsman cocked his gun they made a wild rush for the side of the boat nearest the birds.

Unfortunately, Mr. Peters was at the moment leaning far out over that side, and the weight of the man and his gun and the impetus of the dogs were more than the Maria Louise could stand, and she gave such a lurch to starboard that Mr. Peters went overboard, gun and all.

It was necessary now to find accommodations in the "hotel" to dry his dripping clothes, and while all that could well be dispensed with hung in the sun to dry, Scotty patiently wiped the gun and oiled it, for Mr. Peters was affected almost to tears by the mishap to his favorite.

When the gun was oiled and ready for use again, Mr. Peters set out with the dogs across country, leaving behind him several articles of apparel that in polite society are considered strictly necessary.

For the next hour the "guide" sat under the trees, waiting for the clothes to dry, and greatly enjoying the spectacle of a half-clad gentleman sportsman, followed by five dogs, breaking his way through bushes and jungles. This sport might have continued until dark had not the owner of the land unexpectedly appeared with a gun of his own, and made such forcible remarks that Mr. Peters thought best to retire.

At length the dogs were coaxed back into the boat, when the shaking process was repeated with such effect that, when the lunch basket was opened, the lunch was found to be ruined, and the party returned dinnerless to the plantation. When they climbed the

bluff, Mr. Peters carried the impedimenta, as he intended to walk back to the city, but he stopped for a moment at the house, his face all aglow with the pleasure of the chase.

"Well, we've had a good day's sport," he said, when Hunt opened the door for him, and, in answer to the young planter's look of inquiry, he began to unload himself. Having deposited upon the floor his dress-suit case, cartridge box, bag of clothes, and gun, he came, at length, to an extra shooting-jacket over his arm, in which were innumerable little pockets for cartridges.

"But where are the birds?" Hunt asked.

"Oh, we didn't get any!" Mr. Peters replied, beginning to load himself up again, "but we had a fine day's sport, all the same. I had several fine shots, but the birds were out of range."

So saying, he started off for the city, followed by the five dogs, three of which had meanwhile been soundly whipped by Rover and Buster.

"Well, I've long wanted to see one of those gentlemen sportsmen," Hunt said to Scotty and Mary, fairly shaking with suppressed laughter, "but I haven't seen one yet who shoots birds."

"The birds are all right when he's around," Scotty replied, "but I was rather afraid he'd fetch one of Mr. Vincent's cows."

CHAPTER XX.

A MULE AND A BLIZZARD.

Not long after Scotty's hunting-trip, Hunt went over to New Bern on business, and when he returned he drove over with a sleek bay mule, harnessed with a good harness to a painted farm wagon, on the bottom of which lay a plow.

"I have bought them," he told Mary. "You may think this a poor time of year to buy more stock, but it is not so poor, because animals can be bought cheaper now when they must be fed than later in the season, when they can graze. Several of the gentlemen I consulted with tell me that in the spring this mule will easily be worth one hundred dollars, for he is only seven years old, and perfectly sound; but today I bought the mule, wagon, harness, and plow for sixty-five dollars. His name is Dick, and I suppose you will soon be making a pet of him, as you do of Fannie; but remember, a mule is not a pony, and don't take any liberties with his hind feet."

"I have made some more work for us, Scotty," he went on, as Scotty now came up. "I have been buying a mule, and we will have to build a stable for him."

"I should think you would need a pair of mules for so much land," Scotty answered.

"Bob and the mule can do our work," Hunt asserted, turning the mule over to Scotty.

"I had that same idea," he explained to Mary, "but after thinking it over carefully I concluded to buy only one mule for the present, because by and by, if all goes well with us, we shall want something more than Fannie to carry us over to church and about the country to see the other plantations, and, as I should not care to take you driving with a pair of mules, I have, by buying a single mule, left the way open for us to get a pair of horses after a while, if we continue to prosper."

"I don't want anything better than Fannie," Mary replied; "but if you need a pair of horses for the work that is another matter."

"Don't let the little darkey fool around the mule," Hunt laughed, "or you will soon have no one to wash your dishes; by the way, I have brought the little fellow a coat and a pair of shoes, for his clothes are not suitable for this winter weather."

When they went into the kitchen they found Jim Crow picking up the pieces of a platter that he had just dropped and broken, the latest in a long series; but Hunt handed the clothes to him.

"Wat you gwine pay me fer wukkin fer yo', boss?" he asked, in lieu of thanks.

"Well, my sister thinks that maybe she can teach you something after a while, so we will give you your board and four dollars a month," Hunt replied.

"I don' want no boards, an' I ain' gwine to wuk

fer nobody fo' four dollars a mont'!" little Jim replied, pouting, but picking up the shoes and throwing the new coat over his arm. "I'se gwine home, I is," and off he went, slamming the door after him to show his absolute independence.

"I hope he has a good home to go to," Mary exclaimed, with a laugh.

"Not much to boast of, if his mother tells the truth," Hunt answered, "for she stopped me as I was coming home, and said she was 'clean done a'most starved, boss,' and I gave her a quarter; but they are an independent lot, for at the worst they can catch fish."

"My, what a relief to be alone!" Mary sighed. "That boy has been the plague of my life ever since he came."

The closing days of February had now arrived, and, as plowing-time had almost come, Hunt took Mr. Warren out over the land, after the mule's stable was built, and the latter was delighted at the early signs of budding vegetation.

"This is a great climate you have come into, Hunt," he declared. "To be sure, we have had a few chilly days, and just a little skim of ice, but, after all, the middle of winter is no worse than our spring weather at home; just look at that maple over there. Why, those buds are almost ready to burst out into leaves. I have long wanted to see something of the South, and I tell you I enjoy it, my boy."

Hunt looked doubtfully at the ripples upon the

water, which denoted a northwest wind, but he made no reply. Later in the day, however, he called Scotty away from the chopping to carry an extra supply to all the fireplaces, and that evening, the temperature having fallen about to freezing, the fires were very cheerful and agreeable. They all sat that evening in the sitting-room, passing the time pleasantly not only with conversation, but also with reading new books and magazines, a fresh supply of which Hunt had brought home after his last visit to the city.

"This is really a comforting reminder of old times, Mary, this blazing fire," Mr. Warren said; "the only possible fault that I can find with the South is that there are hardly enough cold days to make a good fire enjoyable."

"I think we shall be able to remedy that fault in North Carolina," said Mary, "before the winter is over. It begins to look a little like budding spring outside, but I know that we have to expect occasional cold weather until the first of April."

"Oh, I am not so sure of that, from what I see," Mr. Warren replied; "there are all the signs of coming spring. I think, Hunt, that you will soon have to be getting your ground ready for the early vegetables, for this looks to me very much like plowing-weather."

"It looks to me, sir," Hunt replied, "so much like snowing-weather that I am going to take Scotty out with me in a few minutes to see that the animals and poultry are all housed."

"Oh, no danger of snow down here!" Mr. Warren laughed. "We'll not have snow and new buds upon the maple trees at the same time."

The family retired early, as they always did, and in the morning Mary called to Hunt, through the open doorway,

"Hunt, I can't see through my windows, and it looks to me as if there had been a snow-storm, and I can hear something beating against the glass, snow or rain or hail or something."

"The sky looked like snow last evening," Hunt answered, "but I guess there is no danger of our having any sleighing." But he changed his mind about that a few minutes later, when, having sprung up and lighted the kitchen fire, he opened the door and saw that the snow was already an inch deep, and still falling as rapidly as he had ever seen it fall in the North, and drifting under a strong northwest wind.

"We may be able yet to give Mr. Warren a sleigh ride!" he exclaimed, "for this looks to me like a real snow-storm coming."

"'Snow-storm'!" Mary exclaimed; "it is a real blizzard. Just hear the wind howl and see how the snow drifts. Wouldn't it be dreadful if we were to have a deep snow, with so many of these colored people in rags and some of them almost barefoot? They all go home from their work at night, even the servants in private houses, and they will have a hard time getting back this morning. I pity the poor souls

who live in James City, and work over in New Bern, with that long bridge to cross in this blizzard."

By the time the breakfast was ready it was plain that Mary was not far wrong in calling the storm a blizzard, for the snow fell faster than ever, and the wind howled louder.

"Why, this is a rare experience for the sunny South!" Mr. Warren declared, when he appeared for breakfast.

"It is not unusual so far for North Carolina," Hunt replied, "for we often have little sprinkles of snow here, but this looks to me as if it intended to continue and give us a real snow-storm."

By dinner-time, the storm having continued unabated, the snow was so deep that paths had to be shovelled before Mary could go out to feed the poultry, and then the wind almost took her off her feet.

As they were about to sit down to dinner they heard a shout outside, but no barking this time from the dogs in the yard, for the dogs were glad enough to remain in the house.

When Hunt ran to the door he could hardly restrain his laughter, for the most abject and woebegone colored man in the world stood without, half-hidden by snow and with a basket on his arm, which was half-full of snow.

"Come and see this smoked ghost before I warm it up!" Hunt called to the others, "for it's speech is frozen up solid." Out of pity he lost no time in taking the colored man in by the kitchen fire, and there,

when he regained the power to talk, he made known that he was a messenger sent with a note from Mr. Vincent, the latter having been caught by the blizzard without sufficient provisions in the house.

"Why, certainly, we will gladly supply our neighbor," Hunt told him; and when he called Mary it was ostensibly to put a strip of bacon and some eggs and flour into the basket for Mr. Vincent, but really to give her an opportunity to see the remarkable messenger.

The man had a small shawl wrapped over head and ears and well tied around his neck; an old blanket thrown over his shoulders was secured about his waist with a rope, and his feet were somewhat protected by feed bags drawn over them, and secured around his legs with more rope. Having no gloves to protect his hands, he had utilized an old pair of blue stockings for the purpose; his shaggy beard had become almost a solid icicle, and this, melting and dripping over his skin, evidently caused him much discomfort. After his departure with the filled basket the messenger furnished food for conversation during the dinner, and his appearance gave Hunt a new idea, for the snow was by that time six or seven inches deep, and he announced his intention to ride over to New Bern, where he had business, and where he desired to see what effect so deep a snow would have upon the people in general and upon the colored people in particular. It was a stormy ride in prospect, but he thought the game worth the candle, and set out on muleback, the mule

wading with great reluctance through the unaccustomed snow.

"Ah, this warms one's heart!" Mr. Warren exclaimed, before Hunt started, and he saw the depth of the snow. "I did not know that I loved my own region and its customs so well. What wouldn't I give to hear the merry jingle of sleigh bells?"

"It may be warming to the heart!" Hunt called back, "but it is not at all warming to the ears and fingers." In a moment almost he was lost to sight, for the air was full of falling and drifting snow. Still the storm continued, and, after more than two hours had passed, they began to feel some anxiety about him; but before they could worry long they heard the cheerful sound of sleigh bells outside, and there was Hunt, with the mule harnessed to a sleigh that was half-hidden in blankets; and, best of all, a string of bells around the mule to jingle at every movement. Scotty went out to hold the mule, and Hunt came in.

"This is something grand!" he exclaimed, shaking the snow from hat and coat, and warming his hands by the fire. "The resources of North Carolina are boundless, and we are equal even to a sleigh ride. When I found there was a sleigh in Scott's livery stable, the only one in the city, I think, I was bound to have it to give you both a sleigh ride, and the sound of the dear old bells; but I tell you I had a time to get it. It was only on account of the raging storm and by promising faithfully to return it this

evening that I could get it at all, for as soon as the storm is over every man, woman, and child in the city will scramble for it, as it is the only one."

"Do you know how deep the snow is?" he suddenly asked. "Ten inches on the level, and much deeper in the drifts. If you don't mind braving the storm in the sleigh, under all those blankets, you will find it worth your while to let me drive you over to New Bern. Such sights you never saw; some home-made sleighs are out already, made of dry goods boxes, old boards, and buggy tops, put on home-made runners; but for real misery and woe, the Trent River bridge is the place. In town the boys are snow-balling at a great rate, and you must be prepared to catch it, as everyone does."

Mary and Mr. Warren agreed that nothing could be more novel or more enjoyable than a sleigh ride in North Carolina; and, wrapping themselves up well, they climbed into the sleigh and set off, with Hunt for driver, leaving Scotty at home to take care of the stock and premises.

When they reached James City, although the snow and wind had now somewhat abated, they were apparently in a deserted village, for hardly a soul was to be seen in the streets, and every little shanty was shut up tight.

"But I do not see smoke coming from the stick chimneys, so some of the people must be doing without fires," Mr. Warren said.

"That is simple enough," Hunt answered; "it is

because they have no wood. They do not expect such emergencies as this, and, if they did, most of them have no money to buy wood."

"The white people ought to establish a relief station to provide food and fuel for the unemployed," Mr. Warren declared.

"Ah, if they did that, sir," Hunt answered, "every darkey with a job would immediately give it up, so as to get food and fuel for nothing. That has been tried before," he added, "but always with the same result. They will hardly have a chance to get really hungry before the sun takes this snow away."

When they reached the Trent River bridge they saw many strange-looking people plodding across to their little homes. Women had their tattered skirts tied down with cords; and men and women alike had their feet tied up in old pieces of blanket, old strips of carpet, or whatever came handy. The city presented a remarkable sight. The pine and cedar trees were loaded down with snow, and in some cases large limbs had broken off; but already the mayor had caused notices to be posted calling for "fifty men to rake the snow off the cross-walks."

"'Rake the snow'!" Mr. Warren cried, as he read one of the notices. "It's well seen they don't know much about handling snow down here. I should like to see those fifty men at work raking ten inches of snow." But he did not have the pleasure of seeing anyone at work in the streets who could possibly remain indoors. Middle Street, Craven Street, and

Pollock Street were entirely deserted except for boys snow-balling, and business was totally suspended.

"You don't often have such snows down here, I suppose?" Mr. Warren asked of a uniformed policeman at a crossing.

"No, sir," the officer answered politely; "we sometimes have a little sprinkle of snow, but I've never seen a thick snow like this before, sir."

"'Thick snow'!" Mary laughed, when they were out of the policeman's hearing. "They not only shovel it with rakes, but they call it thick! I wonder what they would call a snow up to their shoulders, as I have seen it sometimes up in Ontario County?"

"Well, now you see the sunny South buried under the snow," Hunt said, "and some queer sights worth seeing; but we must be going home, for I promised faithfully to return the sleigh before dark."

When they reached home Scotty had shovelled a path from the front door, and they were not sorry to be again before the blazing fire; but Hunt had to take the sleigh home and then return again with the mule.

"I think we will not plant cotton to-morrow, Mr. Warren," he laughed, as he set out.

"So is my every wish gratified," Mr. Warren said to Mary, when they were left together; "I have heard the music of the sleigh bells and have even had a sleigh ride in North Carolina. You and Hunt have caught the spirit of the state, and learned how to do everything possible for strangers. The people of New Bern are the most hospitable and agreeable people I

ever saw, but I really did not expect them to give me a sleigh ride."

By the time that Hunt returned with the mule the snow had ceased entirely, and the wind had nearly died out; but the depth, as he said, was ten inches on a level, and some of the drifts were more than two feet "thick."

CHAPTER XXI.

NEW BERN UNDER THE SNOW.

THROUGHOUT the blizzard, the greatest snow-storm ever known by the oldest inhabitant of eastern North Carolina, the temperature did not fall below twenty-eight degrees, so the suffering was not as great as it had been some years before, when, although the snowfall was lighter, the weather was so much colder that not only the Neuse and Trent Rivers, but even parts of the sounds, were frozen over. At that time, when the ice broke up in the Neuse River, thousands of dead birds floated down on the ice cakes, dead either from cold or starvation. Their own blizzard, however, was sufficient to satisfy the longings of the Northerners for a taste of winter. When Mr. Warren wrote to his wife, who was staying with one of her sisters, that the ground was covered with ten inches of snow, she replied,

"Why, that is more snow than we have had all winter in the region of New York; yet you thought you were in the South."

The day after the great storm was Sunday, for the blizzard came on a Saturday; but, notwithstanding the discouraging circumstances, Hunt took the whole

family to New Bern on Sunday morning in the wagon drawn by the mule, and they attended service in the brick church next to the post-office, where the attendance was meagre on account of the almost impassable condition of the streets; and the rector, the Rev. Mr. George, preached a sermon appropriate to the occasion.

On Monday they all visited the city again, and found most of the white boys in New Bern engaged in building snow men, snow pillars, and pyramids, and rolling huge snowballs almost as large as the negro shanties.

The worst of the Southern blizzard, however, was yet to come, for the coming of snow in the South is not nearly as bad as its going away. The sun on Monday shone bright and warm, and the snow began to melt, converting the unpaved sidewalks into canals of slush. The comparatively warm weather continued, and by Tuesday spots of bare ground began to appear. The mountains of snow were soon exchanged for seas of mud, for, although the Craven County soil seems to be composed largely of sand, it contains enough clay to make a deliciously rich mud when well soaked.

"It's a good thing that horseless carriage scheme did not work," one of Hunt's New Bern friends told him, looking at the muddy streets. "You know somebody was going to establish a sort of street-car line last year, and got up a home-made auto-Memphis to drag some other vehicles through the streets, but the machine would not work."

"'Auto-Memphis'?" Hunt asked. "Haven't you got the wrong city?"

"Oh, to be sure," the man explained; "I've got too far north; I meant auto-Mobile. But the auto, whatever town it was, would have had fine work to pull wagons through this mud. It might have worked if he had put twin screws on it instead of wheels."

Among her other flowers Mary had planted some healthy roots of the orange honeysuckle, which had grown into considerable bushes, and before the snow had disappeared she picked from them a little bouquet of the fragant flowers.

"This is another of the resources of North Carolina," she told Mr. Warren, as she presented the bouquet to him. "I waded through the snow to pick these flowers, and I hope you will send them up North to show that, although we can have blizzards in February, we also have flowers in bloom."

By the following Saturday not a vestige of the snow remained, although there was still an unpleasant reminder of it in the wet ground.

"It goes as suddenly as it came," Hunt declared; "and if the weather continues good the ground will be almost dry in another week or two, and meanwhile Scotty and I will go on with fencing the big lot."

The good weather did continue, and almost out of the snow sprang clusters of green grass and fresh green leaves. Bob was soon grazing on land that a fortnight before had been buried under nearly a foot of snow.

It was not Hunt's intention to depend solely upon cotton, important as his cotton crop was to be, and he began to make preparations for planting his early crops of vegetables.

"Our white potatoes turned out well last year," he told Mary, "and this year we ought to do even better with them, for we not only have much more land to spare, but we have a good stock of stable manure to help them grow."

Bright spring days are beautiful anywhere; but when they come in March and early April, as they do in North Carolina, they are doubly enjoyable. Corn-planting time is a standard date in the farmer's calendar, by which he times the planting of many other crops, and in the North he marks it in his almanac for the tenth of May; but by the tenth of April the greater part of Hunt's field corn was planted.

"I have planted a crop or two," Mr. Warren declared, "but this is something new to me, to plant corn as soon as the snow is melted."

Mr. Warren had spoken several times of bringing his visit to a close, but when he mentioned it now Hunt took him out to the smoke-house, where the fire was now for the first time allowed to go out, and explained that he and Mary must have assistance in eating all that juicy bacon, and the countless eggs, as well as the hens which laid them.

It was plain to them all that Hunt felt the weight of his new responsibilities, and they could not but sympathize with him. They knew that he still had

a further payment of four hundred and fifty dollars to make on the hundred-acre lot, and that the fertilizer for it would cost him two hundred dollars more, although his bank account was somewhat depleted by the building of the house and the necessary purchase of the mule.

"Don't you worry about these things," Mr. Warren urged him, clapping him heartily upon the back, "for your prospects are excellent. The greatest cotton planters of the South would be filled with joy with the assurance of eight cents for their cotton."

"Yes; but I am not one of the great planters," Hunt answered. "I am only a little one trying to become a moderate-sized one."

"But look at the past," Mr. Warren continued. "Two years ago you were a farmer's boy, and one year ago you were beginning the struggle with five acres of land and a cabin; already your five-acre patch has grown into a hundred and twelve acres, and the cabin has grown into a comfortable house. You have every reason to be satisfied with your affairs; but if you are not, suppose you ask Scotty how he would like to change places with you? He has no responsibilities, and he never will have much of anything in this world without running some risks.

"See here, I want you to consider this," Mr. Warren went on; "you are reasonably sure of fifty bales of cotton, and, leaving your eight-cent contract entirely out of the question, but supposing that for any reason you were to get only the lowest market

price for your cotton, and putting that price at five cents, which is certainly the lowest price imaginable, you would still have enough coming in to wipe out all your indebtedness and leave you in good financial condition."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Mr. Warren!" Hunt exclaimed; "for I do not want to think that perhaps I have tried to go ahead too fast."

"No, you have not," Mr. Warren replied; "extending your acreage is not a speculation, for a sure thing is no speculation."

Soon after this conversation Hunt made occasion to ask Scotty what he thought by that time of North Carolina.

"I think I have every reason to think well of it, haven't I?" Scotty answered. "I came here almost a wreck, but now, through your kindness, I am as well and as hearty as ever I was; but a little while longer of working in those mills would have used me up. You have hit the nail on the head, Hunt, and, as far as I can, I want to follow your example and be my own master in North Carolina. By next fall I hope to have enough saved out of my wages to buy a little piece of land, for on his own land a fellow has something to look forward to."

"Does Scotty feel that way about it?" Mr. Warren asked, when Hunt told him what Scotty had said. "I am glad to hear it, but not surprised, for Scotty is no fool. Then let me tell you something that I have in mind, Hunt; I am glad to say that my own

affairs are not in quite as bad condition as we supposed, nor as they were when I first came here. The farm is gone past recall, but some other matters have turned out fortunately for me, and I am still able to draw my check for a respectable amount. As I must make a new start somewhere, I think North Carolina is the place. If I were to buy some land here, a young and active partner would be an advantage to me, and Scotty knows something now about cotton-planting, so it may not be long before you will have both myself and Scotty for neighbors."

"That is almost too good to hope for, sir," Hunt answered, "but still I do hope for it, not only for ourselves, but also for your own sake and for Scotty's."

Thus the question of Mr. Warren's leaving them was disposed of, and, instead of going northward himself, he accepted Mary's and Hunt's invitation to write to his wife to come and join him.

It was a gloriously bright day when Mrs. Warren reached New Bern and Hunt carried her to the plantation in the wagon. She was delighted with everything she saw, but became alarmed when Jim Crow suddenly appeared upon the piazza, as she sat in the sitting-room, in his old reversed position, his prominent feet showing that the new shoes had seen hard usage during the winter.

"My, there's that little imp!" she exclaimed; "Nathaniel Watt, I think he said his name was; and he is so ragged he must have walked down from the North. But do the colored people here all stand

on their heads?" she continued. "He ought to wear his shoes on his hands, for he walks mostly on his hands."

Seeing them looking at him, Jim Crow here turned a series of handsprings into the hall, and appeared in the sitting-room.

"Misses, has you got a nickel about yo' yo' doan' want?" he asked; "I'se a pore little niggah, an' I ain't had no brexfas'."

But, as Hunt made a step in his direction, the ex-dishwasher did not wait for the coin, but hastened out across the piazza, down the steps, and down the walk in another series of handsprings.

"I don't mind them so much when they are on their feet," Mrs. Warren declared; "but I positively can't stand them upside down."

Hunt was delighted at the arrival of Mrs. Warren, for he did not forget that Mary, in her endeavor to assist him, was almost entirely shut off from the society of womankind; and he was pleased again when, after a few days, Mary announced her intention to visit New Bern with some money to invest in dry goods.

CHAPTER XXII.

FIFTY BALES OF COTTON.

HUNT fully understood the importance to him of that year's cotton crop, and made ample preparation for it. Before the ground was quite dry enough to prepare for cotton, he set to work alone to build a large shed, about twenty by thirty feet in size, that was little more than a skeleton frame with a roof to it, for it was to be used only as a store-house after the cotton was picked, and before it was taken to the gin house. If the field gave him enough for fifty bales, as he hoped, the little barn used the year before would not be nearly large enough to protect the cotton from rains; and while this was in progress he set Scotty to plowing, sometimes with the mule and sometimes with the ox. As soon as he was at liberty, however, he took his own turn at the plowing, and then the utility of the mule became apparent, for while one plowed with the ox the other plowed with the mule; and when the plowing was completed he and Scotty alternated in harrowing. He intended to sow the whole field by hand as he had done with the smaller field the year before, and to that end had begun to mark it off in rows with one of the plows, when Mr. Vincent drove up with his cotton-seed drill in the wagon.

"No, you can't sow this big field by hand!" he exclaimed, "and, besides, what is the use of having neighbors if you don't use them? So I have brought you my drill, for I am not going to use it this year. Now, don't think of returning it till you have planted your field, and some rainy day you can send Scotty over with the wagon to get the scales again to weigh your cotton."

"'Not going to use it this year'!" Hunt exclaimed. "Are you not going to plant cotton when it went up to nine and a half cents last year?"

"That is exactly why I am not going to plant cotton this year," Mr. Vincent answered, with a laugh. "With cotton at nine and a half cents last year every dooryard will be turned into a cotton field this year, and the market will be glutted; but you are all right, for you have already sold your crop at eight cents."

Before the harrowing was finished, Hunt drove over to New Bern with the wagon to order his ten tons of fertilizer, and greatly surprised J. E. Latham & Co. by giving his check for it on the spot.

Partly in his own wagon, but chiefly in the wagons of the dealers, the fertilizer was soon on Pine Ridge Plantation, where it was spread over the ground. With the seed drill the large field was planted with much less labor than had been required for the planting of the five-acre lot by hand.

When the young plants began to make a showing of green, as they did in a short time, Mary spent

much of her time in the cotton field, and both Mr. and Mrs. Warren became greatly interested.

"Now for another scraper," Hunt said, and he soon made a second one, so that he and Scotty could work together in keeping down the weeds. The appearance of the sky received his closest attention, for too much rain in the spring might mean much to him; but there was neither too much in the spring nor too little in midsummer. The weather, indeed, favored him throughout as though smiling upon his efforts. In due time the well-grown plants began to bloom, and there are few prettier rural sights than a large cotton field in flower, even to a disinterested spectator. No wonder, then, that Hunt and Mary, knowing what depended upon this field, spent much of their time in watching it.

"Are you not going to take Mary down to Beaufort, Hunt, where many of the New Bern people go in summer in search of a sea breeze?" Mr. Warren asked.

"Not this summer," Hunt answered. "If Saratoga were within ten miles, and I had a thousand dollars to spend for pleasure, I should not go to it till this crop is picked and sold. Mary ought to have some amusement," he added, "but you know what it means for a man to be on the spot and attend to his own affairs. This year's cotton crop is of as much importance to me as a speculation involving millions is to some Wall Street man."

"Ah, you have the true business instinct, Hunt,"

WHILE ONE PLOWED WITH THE OX THE OTHER PLOWED WITH THE MULE.

Mr. Warren retorted. "Your pleasure is in your work, and that is the way that any young man must feel who would make money."

Mr. Warren expected to find the summer intensely hot, as he was in the sunny South, so he was agreeably disappointed at finding the hottest August days no warmer than the corresponding days in the North.

"Now it is almost time to begin our first picking," Hunt announced when September came. "With a large field like this it is customary to make several pickings, though on our small field last year we picked it all at once, and I am going to send my first telegrams to-morrow to bring the pickers."

"'Telegrams'?" Mr. Warren inquired. "Can you telegraph for pickers?"

"When I whisper to the colored people in James City that I want pickers," he answered, laughing, "the news travels through the colored settlement with a speed equal to any telegraph line in the world."

He sent his primitive despatches, and the following day the pickers began to arrive, men and women, boys and girls, as before, but in far greater numbers.

Then Scotty was sent to Mr. Vincent's for the scales, and Hunt himself brought more empty barrels and bags from the city. Pine Ridge Plantation soon became a busy place, and the fleecy cotton began to whiten the new store-house in a way that did Hunt's heart good.

"Well, I have seen such scenes before, but only in pictures," Mrs. Warren declared, as she stood by the

fence and watched the busy pickers. "Now you have a real plantation, Hunt, and I am glad it belongs to so good a man. You were always faithful to us, and you will be faithful to yourself and Mary."

Two weeks later Hunt began to haul cotton over to the gin house, for the first picking was finished.

"First fruits," he cried, on returning home one evening, waving a small bit of paper above his head. "Here is the gin house's receipt for seventy-five thousand pounds of cotton; that is, seed cotton, of course. There will be a little more from the second and third pickings, but less than a ton, I should think."

The next day when he went into the gin house he found himself amid a wilderness of bales of cotton.

"They are keeping you busy this year," he said to young Mr. Burrus.

"'They' means you, so far, for this is all your cotton," Mr. Burrus answered. "Fifty bales of it exactly, averaging just five hundred pounds to the bale."

"Then give me your receipt for it, please," Hunt requested, "for that will be easier to handle than fifty bales of cotton."

The gin-house receipt for fifty bales on demand was immediately made out and handed to him.

"There is some seed, also," Mr. Burrus said. "From the fifty bales there should be fifty thousand pounds of seed, or twenty-five tons, which, at twelve dollars a ton, is worth three hundred dollars."

"And your charge for baling and ginning the fifty bales?" Hunt asked.

"For baling, tying, and strapping fifty bales, at one dollar and twenty-five cents a bale, sixty-two dollars and fifty cents," Mr. Burrus answered. "For ginning the twenty-five thousand pounds, at forty cents a hundred, one hundred dollars. Making a total of one hundred and sixty-two dollars and fifty cents, which, deducted from the three hundred dollars' worth of seed, leaves a balance in your favor of one hundred and thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents."

Hunt lost no time in going to the office of J. E. Latham & Co. with his precious receipt, which he showed to Mr. Latham.

"Fifty bales, averaging five hundred pounds each, eh?" Mr. Latham said, as he read it. "Give me an order for this cotton, will you?"

Hunt picked up the pad that was lying upon the desk and wrote the order in the following words:

"MR. BURRUS:

"Please deliver my fifty bales of cotton to J. E. Latham & Co., on demand.

"H. ROBERTSON."

Mr. Latham meanwhile busied himself with the pad and pencil and his check-book.

"Thank you," he said, when Hunt handed him the order for the cotton. "Your fifty bales weigh just twenty-five thousand pounds, which, at eight cents a pound, is worth exactly two thousand dollars; and here is our check for the amount. Is that right?"

"Quite right, thank you," Hunt replied, as he examined the check, which shook a little in his hands.

"I expect a bale or two more from the second and third pickings," he said.

"Then bring it along at the same price whenever it is ready," said Mr. Latham, "for our contract covers all the cotton you raise this year."

"All right," Hunt retorted, and he immediately visited the bank and deposited his check.

Dick had to make fast time home that day, for Hunt had news for Mary and Mr. Warren, whom he found together in the sitting-room.

"Well, now tell us all about it!" Mr. Warren exclaimed. "Of course, you have not done quite as well as you expected, for nobody ever does."

"Then I am an exception!" Hunt laughed, as he drew a chair up to the big table and seated himself, "for I have done fully as well as I expected, and here is my bank book to show for it. This last credit of two thousand dollars comes just in time, for, with paying three hundred dollars for picking seventy-five thousand pounds, it was drawn pretty nearly dry."

"But, Hunt Robertson!" Mr. Warren exclaimed, looking at the bank book which Hunt held open before him, "do you mean to tell me that you have sold one year's crop from one hundred acres of land for two thousand dollars?"

"That is what eight-cent cotton means, Mr. Warren," Hunt replied; "and I still have a few dollars coming at the gin house; but as you are interested in

cotton and, I think, a little interested in me, I will show you just what those hundred acres have done for me."

"Hunt!" Mary cried, "is it really true that we have two thousand dollars in the bank?"

"It is," Hunt answered with some pride. "That is more than I expected to have for a good many years. At a rough estimate," he went on, taking up a piece of paper, "this is the way I stand with the new lot. Paid for the land," he scribbled with the pencil, "five hundred dollars; for fertilizer, two hundred dollars; for the mule and wagon, sixty-five dollars; for picking, three hundred dollars; for gin-house charges, one hundred and sixty-two dollars and fifty cents. But to the two thousand dollars' credit you must add three hundred dollars' worth of cotton seed, making twenty-three hundred dollars; which, minus the twelve hundred and twenty-seven dollars and fifty cents expenses, leaves me a cash profit of ten hundred and seventy-two dollars and fifty cents.

"However," he continued, "in estimating the profit you must add the five hundred dollars' worth of land and the mule and wagon, all of which I now own, and which will not have to be paid for another year."

"But you paid for some of those things, such as the fertilizer and mule and picking the cotton, Hunt!" Mary exclaimed, "so that you really now have two thousand dollars clear in the bank, except the four hundred and fifty dollars you are to pay Dr. Primrose."

"Yes, I have one hundred and thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents still coming from the gin house," Hunt replied, "and I think there will be at least two more bales of cotton from the last picking."

"Then you have made more than two thousand dollars this year," Mr. Warren said, "besides all the bacon and other things you have produced for the support of your family," he added, "and that is something to be proud of, Hunt. Of course, you cannot depend upon doing as well as that every year; but if you do even half as well you will soon be independent, and it would have taken you a long time to have a good bank account like that at your old job at three dollars a month."

"Oh, that was well enough for a boy, sir," Hunt replied; "but, of course, I looked for something better as I grew older, and I think I have found it here in North Carolina."

"I am so sure you have that I think I shall try North Carolina myself," Mr. Warren told him. "With a farm in the North that cost twenty times as much, I never made that much money in cash in one year out of it."

"It is one of the beauties of handling cotton," Hunt replied, "that it is spot cash."

"Now, I suppose, you will be looking for more land," Mr. Warren suggested, "since you have done so well with your last purchase."

"No, sir; what I have is enough for me, as soon as I get Major Daves to search the title and pay Dr.

Primrose his four hundred and fifty dollars, so that he can give me the deed," Hunt replied. "I do not intend to buy more land every year, but to give all the better tillage, now that I can afford it, to what I already have."

"That is wise!" Mr. Warren exclaimed, "and I will give you an improvement on the old adage. A little farm well tilled means a little purse well filled."

"But if we can make two thousand dollars a year out of one hundred acres," Mary asked, "why should we not have twice as much land and make twice as much money?"

"Ah, Mary!" Mr. Warren laughed, "I am afraid you have the land fever, and it is well that it has not attacked Hunt. It does not follow that with twice as much land you would make twice as much money. With what he has now, Hunt can do most of his own work, and so be independent, as he could not be if his place was so large as to need the employment of colored labor.

"As I understand the situation, Hunt, you now have two thousand dollars in the bank, out of which you are to pay four hundred and fifty dollars to Doctor Primrose for the land; and one hundred and thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents coming from the gin house, leaving you sixteen hundred and eighty-seven dollars in money at the end of your second year, besides a farm of a hundred and twelve acres all paid for, and all your live stock and tools."

"Yes, sir; and a smoke-house full of meat," Hunt added.

"If that is not doing well for the first two years," Mr. Warren continued, "for a stranger in a new country, then I am no farmer. You have hit the nail right on the head by coming to North Carolina, as Scotty says, and now you have only to keep on as you have begun to become a successful man."

Before September was ended, the lawyer had done his part by searching the title, which was found to be perfect, and the balance due on the land had been paid and the deed had been duly made out and delivered to Hunt, and recorded. The estimate of two more bales to come from the second and third pickings was below the mark, for within a short time Hunt had added eighty dollars more to his bank account for two extra bales, which left him credit in the Citizens' Bank for sixteen hundred and thirty dollars.

It was easy to see by his manner that a load had been lifted from the young planter's mind, for he had no more risks to run on that year's crop; and with such a comfortable bank account he was now in better condition to stand possible failures in succeeding crops.

"Are you glad that you left home and struck out for yourself, Hunt?" Mary asked when they were alone.

"I only left one home to come to another," Hunt replied. "This is home now, is it not? We like

the people we are among, and we have every reason to like the cotton-growing business. I do not think that we could ask for anything better. If I had continued to work on a Northern farm at three dollars a month I should have earned exactly seventy-two dollars in these two years, instead of the sixteen hundred and thirty dollars and the home that we now have."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A VOYAGE TO BEAUFORT.

When the December days brought as much winter as North Carolina generally has, all the fields having been cleaned and put in order, Mr. Warren, with considerable introduction, made an unexpected proposition;

"Now, this is something that I earnestly hope you will say 'yes' to," he said to Hunt; "your crop is harvested and the money in bank, so there is nothing now to require your continued presence at home. I am going to take Mrs. Warren," he continued, "and make a little excursion for a few days, and we want you and Mary to join us. These rivers, as you doubtless know, flow into Pamlico Sound, and by following the sound a short distance Beaufort may be reached by boat, and, indeed, is reached every day, for the sailing vessels called sharpies come here from there with cargoes of fish-oil, and return with whatever cargo or passengers they can get.

"Beaufort is a summer resort for the people of this region," he went on, "for it is continually swept by the ocean breezes; but it is also a winter resort, because it is so near the Gulf Stream that it is much warmer than New Bern. It is to Beaufort, in short that my

wife and I are going, and we particularly want you and Mary to go with us. Now remember," he continued, laying a hand on Hunt's shoulder, "that I have been your guest for a long time, and when I devise a little plan for turning the tables a few days you must not thwart me. The sharpies returning to Beaufort carry passengers very cheaply, but I thought that those oil boats would hardly have comfortable accommodations, especially for ladies, so I have chartered one of the largest and best sharpies I have seen in the river, the one called the Flying Fish, and she is to carry us down and back and to remain at our disposal until we are done with her. Indeed," he continued, "she is to be at anchor here in Brice Creek to-morrow morning, so that we can put on board here whatever provisions and comforts we choose for the voyage."

"Thank you very much for your invitation," Hunt replied, "and if it lay entirely with me I should accept it at once with great pleasure; but I must consult Mary first, and if she is willing we will go."

Before he had an opportunity to speak to Mary, the Flying Fish appeared and dropped anchor in the creek, directly opposite the house, and, after seeing her, Mary could hardly do anything but consent to go.

"Isn't it splendid!" she exclaimed when Hunt repeated the invitation to her, "to have our ship anchored almost in our front yard. Why, of course I will go, only too gladly," she added, "and Scotty can take care of the live stock while we are away.

Look at the beautiful little cabin she has, where we can make ourselves just as snug as if we were at home.

"But why do they call that kind of boat a sharpie, Hunt?" she asked. "From what little I know about boats, I should call her a schooner, and she certainly has a schooner's masts and sails."

"That is the local name for those boats," Hunt answered. "They are very much like schooners, only the sides are built straight instead of bulging."

"Oh, we will have a beautiful sail!" Mary cried. "We will put plenty of provisions on board, and some bedding and rocking-chairs from the house to make us comfortable."

The captain of the sharpie assured them next morning that the trip from New Bern to Beaufort was often made in one day, and he was much surprised at the quantity of hams and dressed chickens and eggs and flour and other eatables which, as well as four rocking-chairs and a quantity of bedding and dishes, they carried out to her in the Maria Louise.

Before nine o'clock in the morning the passengers were all on board, Scotty having promised to stay close at home to take care of everything; and the crew, consisting of the captain and two colored boys, hoisted anchor and set sail.

"Why, this is better than any of the sea stories I have read!" Mary cried in glee; "to start from our own yard."

"Yes, Miss, and we have beautiful weather for it,"

the captain answered. "With this fresh westerly breeze I shall land you in Beaufort before dark."

They were soon in the Trent River, and, as the bridge opened its iron draw for them to pass through, Hunt told the captain to stop at the market wharf, so that he could buy some oysters; but Hunt soon returned from shore with the information that there were no oysters in the market that morning, as a sharpie had just taken a big boatload of them up to the wharf where the revenue cutter lay.

"But that will do us just as well," he told the captain, "for we can run up the Neuse to that point and get them there."

"I know the Neuse River like a book," the captain replied, and in a few moments he rounded the point into the Neuse. The westerly wind had blown so much of the water out of the river that Hunt was a little alarmed about it, for he knew that it was not unusual for large boats to run aground there when the water was so low.

When the Flying Fish was nearly opposite the residence of Mr. Burrus, and a short distance below the revenue cutter's wharf, Hunt cautioned the captain to be careful, for he was in a dangerous spot.

"Oh, don't you be a bit afeared when I've got the hellum!" the captain laughed, bringing her about for another tack, "for I know every inch of this river; the channel's out here pretty well toward the middle, but a little to the south'ard of the middle, and furder in toward the New Bern shore is the shallers."

At that moment the sharpie, under good way, ran her nose into the mud with such force that the rocking-chairs on deck were instantly overturned, and Mr. and Mrs. Warren and Hunt and Mary were sent sprawling.

"Them's the shallers!" the captain cried; "I told you I knowed 'em; dang it all, I believe that the'r channel's shifted and we're aground. But never mind, friends," he continued, "the wind's bound to shift, too, in the co'se of a day or two, and blow some water back into the river to float us off again."

And, so saying, he leaned contentedly against the rail, as if prepared for a long wait.

"'A day or two'!" Mary cried, regaining her feet and helping Mrs. Warren back into her chair. "We can't stay here stuck in the mud a day or two waiting for the wind to change. I wonder whether the revenue cutter wouldn't help us off; that's what she's here for, isn't it, to help vessels in distress?"

"Like enough she would," the captain answered, "only she's aground herself. See, the wind has blowed the water all away from her, and she's a-layin' in the mud. She can't help nobody the way she is now."

"Here comes that little tug from the saw-mill above the bridge, captain," Hunt interrupted. "Can't you make some signal of distress, to call her to our assistance?"

"Yes, she can pull us off right smart," the captain answered. But instead of setting a flag at half-mast,

as Hunt expected, he went forward and climbed into the hold through the open hatch, and returned in a moment with a conch shell in his hand, with a hole bored in the top, and on this he blew a long and doleful blast.

The tug's pilot evidently heard the signal, for instantly her bow was headed toward the sharpie; but as they watched her she suddenly came to a stop and partly keeled over, her whistle blowing to its fullest capacity.

"There, by gum, she's went and did it herself!" the captain cried; "she's well aground and she can't give us no help, we jest got to wait here for more water, and you may as well make your minds easy."

"We may as well make our bodies comfortable!" Hunt laughed, "if we have to stay here until the water rises, and if you will let your boys lower that small boat I will row up to the wharf and get the oysters that brought us into this trouble."

The boat was soon lowered, and Hunt set out, and when he returned he brought two flour barrels of oysters in the shell, and the colored boys were set to opening them.

"Now, this is not so bad," Mr. Warren declared while they were eating the excellent oysters raw, the whole party by this time having settled themselves in comparative comfort. "This is the old story of travelling in a sail boat in shallow waters," he added, laughing; "out of every twenty four-hours you must expect to spend twenty hours aground; but we might

be much worse off, for we have plenty on board to eat and everything to make us comfortable."

"Even the privilege of walking ashore through the mud, if we like!" Mary laughed, for they were within about a hundred feet of the sea wall, along East Front Street.

That evening they still lay in the mud, and Mary cooked an excellent supper in the little cook house forward with the assistance of one of the colored boys.

By morning the wind had shifted and blown more water into the river, and they were again afloat; and by the time Mr. and Mrs. Warren turned out they were again under way toward Beaufort.

On the sandy point a mile or two below New Bern they grounded again; but in the course of two or three hours the crew, with their long poles, got them off.

This was only the beginning of what was to come, for they grounded so many times that day that it was dark before they reached the entrance to the canal that was to float them from one sound to another, and the captain dare not try the canal by night.

"I think your sharpie was made for land travel," Hunt told the captain while they waited; "and she ought to have wheels under her."

"I jest wisht she had," the captain replied. "They's some water about here, but it's all got land under it, and most times the land comes mighty near the top. If yo' had a cap'n as didn't know the river you wouldn't have bin here yet."

The next morning the sharpie passed through the

canal, and soon lay in Bogue Sound, in front of Beaufort, and just across the sound from old Fort Macon, which they visited before landing in Beaufort. This old fortification, now deserted except for the presence of a sergeant of the regular army, was a work of considerable importance in the Civil War. Beaufort they found to be a village of five hundred or six hundred people, largely fishermen and their families, and they did not spend much time in exploring its sandy streets. It was not Beaufort that they had come for, but the trip, and of the trip they had already had more than they had bargained for. They all had the good sense, however, to make sport of their difficulties, knowing that in a sailing vessel, as elsewhere, they must take things as they came.

A few days in the neighborhood of Beaufort were amply sufficient for them, and they soon retraced their way toward New Bern.

"You were the pioneer, Hunt, in selecting a spot," Mr. Warren told him on the way up, "and I think you made no mistake in selecting New Bern, especially the beautiful bluff on Brice Creek. If you had searched over the whole South, I doubt whether you could have found a more suitable place. There is, you see, a fine bluff along the Neuse River, also, just below New Bern. I think that somewhere between your place and this Neuse River bluff is the place where before long Farmer Warren will be growing some cotton. Your experience has only strengthened my desire to become a cotton planter myself. Now

that you have a good bank account," he continued, "if my knowlege of human nature goes for anything, you will soon be thinking of building yourself a new plantation house."

"No, sir; for the present, at least, I shall not even think of such a thing," Hunt replied, "for the old house is all we need for comfort, and I have no money to spend in fine living; but if ever I do in the future lay the foundation for a new house, you may be sure that I have enough money in bank to pay every cent that the house will cost me, for I shall not run into debt for it."

"That is a good resolution, Hunt," Mr. Warren declared, "and I hope you will stick to it, for the old house is plenty good enough; and, I declare, there it is, just as we left it, with the Maria Louise floating at the foot of the bluff; and look, there is Scotty on the bluff waving his hat for us. Doesn't it give you an independent feeling, Hunt, to know that it is your own land we are soon to be on?"

"Indeed it does, sir," Hunt answered. "The only fellow I knew well up North was Scotty, and he is already here; but if I knew any more young men up there, I should certainly write to them to lose no time about coming to North Carolina to grow cotton."

Scotty brought out the Maria Louise to the sharpie, and the chairs and other goods were loaded into it, and in a few minutes the party were at home again.

"Oh, you dear old fellows!" Mary cried, stroking the heads of Rover and Buster, which sprang lovingly upon her; "I did not know how much I loved my North Carolina home, and everything connected with it, until I went away for a few days; but I must go out now and speak to Fannie and Bob and Dick; and give my love well mixed with corn to the poultry. Then when I return to the house and smell the smoke of lighter knots again, I shall know that we are really at home."

CHAPTER XXIV.

STOCKING A PIG PARK.

"WILL you come out and see the park?" Hunt asked Mary, after they were well settled down again at home.

"'The park'?" Mary repeated; "I did not know that we had grown grand enough to have a park."

"Well, come and see," Hunt told her, "for it is to be your own park;" and he took her out to the seven-acre plot which he and Scotty had enclosed with a high and substantial fence.

"You know it is quite the thing," he told her, "for rich farmers in the North to have their parks — very rich ones, I mean, who do not know quite what to do with their money, and spend it in buying deer for their parks. We are not quite rich enough for that, so what I have arranged for you here is not a deer park, but a pig park."

"'A pig park'!" Mary exclaimed. "Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"That makes no difference," Hunt answered; "people who never heard of a pig park can come here and see one if they like; a park is no more than a bit of land well enclosed. When it is stocked with deer, it is called a deer park; and if we stock this

one with pigs, it will be a pig park, beyond a doubt.

"I say that it is yours," he continued, "because I made it especially for you, and I know that you will take an interest in the pigs.

"Naturally you will want some income of your own, and now that the fishery has suspended operations (for you will not want to sell fish any more in New Bern), I do not see what better money-making thing you can turn your attention to than bacon. Now that we have plenty of land to raise corn to fatten pigs with, we can raise as many as we like; a dozen pigs or so may be kept in a pen, but with any large number they must have a place to run and root, and this is the place."

"Oh, this is a splendid place for them," Mary answered, "where they can roam about a little, but not enough to keep them thin. What is that part fenced off for, with a lighter fence, at the upper end?" she asked.

"That is for your poultry," Hunt replied; "there is a very small door to it, you see, so that the fowls can come into the larger part and associate with the pigs when they choose, but the pigs cannot get through to trouble the fowls. In short," he went on, "here is room for a hundred pigs, and as many chickens and ducks and turkeys as you care to keep. I have built a fowl house for the poultry in their department, and here is a large pigpen to shelter the pigs in bad weather. Here is the only other improvement that I

need trouble you with," he went on; "do you see this big log hollowed out into a trough? Scotty and I hollowed it with our axes and with fire, and it is so placed with one end in the poultry yard, and the other in the pig park, and close to the fence nearest the creek, that when it is filled with water every morning, as it must be, it will give drink to both pigs and poultry."

"This is a fine place for them both," Mary declared; "and I shall be glad to take charge of them, for both bacon and eggs will bring us in some money."

"Now that you have seen it," Hunt told her, "the next thing is to stock it. You have poultry enough to make a start by letting them increase, but we need a lot of little pigs, and if you feel like it we will drive over to James City with the mule and try to find some."

Mary was more than willing, and in a few minutes the mule was harnessed to the wagon, and they set out together for James City to buy little pigs.

"Hunting pigs in James City is like hunting paving stones in Broadway," Hunt laughed, as they drove through the narrow streets, "and they are all in the street. James City itself is a good deal of a pig park."

As there are no dealers in small live pigs, their only way was to follow up those that scampered before them and inquire in the houses under which they took refuge. In this way they soon bought a half-dozen litters, making about twenty-five little pigs; some white, some black, and some mixed.

"We need not look further," Hunt said, when the new purchases, with their little legs tied, were deposited in the wagon. "We have told at least a dozen people that we want to buy young pigs, and before dark that news will have spread through James City and New Bern, too, so plenty of young pigs will soon come to us."

Mary was so much pleased with the sight when the little piggies were set at liberty in the park that she ran up to the house to cook some corn meal for them.

A day passed without any further steps toward stocking the pig park; but on the second day after the visit to James City the dogs set up a great barking outside as the family were about to eat breakfast, and Hunt hurried to the door, where he found an old colored man in a long and very ragged overcoat, the pockets of which bulged out greatly and seemed to require considerable attention.

"Mawnin', boss," he said, shifting a large covered basket from his left arm to his right; "does yo' want ter buy some young hawgs dis mawnin'?"

"Yes, I don't mind buying some, Uncle Eben, if they are good, healthy ones," Hunt answered. "How many have you got?"

"I'se done bring yo' eight, boss," the man answered, lifting the lid of his basket to show them.

"They seem in very good order," Hunt said, looking into the basket; "but there are only six here, Uncle Eben."

"I done gwine show yo' de rest, boss," the visitor said; and he set the basket down upon the floor, with the cover still open.

Then followed a struggle to extricate an unwilling little pig from each of the two side pockets of the old overcoat; and when, at length, they were both out, the owner could not hold them. In his efforts to quiet them he lost sight for a few moments of the open basket, from which the six piggies soon escaped, and he had eight to contend with instead of two. The racket made by the pigs, the man, and the two dogs, which had returned, soon brought Mary to the spot, and she chased the scampering animals with nimble feet, and soon had the whole eight in her apron, a squirming mass of embryo bacon; and while Hunt bought and paid for them she carried them out and set them at liberty in the park.

She returned to the house just in time to meet a very stout negress with her head tied in a towel, and something living and squirming in her upheld apron.

"Boss, does yo' want to buy a few nice young hawgs?" she was asking Hunt, and Hunt bought six more from her.

"Boss, does yo' want to buy a few nice young hawgs?" was asked of them so often that morning that at each repetition of the question Mary was ready to burst into a roar of laughter. It was asked by an old man with a bag over his shoulder, who produced four piggies from the bag when Hunt consented

"I DONE GWINE SHOW YO' DE REST, BOSS."

to buy. Then it was asked by another woman, by a girl with a clothes-basket on her head, in which she had seven, and by a ragged boy, who had three attached to a rope.

There was a procession of colored people all the morning, with "nice little hawgs" for sale, all of which Hunt bought, and he thought he must have exhausted the young-pig crop of Craven County, when a row-boat arrived manned by two men, one of whom shouted, "Boss, does yo' want ter buy some nice young hawgs? We'se brought you some over from Pamlico;" and Hunt bought ten little ones from the boat, as well as the two mothers.

With this addition they had about one hundred pigs, large and small, in the park.

"Boss, does yo' want to buy some nice little hawgs?" Mary laughingly asked when Hunt returned from the house with some food for them; but he said that he would wait a bit and take his "nice little hawgs" in the form of bacon.

"They are dear little things," Mary declared, "and it seems a shame to fatten them only to kill; but when they become large enough for the smoke-house the bacon will make an important addition to our income. You may think my piggery only an amusement for me," she continued, "but some year when the cotton crop is a failure we shall be glad enough to have the bacon to sell."

Both Rover and Buster had followed Hunt to the gate of the pig park, and he let them in before shut-

ting the gate. "I want them to become accustomed to staying out here," he explained. "Our neighbors are all strictly honest, for all I know to the contrary; but even an honest man will not bother his neighbor's pigs when two good dogs are watching them."

Mary was sure that no deer park ever looked better than her pig park with its hundred big and little pigs roaming under the trees. The fowls, too, she thought, added greatly to its appearance when they were moved over from their old quarters.

While the brother and sister were enjoying the sight Mr. Warren walked out from the house.

"Hunt," he said, "you know I am an old hand at hog-raising, and I want to ask you a question. Has it ever occurred to you that a good hog eats no more than a poor one? That is not very plain, either," he added, "so I will put it in a different form. What I mean is, that if you stuffed one of these razor-back hogs with corn all winter long you would have hard work to make him weigh more than one hundred pounds; whereas the same quantity of corn fed to some hog of a really good breed, such, for instance, as the Chester County White, would produce from five to six hundred pounds of pork."

"Yes, sir, I have thought of that," Hunt answered, "and I know that it is true. There is no fault to be found with the quality of hams and bacon produced by the North Carolina razor backs, for we grow here some of the finest hams and bacon in the world. I do think, however, that in time there would be greater

profit in raising some of the improved breeds you speak of, such as we used to have on the old farm in Ontario County. But I thought it best to begin with the plain hog of the country till Mary and I have some experience at the business."

"That was wise," Mr. Warren replied; "but when I begin my farming I doubt whether I can resist the temptation to import some of the very large breeds, if only to see what our colored friends will think of a hog weighing six or eight hundred pounds."

Hunt was no hand to let the morrow take care of itself, but always, as far as possible, made his arrangements for the distant future, and at sight of the many pigs feeding he brought out his tape-measure and measured off a site for another building just beyond the old smoke-house.

"What, not another building?" Mary asked, coming upon him while he was at the work.

"Yes, it is to be a new smoke-house, Mary," he answered, "and more than four times as large as the old one. The old one was large enough when we had less than a dozen pigs, but now that we have a hundred or more we shall need much more room for bacon. I am going to start Scotty at once hauling lumber for it, for, since it is to be built, there is no use wasting time about it."

In a day or two the lumber began to arrive from the saw-mill in the wagon, and it was lumber of a very different kind from what Hunt had used for the first smoke-house. It was plain, straight boards this

time, instead of slabs, for he now had money to pay the increased cost.

Mary took great interest in the work, and she was delighted when a suggestion she made was promptly adopted. It was that the new smoke-house should be built at least thirty or forty feet from the old one, so that if unfortunately one should burn, both need not be endangered. In about a week from the beginning the new smoke-house was completed, even to the large table for butchering upon.

CHAPTER XXV.

HUNT VISITS GEORGIA.

WHEN the new smoke-house was finished and everything was in order for the winter, Mr. Warren called Hunt into the sitting-room to have, as he said, "a serious talk" with him.

"Now, Hunt," he began, "I want to make a suggestion to you that I am sure you will give attention to. It is not," he went on, "because I am an old farmer and you are a young planter that I shall take the liberty to offer you a bit of advice. The fact is that I have made a failure as a farmer and you have made a great success as a planter, so we are at least equals on that score; but I am an older man than you, Hunt, and have seen more of the world, and I know how these things go.

"You have made such a success here," he continued, "that you are at a turning-point in your career; from nothing to speak of, you have built up and up, till now you have more than a hundred acres of land, and a very comfortable little home; but you are not going to be satisfied with that, you are going to have more and better. That is the way of the world.

"You are a cotton planter," he resumed, laying his hand affectionately upon Hunt's knee, "and you can-

not know too much about cotton and how and where it is grown.

"You came a stranger to North Carolina," he went on, "and what you know about cotton is the North Carolina way of growing and handling it. Now, North Carolina, much as we both like it, is not one of the great cotton-growing states. Indeed, it is not one of the leading states in any branch of agriculture. It is near to the great markets, and land is cheap here, and for these and many other reasons it is one of the best places in the country for a young man who has to start without capital. Now that you have the capital, I want you to go and see some of the great cotton plantations, to see how the work is done upon them and how the planters live. Before long you will be building a new house for yourself, and you ought to see first how other planters live. That you may see these things for yourself and profit by them, I want you to make an excursion into some of the great cotton states."

"But it is impossible for me to get away," Hunt objected. "A man who desires to grow cotton or anything else successfully must be on the spot to look after it."

"I have spoken to you about this now," Mr. Warren resumed, "because this is exactly the time when you can best get away for a few weeks or months. Here are Mrs. Warren and myself in the house to be company for Mary while you are away, for it would not be well for you both to go away at the same time.

Leave Mary here with us; and to make the matter more definite I suggest that you go down into the lower part of Georgia, where I am sure Colonel Andrews has some friends, and if you will follow my advice I will write to him for a letter of introduction for you. That is a great cotton country, and you will learn something to your advantage. You can do nothing more on the plantation now until winter is over, and there is nothing to hinder you."

"But do you think it would be fair for me to go on such a trip and leave Mary behind?" Hunt asked.

"I think it would not be fair to her for you not to go," Mr. Warren replied. "You know Mary is a girl, and girls of her age generally begin to think of beaus, and when they begin that they begin to want new clothes. If you leave Mary enough money to refit herself with clothes which she needs, you will please her much better than by taking her with you."

"Well, sir, if you think I ought to go I will go, purely as a matter of business," Hunt replied.

"Good for you!" Mr. Warren exclaimed; "you must remember that a successful planter needs a little more polish than will answer for a poor farm boy, and that nothing gives this polish as well as travel. I will write to Colonel Andrews at once for the letter of introduction, for the North Carolina spring opens so early that we have no time to lose."

Mr. Warren was as good as his word, and wrote at once to Colonel Andrews, and the mail in a few days brought this letter of introduction from him.

"JUDGE JOSEPH TILLMAN,
Quitman, Brooks County, Georgia.

"*My Dear Judge:*

"Please allow me to introduce to you by this my friend and neighbor, Mr. Huntley Robertson, whom I recommend to your kindly consideration. Mr. Robertson came to North Carolina several years ago without much capital beyond his knowledge of agriculture, and by industry and perseverance he has already made himself the owner of a good cotton plantation on the Trent River, near New Bern. He desires to inform himself of your Georgia methods of handling cotton, and by putting him in the way of knowing your country and its people you will much oblige

"Yours sincerely,
"H. ANDREWS."

"That is exactly the thing," Mr. Warren said, as he handed the letter to Hunt, "and Quitman is just the place I should have chosen. I have often heard Colonel Andrews speak of Judge Tillman, who is an old and honored resident of Brooks County. Quitman will be easy for you to reach, too. You have only to take the A. & N.-C. Railroad to Goldsboro', and there change to the Atlantic-Coast Line, which will carry you to Waycross, in Georgia. At Waycross you change again, and the train from there will take you directly to Quitman, which is the next town to Thomasville. Thomasville is a celebrated winter resort, and I am sure you have known of

Northern people going there in winter to benefit their health."

About the same preparation that an old traveller might make for cruising in the Indian Ocean Hunt made for his little excursion to Georgia, for travelling was entirely new to him.

"Don't forget yourself and ask the sleeping-car porter in the morning whether he has fed the ox yet," Mr. Warren cautioned him, as he watched with great interest the packing of the new satchel. "Now, if you lose yourself, send us a telegram," he laughed, "and if anyone happens to be coming over to Brice Creek, we may get it in the course of a week or two."

The preparations for starting included the putting of a neat roll of bank notes into Mary's hands, and Hunt extracted the promise from her that the money should be spent for new clothes during his absence.

With many affectionate farewells to his sister, and parting instructions to Scotty, Hunt stepped into the wagon which Scotty drove up to the door to carry him to the railway station in New Bern, where he bought a ticket for Goldsboro' for one dollar and ninety cents, a rate which opened his eyes to the cost of railway travel in North Carolina. The company did its best, however, to give him the worth of his money by keeping him in a jolting car between two and three hours for the short journey. When he stepped out of the car in Goldsboro', satchel in hand, he was beside the track of the Atlantic-Coast Line, which runs through the main street of the town. He had visited the

office and bought his ticket for Quitman, and was standing outside by the track, when some one came up behind and relieved him of his satchel.

"Mawnin', boss Robertson," he heard in a voice that was somewhat familiar. "Is yo' off fer Georgy, sah? Yo' knows me, don't yo' sah? I'se Kunnel Andrews's boy Mose, sah, an de kunnel he send me to go 'long wid yo' an' take keer of yo', sah; de kunnel hisself he jist gone into de office, sah, and he say he like ter say good-bye to yo' afore de train come."

There, sure enough, were the face and form of Mose, and Hunt gladly left the satchel in his care, while he returned to the office to say good-bye to Colonel Andrews.

Their conversation was necessarily brief, as the train was due in a few moments, but the colonel gave him some information about the route, and wished him a pleasant journey.

"Here, hold on, Robertson!" he exclaimed, as Hunt started again toward the ticket office. "Not going to buy Mose's ticket, are you? Here is his ticket down and back. It is bad enough to saddle a darkey on your shoulders, without leaving you to pay his fares; but Mose is a good servant, and I think you will find him useful on your journey; anyhow, I want to show those Georgians that when a North Carolina planter travels he does it properly."

"Thank you very much, colonel," Hunt exclaimed, hastily shaking the colonel's hand, for he heard the whistle of the train, which drew up a minute or two later, and gave him some new ideas about railway trains, for he had seldom seen such a train.

Composed almost entirely of parlor and sleeping-coaches, the cars were all vestibuled, their bronze rails shining bright enough to dazzle his eyes; and in an instant the parlor car conductor and porters stood by the end of each car, ready to give information.

"For Waycross, sah?" Mose asked of the nearest conductor, for he had travelled enough with Colonel Andrews to know how such things were done.

"Yes; take seats seven and eight, if you are this gentleman's servant," the conductor answered. "If you are not, you will have to go into the Jim Crow car," and Mose and Hunt stepped into the car, where it lay with Hunt to select the seats designated, for the little accomplishment of reading Mose had not acquired.

"Maybe yo' diden' know wat de gemman meant 'bout de Jim Crow car," Mose said, as he made Hunt comfortable in his seat and took the one immediately behind him.

"Fer dey don' have no sich nonsense up Norf; but down heah dey's a special car in ebery train for us niggahs, an' we not 'lowed to ride in de white folks' cars; but when a niggah's a white gemman's servant, it's different, and de gemman takes him whare he likes. It mos' one o'clock, sah, an' yo' ain't had no dinner, sah. Do yo' feel like havin' som'thin' to eat, sah?"

Hunt braced himself for such a jerk as the New Bern train had started with, and was surprised that the train was already in motion and gliding along as smoothly as if on cushions. He was a little uneasy, and began to feel his own insignificance, with both the car porter and Mose fluttering about him to make him comfortable, and brushing off dust that was not there. At the suggestion of something to eat he looked up and down the car for a boy selling peanuts and apples, and, being decidedly hungry, he regretted that he had brought no lunch with him.

"Yes, it is past dinner-time, Mose," he answered, "and I am very hungry, but I don't see how we are going to get anything till we reach Waycross."

"Dat wat I heah fo', sah; Mose tend to dat," Mose answered; and, so saying, he pressed a little black button in the wall, which Hunt had not noticed, and instantly a bell rang somewhere in the distance, which Hunt feared might stop the train; but instead of the train stopping a waiter soon appeared, in spotless apron and equally spotless cap, and held a card before Hunt, which contained the names of many delicacies of which he had never heard before; but after he had selected a soup and sliced tomatoes and Vienna sausages and English plum-pudding, the waiter brought a snug little table, with hooks at one end to hold it against the wall, and a leg at the other, and spread a shining white cloth upon it, and Hunt would have enjoyed the prospect more if he had not been in constant fear that Mose would

offend the stylish waiter with such imperious orders as:

"Now, you step lively, yo' young niggah! Don' yo' see the gemman's in a hurry? Don' yo' be all day 'bout gettin' dis truck togedder; yo' heah me, now?"

But the trained waiter was all smiles, and he soon spread upon the table an array of silver-plated ware that made Hunt wonder. When the repast was set before him he ate with pleasure, but he would have enjoyed the meal much more if he had not felt that both Mose and the waiter were watching every move and every mouthful.

Eating in the car, however, was not as much a novelty as sleeping in it, and Mose arranged that he should occupy a sofa in the smoking-room, beside the porter, but he did not retire to it until he had seen Hunt's berth made up and his new boss safely settled in it. Then he told Hunt that the bell rang close by where he had to sleep in the smoking-room, and if he should be needed in the night two pushes of the button would bring him in a hurry, and he took his leave for the night, with the comforting assurance that "Ef dey should be a accident afore mawnin', Mose he gadder yo' togedder, an' jine the pieces." But even the novelty of the situation could not keep Hunt awake, and in a few minutes, as it seemed to him, the porter called to him to get up and dress, as the train would be at Waycross within an hour.

The bright sunshine, however, told him that he had

slept through the night, and Mose, too, was on hand ready to get off. When the train at length came to a gentle stop they stepped out to the station platform at Waycross, and Mose knew that the train for Quitman started from the other side of the same platform, and in a few hours they were in Quitman, both master and man having satisfied their hunger at the railway lunch counter in Waycross. In Quitman Hunt was about to make some inquiries about where Judge Tillman might be found, for he hardly yet appreciated what it means to a stranger to have two Southern gentlemen looking out for his comfort. Before he had asked a question he felt a touch upon his arm, and the fatherly-looking gentleman who had touched him introduced himself as Judge Tillman.

"And you are Mr. Robertson, I hope," the judge said. "My friend, Colonel Andrews, wired me from Goldsboro' that you were coming on this train with a colored servant, so, of course, I drove over to meet you and bid you welcome to Quitman; for I know that he thinks highly of you, and any friend of his is more than welcome in Quitman. Now, you boy," he added, turning to Mose, "as you are a North Carolina darkey, it is only fair to remind you that you are in Georgia, or you may get into trouble. When the young men of Quitman expostulate with a darkey, I generally make it a point to be at the inquest." But as the judge nudged Hunt with his elbow, and smiled as he spoke, Hunt did not think Mose's life in any particular danger, even in Georgia.

"Unfortunately, my family have all gone North," the judge continued, "so I have engaged accommodations for you in the Hotel Marie, where we will drive now if you are ready, and the boy can ride behind with the satchel."

Even with his limited knowledge of Southern affairs, Hunt could not help noticing that the Georgia way of dealing with a negro boy was different from the North Carolina way, for the judge, although he spoke with great kindness, gave Mose no chance for familiarity. When, in the hotel office, he thanked the judge for his attention, he handed him the letter of introduction, and the judge, after reading it, shook him warmly by the hand and said that nothing would give him greater pleasure than to take him out next morning and show him some of the fine plantations of Brooks County; and mentally deciding that wherever a man went in the South he was sure to meet with much kindness, Hunt retired to the large room that had been reserved for him, for the best in the house was thought none too good for a friend of Colonel Andrews, of North Carolina. He did not know, fortunately, that the judge had told the hotel folks that they were to entertain a large and wealthy cotton planter from the Trent River, or the probable size of his bill might have disturbed his rest.

Mose's assertion that his bed was to be on the floor just outside the door, where he would be handy when wanted, did trouble Hunt a little; but Mose was so well trained in the useful art of taking off his

master's shoes that Hunt soon gave himself up to the comfort of a Brooks County bed, and when he opened the door a few moments later and found Mose snoring lustily outside he became more resigned to the Southern relation between master and boy.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DELIGHTS OF HOME.

HUNT was early out of bed, as his custom was, and Mose was soon with him to polish and lace his shoes, brush his clothes, and build a fire. The boy seemed almost hurt at Hunt's refusal to allow him to bring breakfast up to the room. Hunt insisted, however, upon going down to the breakfast room; and when the meal was concluded and he went into the office he found Judge Tillman there waiting for him, accompanied by a number of the prominent gentlemen of the place, whom he desired to make acquainted with the large cotton planter from North Carolina. Among these gentlemen were Mr. Bennet, the mayor of Quitman, and Colonel Hopson, who owned the hotel building. They gave Hunt a cordial reception, and urged him to make a long stay in Brooks County; but he was not allowed to remain long with them at that time, for the judge had a spirited horse and shining buggy waiting outside, and as the day was bright and warm they set off early to see the Brooks County fields. Driving down first through the main street of Quitman, which is not as large a place as New Bern, the judge pointed out the county court-house and its accompanying offices, occupying a well-

shaded block on the right-hand side. Then turning about they retraced their way and ascended a slight hill at the other end of the town; and turning to the left by an excellent road they soon passed the entrance to the handsome Quitman Cemetery, where everything was kept in perfect order.

It seemed to the visitor in passing through the town that Quitman was essentially a place of the present, unlike New Bern, which is a relic of the happier past, most of the larger residences being very old, and many of them out of repair. Quitman was more like the Northern towns he knew, with its fresh paint and good roads; and all the roads they drove over attracted his attention, they were so smooth and well kept.

Before they had gone far the judge pointed out the first cotton field—a field so large, so clean, and so well fenced that, at Hunt's suggestion, the buggy was stopped and he climbed the fence to examine the soil.

"This is much the same soil as we have in North Carolina," he declared, scraping up a handful and finding it a rich sandy loam.

"Yes; and excellent soil for cotton-growing," the judge answered. "That is a fair sample of our Brooks County land."

"About how many acres are there in this field, sir?" Hunt asked.

"I think about three hundred," the judge replied; "and in this situation it is worth about twenty-five dollars an acre."

"Ah, then a man requires considerable capital to

set up for a cotton planter in Brooks County!" Hunt exclaimed.

"Well, that depends," the judge replied. "He does not need to begin with three-hundred-acre fields, you know, nor to put up so many barns and warehouses as this man has, nor such a large dwelling-house. Much of our fine wood land," he continued, "can be bought for five dollars an acre, and the land is often paid for by the sale of the timber. Do you see that cosey place off to the right?" the judge asked; "the well-painted cottage surrounded by substantial buildings? That place is owned by a German, a Northern man, who came here without any capital to speak of, and has made himself well-to-do. That shows that a man can come here as well as to North Carolina and work his way up. A Northern man is always made welcome here, for we do not stop to ask what part of the world a stranger comes from."

"When do you plant cotton here, sir?" Hunt asked.

"That depends upon the convenience of the planter," the judge replied; "as far as the weather is concerned, we can plant almost any crop at almost any time of year. This is January, isn't it? and you don't find it very cold. You will find some difference between our weather and the North Carolina weather."

"Yes, sir," Hunt laughed; "I must take off this overcoat, for I really can't stand it any longer."

"'Overcoat'!" the judge exclaimed. "I did not notice that you were wearing one. Do you see that colored man coming down the road in his bare feet?

Notice the other one in the next big field there, plowing with the team of mules. He is plowing for cotton, and the owner will plant his cotton as soon as the ground is ready."

"The planters all seem to have fine large houses, sir," Hunt said.

"Why not?" the judge laughed. "You know a year ago cotton went up to nine and a half cents, and that made many of our planters wealthy; even with five-cent cotton they make a little money.

"But they no longer depend entirely upon cotton," the judge went on; "you have heard of Brooks County bacon, no doubt, for it is celebrated throughout the country. They grow corn and convert it into bacon. Here, we will drive through this plantation yard, so that I can show you one of our Brooks County smoke-houses."

It was a fine large smoke-house, and the judge said that beyond a doubt it was filled with bacon.

"That is a good one, sir," Hunt declared, "and I have one very much like it at home. It is not filled with bacon yet, but I have more than a hundred little pigs growing, and I hope soon to have it filled."

"That is well," the judge asserted; "cotton and bacon should go together.

"Now I want you to notice how our colored people live," the judge continued when they returned to the road. "Every colored family has its own little cabin, you see, and generally a small patch of land about it for a garden. The cabins are built by the plantation

owners, and the colored man gets so much a month and the use of his house. They generally have some pigs and a smoke-house of their own, and they live very comfortably."

"The cabins and their little grounds are all neatly kept!" Hunt exclaimed. "Your colored people seem to be more thrifty than the North Carolina negroes, where their cabins are generally falling to pieces."

"Maybe the white Georgian has more influence on the negro than the white North Carolinian has," the judge laughed. "We keep him in his place in Georgia; and the Southern negro is not at all a bad person when kept in his place."

Soon they reached the intersection of several roads, where stood a large fine plantation house, back of which were hundreds of acres of well-tilled cotton land, and across the road was a beautiful pine grove; and under the tall, straight trees were a number of negro cabins, and a church and school house for their occupants. Going further on, the road took them into the pine woods, where in a few moments they passed a romantic old mill standing on the bank of a picturesque deep stream. Emerging soon from the woods they passed more plantations, and Hunt's desire to see fine large plantation houses was fully gratified. At many of the houses they stopped and went in, and at every stop they were hospitably received.

"Now this large plantation that we are approaching," the judge said, "belongs to two elderly gentle-

men from Boston, who have added here to their wealth. As they are friends of mine we must not pass the house without stopping, and they will show us their gin house, I am sure.

"That is one of the peculiarities of cotton culture in Brooks County," the judge went on; "nearly every planter of any size has his own gin house, and gins his own cotton. The smoke-house and the gin house are necessary parts of the plantation."

In the house they found it impossible to leave without eating dinner; but after the substantial dinner they returned to the buggy, and drove through one of the large cotton fields, where the judge announced that they had just crossed the state line, and were in Florida.

When they turned toward Quitman again, Hunt was silent and thoughtful, for he had been receiving new ideas and impressions all day, and had learned much about cotton-growing.

"Well, what do you think of it?" the judge asked. "Now you have seen some of our Brooks County plantations, do you think well of them?"

"They are splendid, sir," Hunt replied; "and I am very glad I came to see them. They are much superior to our plantations in North Carolina. That is a new country, judge, and it is not as thickly settled as this. Brooks County is beautiful; but I do not really think that a young man could come here without capital and make his way as well as he can in North Carolina."

"That depends more upon the young man than it does upon the state," the judge replied. "Some young men would make their way anywhere, and some would make it nowhere; but a young man can start here in Brooks County without a cent, and establish himself in the world. There is plenty of work to be done here, and plenty of timber to be cut and sold. Then we have the very finest climate in the world, Mr. Robertson, as you can see for yourself. This is a very fair example of our midwinter days; yet with this fair country beckoning to them," the judge continued, "and offering them comfort and independence, how many thousands of the young men of our country herd together in the large cities, working for barely living wages!"

"That was the way that I looked upon it, sir," Hunt answered, "when I went to North Carolina, and I find that independence in the South is much better than working for wages in the crowded North.

"I like Brooks County so well that I could almost wish to be settled here; yet I like North Carolina equally well, and nothing should induce me to leave the shore of the Trent. As far as my limited experience goes, it seems to me that wherever a young Northern man settles in the South he must feel that he has found exactly the right spot."

"I am glad you feel so," the judge replied; "and I am sure you are right."

They were back now at the hotel, where Hunt found that a number of the neighboring planters had

called upon him during his absence; and Mose was delighted at the quantity of Georgia mud on Hunt's clothes, as it gave him an opportunity for renewed brushing.

"Well, sah, I reckon yo' ain't seed nothin' ekal to ole No'th Ca-line!" he exclaimed, when they were alone, the judge having hurried home to his late dinner.

"I have seen much better cotton plantations than I ever saw before," Hunt answered, "and some very kind people; but none kinder than we have left behind in North Carolina, and their superiors would be hard to find."

"Is yo' t'inkin o' movin' down to Georgy, boss?" Mose asked.

"No; I am very well satisfied where I am," Hunt replied; "but I am glad I came down here to see the big plantations, and some time I may build a good plantation house like some we have passed to-day. If ever I do and you are out of a job, Mose, you shall have the job of washing the windows in it." Without stopping to listen to Mose's thanks for such unbounded liberality, Hunt went on to say that Brooks County made him feel almost as if he were back in Ontario County in summer, "for they have roads here, Mose, real roads, and that is something we need to learn in North Carolina; but the old North state has done well by me, and I will stand up for it through thick and thin."

"T'ank yo', sah; t'ank yo', boss!" Mose replied,

taking off his hat and bowing very low, as if a compliment to his state required some acknowledgment from him.

For several successive days Judge Tillman took him out driving among the plantations, and wherever they stopped Hunt took pains to examine the tools in use, and to inquire about the best fertilizers and the quantity used to the acre. He soon became satisfied that those planters who gave their soil the most nourishment received the best returns; but he found few cotton-growing tools that he was not already familiar with.

On the third day he provided himself with a pad and pencil, and made rough outline sketches of some of the plantation houses that suited his fancy; but his sketches were all of plain houses, for they pleased him best.

Finding that by taking an early morning train from Quitman he and Mose could reach Goldsboro' without spending a night in the cars, he spent one more night in the Hotel Marie, and, thanking Judge Tillman for his great kindness, he let Mose carry the satchel to the station.

"I am glad to hear that you are doing well in North Carolina," the judge told him; "but I believe you would have done even better here in Georgia. Since you are well settled you naturally will not care to change; but if you should change at all, change for the better, and come to Brooks County. Here you would fine a warm welcome and bright prospects."

"I should not like to think of leaving North Carolina, sir," Hunt replied; "but I think that I can safely advise any of my young friends in the North to come either to North Carolina or to Georgia."

When they reached Waycross they found that by going northward at once their time of arrival in Goldsboro' would be too late to catch the last train for New Bern, so they spent the night in one of the Waycross hotels, and took an early train for home in the morning; and as they stepped out of the cars in Goldsboro' Hunt was greeted by Colonel Andrews.

"I had some business in town," the colonel told him, "and I more than half thought that you might come to-day by this train. Well, you saw some fine cotton plantations about Quitman," he continued, "for there are plenty there."

"Oh, there are splendid plantations in Brooks County, colonel," Hunt replied. "I am greatly obliged to you for the letter of introduction to Judge Tillman, for he showed me great kindness and made everything plain to me. I am very glad I made the trip," he continued. "It has given me many new ideas about the cotton business. My notion of a cotton planter before was of a man living in a small house like mine, and driving an ox-team; but I know now that he is equal to better things than that."

"Ah, I thought those Georgia plantations would give you some new ideas!" the colonel laughed; "but I don't want you to think that it is only the Georgia planters who have good cotton fields. I am a cotton

planter myself, you know, and as I have my carriage here, and it is only about two miles out to my place, I want to take you home to dinner with me. I will bring you back in ample time for the evening train for New Bern, if you think you must return to-night."

"Thank you very much, colonel," Hunt replied; "but I must be home to-night without fail. I am a little anxious about my ox and mule, for fear they may have been neglected."

"Ah, you'll soon change your way of talking about your stock, Robertson!" the colonel laughed. "In a year or two there will be more than one ox or two to need your attention, and you will be going home at night, I suspect, to a new and a much larger plantation house. North Carolina is not the richest state in the country, but there is plenty of room in it for new houses, and if they will keep cotton up above nine cents for a few years, we planters shall have the money to build them."

When they drove out to the colonel's house Mose seated himself beside the driver, greatly to Hunt's relief. Much to the young planter's surprise, it was a large brick mansion to which they drove, and furnished more elegantly than anything that Hunt had before seen, either North or South; and at dinner they were waited upon by several colored servants, who were so well trained in their duties that Hunt thought that they must certainly belong to a different race from the Craven County negroes.

After dinner the colonel sent him back in the coach

to Goldsboro', and before dark he stepped from the car to the station platform in New Bern, carrying his own satchel this time; but that was a pleasure to him, for after three or four days innocently posing as a wealthy cotton planter, and being waited upon every moment, it was a luxury to be permitted to wait upon himself.

Finding no one to meet him caused him no inconvenience, for "transfers," as the public hacks are called, are always plenty at the station, and one of the drivers gladly agreed to take him home for twenty-five cents. He was a little afraid that after seeing so much his own place might seem small and mean to him, but the sight of the best house in Georgia would not have given him as much pleasure as seeing Mary on the piazza waving both hands to him and shouting, "Welcome home, Hunt! We are all so glad to have you back."

But was this Mary who was greeting him? If it was, she had certainly kept her promise to visit the dry goods stores. After stepping in to greet the family he went out to see to the safety of all the animals, and concluded, when he returned, that the chairs of home had increased wonderfully in comfort.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. WARREN'S PLANTATION.

HUNT was prepared to give a full account of his journey as they sat before the fire that evening, but he soon found that there was news for him to hear as well as news for him to tell.

"I have a new reason for wanting to know about other plantations," Mr. Warren told him, "for now I need to learn all that I can about the cotton business, before I begin work on my own plantation." There was a smile about his mouth that led Hunt to suspect something when Mr. Warren spoke of his own plantation.

"Do you mean it, Mr. Warren?" he asked, springing to his feet. "Have you been looking at land while I was away?"

"I did something better than that, Hunt," Mr. Warren answered. "I bought some land while you were away; a hundred and fifty acres of it. It is not a plantation yet, but I intend that it shall be one as soon as I can get the timber cut off and the land put under cultivation."

"That is the best news I have heard for many a day, Mr. Warren!" Hunt exclaimed. "I am sure your land is in North Carolina, because you

like the state so well; but I hope it is close by this place, so that we can always be near neighbors."

"Then the Georgia plantations have not stolen your heart away from your first love?" Mr. Warren asked. "But if it will be any pleasure to you to have me for a near neighbor," he continued, "that pleasure you shall enjoy, for you could stand in your big cotton field and almost throw a stone to the land that I have bought, which is just a little further up the creek."

"Good! I am rejoiced to hear that, Mr. Warren," Hunt retorted; "but I should have to make another journey to get the stone to throw, for you know there are none here. With all our plowing on this place we have not turned up a single stone."

"That speaks well for the soil," Mr. Warren answered. "We do not want stones to raise cotton in, though I am going to give part of my attention to producing bacon, as you do. It is an actual fact, though, Hunt, that I bought a place while you were away; and the sooner I begin work on it the better. The thing that chiefly interests me now is a house to live in. I want to have my plantation house under way before the winter is over; and our North Carolina winters end very early; but the saw-mill is handy, and, as there are plenty of carpenters in New Bern, my house need not be long under way. I have thought a little of building an exact duplicate of my old house in Ontario County, but I do not know whether that would be suitable for a plantation."

"No, sir, you can do better than that for this climate," Hunt replied. "I saw some very fine plantation houses in Georgia; and though I am not much of an artist, I made rough sketches of a few of them, which I will show you, and I hope you will call upon me for any assistance I can give in getting your plantation started; not only in helping to plan the house, Mr. Warren," he added, as Mary left the room to attend to some household matters, "but I mean financially, too. It sounds like boasting," he continued, "for your old boy to offer financial help to you; but I am sure I do not mean it in that way. I know that buying a plantation outright and building such a house as you will want takes a heap of money, and I hope you will remember that I have a moderate little bank account. A thousand dollars taken out of it would not cripple me at all, and if it would be of assistance to you, I hope you will make free use of it."

"No, Hunt, it does not sound like boasting," Mr. Warren replied, with a little tremble in his voice. "It sounds just like the big-hearted boy that Huntley Robertson always was, and the big-hearted man that he now is.

"But I am thankful to be able to tell you, Hunt, that my affairs in the North have turned out better than I had any reason to expect, and that through the generosity and honor of my creditors I can command all the ready money that I shall need, without borrowing; but your kindness in offering it I shall

never forget, Hunt, and I am glad that I am to have so good a man for a neighbor.

"But I do not know what better word could be said for North Carolina," he went on. "Here is my old farm boy at three dollars a month comes down to New Bern, and, after being here a couple of years, offers to lend me a thousand dollars. To tell you the truth, my affairs have taken such a favorable turn that I could have the old farm back if I wanted it, but I do not want it. North Carolina suits me better, and there is more chance here to make money.

"If I can do as well in proportion as you have done," he went on, "we may some day have our own vessels sailing up the creek, for my land runs right down to the water, the same as yours."

"I think I have a better idea than that, sir," Hunt replied, "and it is one of the things I learned in Georgia. A considerable part of the planter's income goes to the gin house, as I have found; but down there each large cotton plantation has its own gin house. To fit up a gin house with the machinery required," he continued, "is an expensive matter that just now I should not care to undertake alone; but if we are to have adjoining plantations we can easily establish one in partnership, and so each of us save the gin-house charges every year."

"Yes, you have learned something by travel," Mr. Warren assented, "as I was sure you would; but you know how it is. When a man has bought his land," he continued, "the first thing he needs is a house to

live in, for I do not intend to settle myself upon you for the next century or two. I want my own house on my own land, but I cannot engage the builder until I know about what kind of a house I want."

"That is a point that I am doubly interested in," Hunt answered; "for although this house is good enough for me, I am pretty sure that as Mary grows older she will want a larger home; but not one stick do I intend to lay upon another toward a larger house until I have enough money on hand to pay for it."

"That is wise, Hunt!" Mr. Warren exclaimed; "and I am going to build my house at once because I have money enough on hand to pay for it. I don't want anything fancy, though, in the way of a house," he continued; "just an old-fashioned plain and comfortable home."

"I noticed in Georgia," Hunt retorted, "how much better and more suitable the plain plantation houses looked than the fancy ones, so I did not waste time sketching any of the fancy houses, but gave my attention to the plain old-fashioned ones; a house with an assorted lot of piazzas and bay windows and useless gables seems to me out of place on a cotton plantation."

"It is out of place anywhere," Mr. Warren laughed; "and the wise man never builds one of those modern abominations. Our forefathers knew a thing or two about comfort, and they deserve our gratitude for giving us the plan of the big plain

house with a broad hall through the middle and rooms on each side of it; and that is the kind I intend to build."

Mr. Warren took great interest in examining the sketches that Hunt showed him, but he said that his house must be one suited to the site upon which he intended to build it; and next morning he took Hunt and Mary and Scotty over to see his place, and the situation that he had selected for the new house. They had only to follow the bluff a short distance up the creek, and the spot selected by Mr. Warren for his house was almost on the edge of the bluff, where the windows of the building would not only command the creek below, but would also give a distant view of the Trent River. Mr. Warren had already cut several trees which stood in the way of the proposed building, for he was no stranger to the use of the ax, the hoe, the plow, or any other tool used on a farm.

"Have you selected a site for the barn, sir?" Hunt asked. "The barn is of more immediate importance even than the house, I think, for you must have animals to draw your lumber and to do your spring plowing, and at this season they must be housed."

"Just about here, I think, is the proper place for the permanent stable," Mr. Warren answered, stepping out a little beyond and behind the site of the house; "but as the permanent stable will be of slower growth," he continued, "I think I will put up first a real North Carolina barn of logs and branches to

shelter from the rain the pair of mules that I intend to buy as soon as I can find some to suit me."

"Then there is where Scotty and I can be of some use," Hunt quickly answered. "I wondered whether there wasn't something that we could do to help you get settled, and that is just where we can be of use. Scotty and I will come over with our axes this morning," he continued, "and as you have selected the site, and the barn is to be for a pair of mules, we will soon have it ready for them; and you must let us know what trees we can use for it, or whether we are at liberty to use whatever trees will be most suitable."

"Oh, the trees are all to be cut!" Mr. Warren answered; "for I am going to have a cotton plantation, not a pine forest; but I do not know about letting you do the work, when your own plantation will soon need your attention."

But Hunt knew about it, and under his and Scotty's axes some of the smaller trees soon began to fall, and in a few days the new barn was ready to be roofed.

Meanwhile Mr. Warren was not idle, for even with money to pay for what he needed he had much work to do. His first work was largely with pencil and paper, and, after studying Hunt's sketches of Georgia plantation houses, he made a design of his own of a large rectangular building, with a broad hall through the centre and rooms on both sides of it in the first and second stories, and a broad two-storied piazza on the front facing the creek. Having had

experience in building, he was able to draw up a complete set of specifications, calling for both front and back stairs, and doors and trimmings of oak, ash, and other native hard woods. This finished, he took it over to New Bern to get estimates from several builders, and on the same trip he bought a pair of mules and a large wagon, with which he immediately began to draw his lumber from the saw-mill, a contract having been closed with one of the builders; and a few days later boats began to arrive in the creek, loaded with bricks for the foundation and chimneys.

Hunt was surprised when he saw the digging begun for a cellar under the house.

"Why, Mr. Warren!" he exclaimed, "you know they don't have cellars in this country. I don't believe there is a cellar in all New Bern, for there is so much water about us that a cellar would soon be overflowed."

"I don't know about New Bern," Mr. Warren laughed; "but there is going to be a cellar on the Brice Creek bluff unless the laws of Nature are reversed in North Carolina. The site of my house is about fifteen feet above the creek, and the bottom of the cellar will be eight or ten feet above it; so unless water runs up hill in Craven County, I think the water of my cellar will run down into the creek through the drains that, of course, I intend to lay. I have always had a cellar under me, and I am going to have one now."

Hunt was glad to see some of the old-time snap in Mr. Warren, and knew that when he determined

to have a cellar he would have one even if he had to put in a steam pump.

"Now, I want to tell you about this house of mine," Mr. Warren explained to Hunt, the day that the builder appeared together with several masons and carpenters. "It is to be very much like one of the plantation houses that you sketched in Georgia, and I have made some improvements of my own; so the design is half yours and half mine."

It was like old times to see Mr. Warren hurrying a piece of work; and he did not let grass grow under the feet of either masons or carpenters, for he saw the plowing-season approaching, and he had almost endless work to do before he could plow. Hunt kept Scotty at work with him on Mr. Warren's place, clearing away as much of the timber as possible, knowing that they must soon give their whole time to the Pine Ridge Plantation.

The early plowing was soon begun on Hunt's place, for there was no blizzard that year, and no snow to keep them back. Then a few weeks later the advancing vegetation as well as the almanac told them that the time had come to prepare for cotton-planting. This year the ready cash made fertilizer two dollars a ton cheaper, and for the crops other than cotton he utilized large quantities of stable manure, still holding to his Northern belief that the best fertilizer in the world comes out of the barnyard. The little piggies had grown to considerable size, and enough of them already had families

of their own to double their number, but none was yet large enough to ornament the smoke-house, so the butchering had to be deferred until the following winter.

About the second week in May Mr. Warren and Hunt met midway between their places, each having something important to tell the other.

"I want to show you my new cotton up!" Hunt exclaimed.

"But come with me," Mr. Warren replied; "I want to show you my new house; it was finished yesterday."

"I am glad it is finished," Hunt declared, "particularly the roof, for it seems to me we have had nothing but rain for the last fortnight. I am growing a little alarmed about my cotton, Mr. Warren, for the ground is much too wet for it. Don't think that I am complaining, though; instead of that I am congratulating myself all the time to think that I had more sense than to build a new house on credit and look to this year's crop to pay for it; so now if anything happens to the crop there is no great harm done."

They turned about and walked over to the new house, where they found Mrs. Warren and Mary sitting on carpenters' benches in the parlor; and Mr. Warren made them all follow him down the piazza steps to the flight of brick steps that he had built down the side of the bluff, with railings on both sides, to the roomy summer-house over the water.

"This is my only extravagance," he laughed, as they seated themselves on the benches around the walls; "but I could not resist the temptation," he added, "to have a breezy place to cool off in when I am heated by plowing and chopping."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SCOTTY MAKES A START.

It was an open question with Hunt for some time whether the almost continuous rains would so injure the cotton that he should be compelled to replow and replant the field; but he was not so much worried himself as to fail to see that something was weighing upon Scotty's mind, and he asked him one day:

"What is the matter, Scotty? I know you are troubled about something, but you must not let the long rain bother you; even if the crop fails entirely that will not kill us, for there will be more years after this."

"I am afraid I am more selfish than you give me credit for, Hunt," Scotty replied. "I should dislike very much to see anything happen to the cotton crop, but it is my own affairs that I am worrying about."

"Why, I thought Mr. Warren contemplated taking you into partnership on his new plantation!" Hunt exclaimed.

"That's just it," Scotty explained. "You see, Mr. Warren is spending a lot of money on that plantation, and I have no money to put in for my share. Mr. Warren is an awfully kind man," he continued, "but he is not foolish enough to take in a real

partner without capital, and then furnish all the money himself. I have thought the thing over carefully, and I know that under such an arrangement I should have no more to look forward to than if I had stayed in the North working for wages. Indeed, I have been working for wages ever since I came south, Hunt, though I have not a word of fault to find, for I came here half-dead, and now I am as well and strong as anybody."

"Why, it is only for your own sake that Mr. Warren thinks of a partnership," Hunt declared. "He wants to help you along."

"I know it," Scotty answered, "and that makes it all the worse. If I do not agree to anything he proposes he will think me ungrateful. I am very grateful to him," he continued, "but my ambition is to make a little start on my own land, even if it is only five or ten acres, and work up gradually, as you did. That would suit me much better than being a sort of one-horse partner on another man's place."

"Much as I like Mr. Warren," Hunt asserted, "I must say that I think you are right. I believe in a fellow having his own land and working for himself; but if you stay in the neighborhood to work for Mr. Warren whenever he needs you, you will do him just as much service as if you were nominally his partner. I shall need you, too, and with the two of us to work for you will have at least as good a chance as I had. Now, see here, Scotty," Hunt went on; "if that is the way you feel about it, I want to have

a little business talk with you. Here is my place on the creek, and about a quarter of a mile above, also on the creek, is Mr. Warren's place, leaving about a quarter of a mile of land between us. Now, a few days ago," he went on, "old Mr. Gibbs, who owns twenty acres of that land fronting on the creek, offered to sell me his twenty acres for five dollars an acre. If you want a little place of your own, I do not see how you could situate yourself better than by buying those twenty acres. That would make you a start, and put the three of us all in a row along the creek: my place here, then yours, then Mr. Warren's, and you would be handy to both, when we wanted you, until you grew too rich to do days' work."

"Five times twenty equals one hundred, they used to teach me in the Geneva Academy," Scotty retorted. "That is a beautiful little plan of yours, but the weak point in it is the hundred dollars necessary, for I have no hundred dollars to buy land or anything else with."

"Yes; but you have!" Hunt explained. "It is exactly seventy-five dollars that I owe you to date for labor, and it would be a small matter for a total stranger, much less for an old friend, to advance you twenty-five dollars more on account of your labor for the rest of this season; so if you like the land after looking over it, you have only to say so, and it shall be yours."

This offer was too tempting for Scotty to refuse,

and in less than a month he was the owner of the Gibbs tract of twenty acres on Brice Creek.

When the spring rains ceased they were followed by a long drought, and the appearance of the cotton field caused Hunt to shake his head doubtfully when he made his daily visit to it. The blooms were small and sickly, like the plants, and the leaves began to droop. The crop was so evidently in danger for want of water that Hunt thought seriously of having Scotty help him carry water up in pails from the creek; but the task of carrying water so far for so large a field seemed so hopeless that he did not undertake it.

Mary worried over the drooping plants much as she might have worried over a sick pet. She selected a dozen of the hills for her especial care, and every day she pumped water and poured it over them; but her hard work could have done little good, and the crop must have suffered seriously, if the drought had not been broken by a furious early summer thunderstorm, in which the rain poured down in torrents, showing the fallacy of the statements of the would-be weather-wise, who said that the clouds had spilled so much water in the spring that they had no more to spare for summer.

"That is worth some money to us, Mary," Hunt said to his sister, as they sat on the piazza watching the rain.

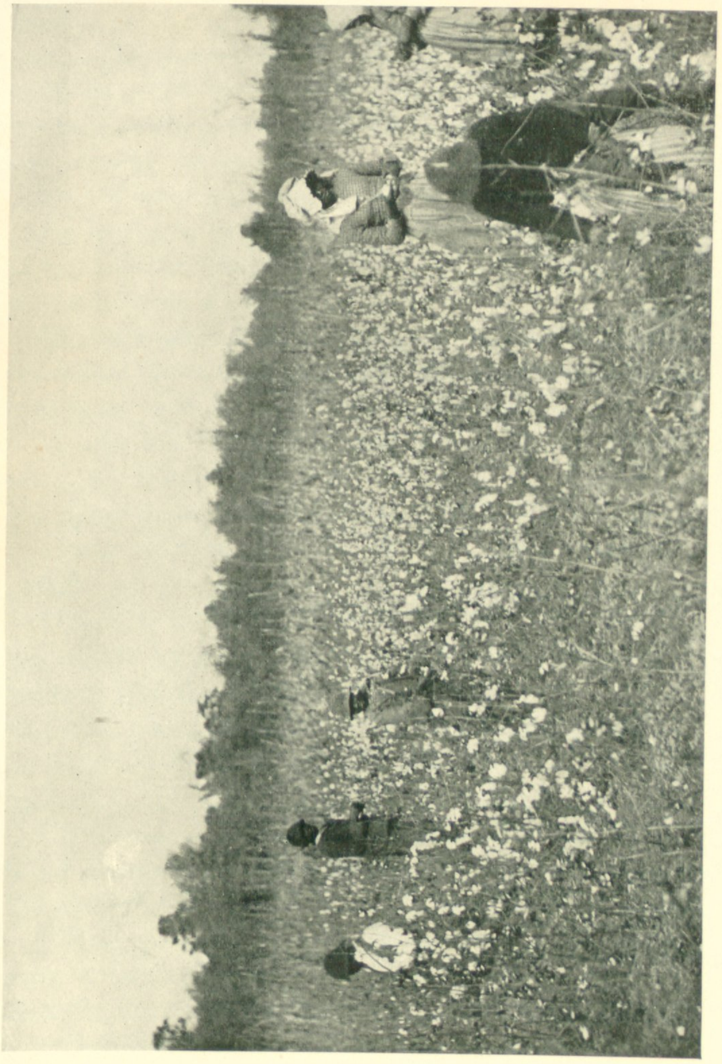
"And the crop is saved," Mary shouted, clapping her hands in glee.

"This will save it, at any rate, from total loss," Hunt replied. "It looked like a bad case for a while, but if we had had no cotton to pick we need not have complained. We must expect to take the bad weather with the good, for we cannot expect the weather to suit itself to our especial needs. I will congratulate myself once more that I did not run into debt to build a larger house. Then I can congratulate Mr. Warren on the fine, dry weather he had for bringing his new furniture over from New Bern. It was just what Scotty needed, too, for cutting timber and putting up a shanty on his place."

Scotty had been working at intervals for Mr. Warren, who had his own cotton crop growing; and Scotty's cabin at first was little more than a ware-house, for it had been decided that he was to make his home with Hunt as long as he pleased. Between Hunt and Mr. Warren he had scarcely an unemployed day, except when the rain interfered.

Preparing for cotton-picking now was no novelty to the young planter. Early in September the barrels and bags for it were ready, and word was given out that pickers were needed. This year there was not such an avalanche of cotton in the ware-house.

Thinking that he had borrowed Mr. Vincent's scales often enough, Hunt drove over to New Bern and bought a set of his own. Scotty was again the marker to weigh the seed cotton as it was brought in by the pickers; but ponder as he would over Scotty's little book, Hunt could not convince himself that



HUNT COULD NOT CONVINCE HIMSELF THAT THERE WOULD BE MUCH MORE THAN THREE-QUARTERS OF A CROP.

there would be much more than three-quarters of a crop. The plants looked well, but they could not stand two such severe strains upon their vitality as the long flooding, followed by the long drought, without affecting the crop.

Mr. Warren was almost as much interested as Hunt in the latter's crop, and even the arrangement of his new furniture had to wait while he went over to watch Scotty's weighing.

After the second picking, with little more left in the bolls, the account showed that sixty thousand pounds of seed cotton had been picked.

This cotton Hunt took himself over to the gin house in the barrels and bags, and it was not gratifying to him to learn that cotton was selling that year in New Bern for six and a half cents a pound.

"Come, now, partner," he said to Mary, one evening, before he had settled his accounts at the gin house or sold the cotton; "let us see how we stand with this year's cotton; you put down the figures," he went on, when they were in the sitting-room together.

"Ten tons of fertilizer, at eighteen dollars a ton, is one hundred and eighty dollars," he told her; and she put it down.

"Then, picking sixty thousand pounds, at forty cents a hundred, is two hundred and forty dollars. Now for the gin-house charges.

"That sixty thousand pounds of seed cotton," he

continued, "should give us twenty thousand pounds of clear cotton.

"Now wait a minute," he continued; "twenty thousand pounds divided by five hundred, the number of pounds to a bale, will make just forty bales.

"Put down baling—forty bales, at one dollar and twenty-five cents a bale, is fifty dollars; and ginning, eighty dollars.

"Now, foot that up, sis, and see what the crop has cost us."

"Just five hundred and fifty dollars," Mary answered, after pausing a moment to do the adding.

"Now, wait a moment," Hunt cautioned her. "This is all expense so far; but let us see what the returns will be. The market price this year," he continued, "is only six and a half cents a pound. A five-hundred-pound bale of cotton, at six and a half cents a pound, is worth how much?"

"Thirty-two dollars and fifty cents," Mary answered.

"Then at thirty-two dollars and fifty cents a bale," Hunt went on, "what will our forty bales be worth?"

"Exactly thirteen hundred dollars," Mary answered.

"There's another drop to add to that," Hunt went on, "for every bale of clear cotton we get half a ton of cotton seed worth six dollars, or two hundred and forty dollars in all."

"Exactly fifteen hundred and forty dollars," Mary answered, after making the addition.

"All right," Hunt resumed. "Now subtract the five hundred and fifty dollars expenses from that, to see what we make on this year's cotton."

Mary did the subtracting and read her figures:

"Leaving nine hundred and ninety dollars profit on this year's cotton above all expenses."

"All right; that's just what I make it," Hunt replied. "Now let me twist your brain with a few more figures. We have seen," he went on, "that with a good price and with a good year we can clear about two thousand dollars. This bad year and at a low price we will clear nearly one thousand dollars. In the two years together, the good with the bad, we make three thousand dollars, or an average of fifteen hundred dollars a year, taking the good year with the bad.

"That is not making a sudden fortune," Hunt laughed; "but I know of a few Northern farmers with fortunes invested in their farms who would be glad if they could average half as much annual profit."

When the cotton was sold a few weeks later, and all accounts settled with the gin house, Hunt's bank book showed that his estimate was correct almost to the dollar.

"But it is on cotton alone that this represents the profits of the year," Mary objected, when Hunt exhibited the bank book to her. "You have left my department out entirely, and I think that with the hogs I shall be able every year to make a considerable

addition to the profits. You ought to see how fat they are, and I have been doing a little estimating on my own account. We have now nearly two hundred fat hogs, some of them so fat they can hardly walk. I base my estimate on what we did with a few hogs last year, that we average at least forty pounds of smoked bacon to a hog. So with two hundred hogs this year we ought to have at least eight thousand pounds of bacon. I know that sounds like a good deal, Hunt, for eight thousand pounds is four tons; but in the two smoke-houses we can easily cure that much. The lowest price we have had for our bacon and hams is eight cents a pound, and eight thousand pounds at that rate would bring us six hundred and forty dollars.

"And you must remember, Hunt, that that costs us nothing but our own labor and perhaps a few days' work for Scotty in killing-time, for we grow all the feed for the hogs and all the other stock, and we have plenty of wood to smoke the meat with. So I was not far wrong, Hunt, when I told you long ago that in bad cotton years we might be glad enough to have the bacon to help out.

"If my account is as nearly correct as yours was, you can add about six hundred dollars to the average yearly profit, which will bring it up above two thousand dollars, and that, I think, is something for us both to be proud of."

"It is one thing to make our profits on paper," Hunt said, after walking out to look more carefully at the hogs; "but we have estimated correctly about

the cotton, and I think you can do even better than you expect with the pork.

"It is a fine, bright day," he continued, "and in a short time I shall be busy with the pig-killing, for winter will soon be upon us. We have been neglecting the Maria Louise lately, and I suggest that you and I take a sail up to Mr. Warren's, and take Rover and Buster along, for I want to see how our neighbor has made out with his cotton crop."

The sail was agreed upon, and when Mr. Warren saw them coming he went down to the summer-house and met them there. The new cotton planter was in excellent spirits, for notwithstanding the bad weather and the low price as well as the small part of his land that had been ready for planting, he had cleared several hundred dollars on the crop, and he looked upon that as only a fraction of what he could do under more favorable circumstances.

At Mr. Warren's suggestion Mary went up to the house to see Mrs. Warren, and during her absence he showed that he was making a real North Carolinian of himself by borrowing the Maria Louise and sailing her down to the fish market after a few bushels of oysters.

The result of this trip was that Hunt and Mary were compelled to stay and help eat an oyster supper in Mr. Warren's new dining-room, Scotty having run out meanwhile and brought back a colored man to open the oysters.

This little feast reminded Hunt of a place in New

Bern where cooked oysters and other good things could always be had, and he told Mr. Warren that he had a day or two before received an invitation to join the Craven Club, but that he did not think it would be best for him to accept it, as he had little spare time for going to a club.

"The Craven Club is rather different from most clubs," Mr. Warren told him. "The club house is in Pollock Street, and some of the first gentlemen of New Bern can generally be met there. It is a compliment to you that you have been invited to join it, and, although you may not be able to go often, I should not be in too much of a hurry about declining the invitation; but take time to think it over."

"I think you ought to join it, Hunt," Mary expostulated, "for you ought to have a little play mixed with your work."

"I do not care for play," Hunt replied; "but I know that the members take their wives to the club house sometimes for dinner or supper, and where a man can take his wife he can take his sister; so if I do join it will be largely on your account, for I think that you are the one who is most in need of a little play; but after the hogs are killed will be time enough for us to make up our minds."

CHAPTER XXIX.

NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

WHEN the pig-killing time came, Scotty's assistance alone was not enough, and Hunt selected several of the neighboring colored men who could be of most use to him in such work. Even with this additional help, the killing and butchering and salting occupied more than two weeks; and when the work was finished and the smoke-house fires lighted both of the smoke-houses had almost solid ceilings of pork.

It was perhaps because he was kept so busy with this work that Hunt did not at first notice an important change that had been made in the household economy. When Mr. Warren removed to his own house, Mary changed her sleeping-room, taking possession of the room formerly occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Warren, as Hunt had often urged her to do. She thus had a good modern bedstead with springs, and she had ornamented the room with curtains and table covers and a dressing-case with a marble slab, till it looked, as Hunt thought, as fine as any parlor.

"Now that my old room is vacant," she told him when he first spoke of the change, "you had better take it for your sleeping-room, so you will not have to sleep in the kitchen any more. That was well

enough for a poor working boy, but it will not do for a successful cotton planter;" and Hunt, agreeably to her wishes, exchanged his Hyde County bed in the kitchen for Mary's old bed of the same pattern in the little back room.

It gradually dawned upon his masculine mind that a great change had come over Mary for the better within a few months. That she had used at least a part of the money he left with her for the purchase of new clothing was evident to him whenever he looked at her, although she had refrained from purchasing any of the articles that Hunt and Scotty termed "fancy jim-cracks," and her attire, though much improved, was still plain and substantial and well adapted to her situation and household work. The improvement in her manner he attributed to her association with Mrs. Warren; and when that lady told him that his sister was a very pretty young lady he was not disposed to dispute it.

That his improved condition had made an equal improvement in his own bearing and manner he could not so easily see, though his associates saw it; and even Hunt could not help noticing that when he went over to New Bern he was no longer addressed as "Hunt, my boy!" even by his intimates, but was always called either Robertson or Mr. Robertson; but as long as they did not call him colonel or captain or judge, after the fashion of the country, he was satisfied.

It was about this time that Hunt became officially

a planter, for when the grand jury was selected for the winter term of the county court he was named in the court list as "Huntley Robertson, planter."

Although he had almost determined that in justice to Mary he ought to become a member of the Craven Club, this drawing on the grand jury fully decided him, for he knew that his duty as a grand juror would require his frequent attendance at court during, at least, a week or two, and, as Mary would sometimes accompany him to the city, his membership in the club would enable him to make her acquainted with more young people.

He accordingly became a member of the Craven Club, and in a short time he was introduced to Captain Henry Maltby and his sister.

Captain Maltby, a fellow-member of the club, was also a young cotton planter of good habits, his plantation, which he had inherited, being reckoned among the best in Eastern North Carolina; and his sister was a beautiful and vivacious young lady.

After several meetings at the club, Captain Maltby asked permission to take his sister over to Pine Ridge Plantation to call upon Miss Mary.

Hunt knew that Captain Maltby's saddle horse was one of the finest animals in Craven County; but, much to the surprise of Hunt and his sister, when the captain and his sister called they drove over in their shining victoria, which was the wonder of New Bern whenever it appeared in the streets.

After that first call Mary and Miss Maltby be-

came intimate friends, and the surest place to find either the victoria or the captain's saddle horse was in front of the hitching-post at Pine Ridge Plantation.

One of the first results of this intimacy was the purchase by Mary of a side-saddle for Fannie, after which her visits to her New Bern friend became equally frequent.

Mary had carefully avoided the progressive euchre parties and afternoon teas that occupy the attention of many of the ladies of New Bern, and this was not hard, because she knew so few of them; so her association with a young lady of her own age pleased Hunt very much.

Calls with his sister were not entirely to the captain's liking, and after a short time, when Miss Maltby drove over in the victoria, she often found the captain's saddle horse already on the spot, and the captain, too.

Hunt and his new friend naturally had much to talk about, but the conversation did not seem to lag when Mary and the captain were together.

"Is Captain Maltby at your house to-day?" one of Hunt's New Bern friends asked him when he visited the city.

"'Captain Maltby'!" Hunt exclaimed; "why should he be at my place to-day?"

"Well, I don't know, I'm sure!" the friend quietly laughed. "I guess you'll have to ask him about that."

This was one of a thousand little hints he heard

that told Hunt that the captain's frequent visits to the plantation were not unnoticed in New Bern.

"Everyone speaks well of Harry Maltby," Mary said, one day, with something very much like the beginning of a blush.

"'Harry Maltby'!" Hunt repeated. "I don't know whether his name is Harry, but I do know that his sister Ethel is one of the prettiest young ladies I have seen since I began to look at young ladies at all."

"Oh, you have begun to look at young ladies, have you?" Mary laughed.

"It is as natural for me to admire young ladies as it is for you to admire young men and captains, Mary," he answered, with a laugh.

The captain's frequent visits continued, and his sister's, too; and Hunt perhaps would have continued to attribute them to the girlish friendship between the two young ladies if Mr. Warren had not helped him one day to open his eyes. "What are you going to do if you lose your sister, Hunt?" Mr. Warren asked him.

That gave Hunt a start, for only one way of possibly losing her occurred to him at the moment.

"Why, Mary's perfectly well, Mr. Warren," he replied. "I think that she has been looking even better than usual for the last few weeks."

"Is that so?" Mr. Warren said, smiling. "Well, I'm glad to hear it, and I am sure I hope there is no trouble with her heart, for girls of her age so often have some little heart trouble, you know. Captain

Maltby seems to fear something of the kind, too," he added, "for he comes over very often to see that she is all right."

"Oh, I am afraid that I must be stupid!" Hunt laughed. "I did not see at all what you meant: but I see now," he continued, "and since you have asked me a question, I will answer it. Captain Maltby does come to the house very often, that's a fact, and perhaps he does not always come to see me. It is nothing unusual for a young man to make calls upon a young lady, and since Mary has become a young lady such things are to be expected, I suppose; but if the captain has any idea of stealing away my sister, which is doubtful, why then I must remind you that he has a beautiful sister of his own, and that turn about is only fair play."

"Then you are aware of the situation," Mr. Warren said, "though you would not have us know it; and for my part I do not go about with my eyes entirely shut. I should not like to think of your sister going off and leaving us; but if it has been decreed that we are to have changes at Pine Ridge, I am glad the captain is so fine and wealthy a young man, and his sister so beautiful and accomplished, that I can safely promise to give my blessing to all parties."

"But I don't think Mary would want to leave her pig park," Hunt objected.

"'Pig park'!" Mr. Warren almost shouted. "Why, if every county in this state could be made into a pig park, and every one of them be stocked with the choicest breed of hogs, the whole lot together would not for one instant, in a young woman's mind, counterbalance a handsome young captain riding up on his charger."

"I am going to have a fine lot of bacon in a few weeks," Hunt said a little irrelevantly. For although Mary's welfare was of the deepest interest to him, love affairs in general were not nearly as important in his mind as cotton and pork crops.

Neither Hunt nor Mary realized for a time what an influence Captain Maltby's place began to exert upon their own home; but Mr. and Mrs. Warren saw it, and they were much pleased at the improvement.

Several times the brother and sister were invited to the Maltby plantation to eat dinner, and the victoria was sent for them. This reminded Hunt that his sister was as well able to ride in her own carriage as any other planter's sister, and that some time before he had bought a single mule for the express purpose of leaving room for the purchase of a pair of horses. He proposed, therefore, to buy the horses at once, and as good a carriage as they could afford.

"I am not going to have a carriage," Mary said with much determination. "To tell the truth I do not care to be bothered with one, for if we had it I should have to depend upon you or Scotty or some colored man to drive for me, and just think how much more pleasure it is to go out to the stable and throw

the saddle myself over Fannie's back, and go when and where I please, without waiting for anyone."

"Do you know how much pork we had in the smoke-houses?" Hunt asked.

"Oh, it is not only on account of the money," Mary replied, "that I do not want you to buy horses and a carriage. Yes," she continued, "I know that it weighed nearly three tons when you hung it up to smoke, for you killed a great many pigs. Supposing it to lose one-half in weight in the drying and smoking, we shall still have three thousand pounds of bacon and hams to sell, worth nearly three hundred dollars.

"Of course, that is only a beginning," she went on, "and we can much more than double it in future years; but you know you said the pig park should be my department, and I do not want to make money just for the fun of spending it."

This was a low estimate of the value of the bacon, for what it produced was nearer five hundred dollars. When they returned from the Maltbys, Mary was well pleased that she had said "no" to the carriage proposition.

"You see, a carriage would be only a small part of the expense, if we were foolish enough to try to imitate rich people like the Maltbys," she told Hunt. "When we can afford to buy a lot of silver things for the table, and such elegant china as they have, and paintings to hang on the walls, and carpets and rugs and hundreds of other things that we do not need it

will be time enough to think of horses and a carriage; but even then I hope we can find a better use for our money.

"Indeed, I know of a better use for some now," she added, "if you feel as if you could spare some, Hunt."

"Why, of course, we can spare some," Hunt quickly answered, believing that his sister was about to propose the purchase of something that would give her pleasure.

"I suppose you remember," Mary resumed, "that poor old crippled negro sitting shivering in a wheeled chair in George Street, and begging, whose tin cup I dropped a few pennies into? I asked Ethel Maltby about the poor fellow, and she says he was a slave until 1863, when he was thirty years old, and then he became so crippled with rheumatism that for nearly forty years he has not been able to walk or even to raise his food to his mouth, but lives by begging a few pennies from his wheeled chair.

"Just think what a hard fate, Hunt, to be first a slave for thirty years, and then a helpless cripple for forty years! If I can have a little of the pig money in advance, I want to buy a warm overcoat for that poor man."

"I think I have a good partner, Mary!" Hunt exclaimed. And when he drew the check to pay for the overcoat he made it sufficiently large to fill the cripple's tin cup with nickels, also.

There were soon more books and magazines and

newspapers in the Pine Ridge Plantation house than there had been before; and as one expense generally leads to another, the need of a better light to read them by was felt until Hunt and Mary went to Mrs. Whitehurst's store in New Bern and bought a fine large student lamp, which thereafter stood upon the extension table.

Mary seemed more pleased than was really necessary, Hunt thought, when Captain Maltby, on spending his next evening with them at Pine Ridge, complimented her taste in selecting it.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FAMILIAR FACE.

MANY changes for the better were made in the Pine Ridge Plantation as time rolled by; and one morning when Hunt was sitting in the corner front room of his house, not the same room or the same house in which we last saw him, but a new house entirely, he heard a loud "halloo!" from the direction of the creek, immediately followed by the violent barking of the dogs and a ringing of the front door bell.

It was not Hunt himself who answered the bell now, but a neatly dressed colored maid, for the household arrangements had improved with the plantation. A minute later he heard a voice that had a familiar sound saying to the maid:

"I am looking for my young friend, Hunt Robertson; he used to have a cabin somewhere around here."

Hunt was so sure that he had heard that voice before that he sprang up and hurried to the door.

"Why, Mr. Chatfield!" he exclaimed to the gray-haired and gray-bearded gentleman who stood on the piazza. "How glad I am to see you again!"

"Hunt Robertson, as sure as the world," Mr. Chat-

field replied. "As your little house was gone, I was afraid you would be gone, too; but give me your hand, Hunt, to make sure this is not a North Carolina dream I am having.

"This is a growing state sure enough," the visitor went on, taking Hunt's outstretched hand; "here you have grown from a boy into a young man, and your cabin has grown into a big two-story house. Do tell me what it all means, Hunt, after you call off these dogs."

"Down, Rover! Down, Buster!" Hunt called to the dogs. "The six years that have passed since I bought the Maria Louise from you have made some changes in Buster as well as in his master; but come in, Mr. Chatfield, and sit down. I am delighted to see you again."

"Well, I want to know about this thing, Huntley," Mr. Chatfield said, as he stepped into the hall. "I left you six years ago in a cabin, and here I find you in a mansion; so it is your turn to explain matters. There is no mystery about my appearance," he went on, "for I have brought my wife down to spend another winter in New Bern, and catch some more Welshmen, that is all."

"But come and sit down, Mr. Chatfield," Hunt said, leading the way into the parlor, where the visitor made pretense of being afraid to sit down in the upholstered chairs.

"Well, this is more than I bargained for!" he declared, seating himself at length at one of the front

windows. "But do tell me whether this is your house, Hunt; and if it is, how you got it."

"It is mine and my sister's," Hunt replied, "and it grew out of the ground in the form of cotton plants. We have two hundred and twelve acres of land now, and Mary and I finished the house last summer. My sister Mary has been with me almost since I started here, you know, and it was largely on her account that we built the new house."

"Then there must be some truth in what I hear about you over in New Bern," Mr. Chatfield said. "They tell me you have made twenty thousand dollars here in six years, Hunt, and your place looks as if it might be true, as I hope it is."

"It would be hard for me to say," Hunt laughed, "how much of that is true, for it would depend largely upon what the house and plantation and live stock are worth. Of course, I know how much we have in bank, and in a few bonds that we have bought; but I should not want to make a closer estimate than to say that we have done very well here, and have always lived comfortably."

"Didn't I tell you you were going to be a successful cotton planter?" Mr. Chatfield asked. "You know it is always a satisfaction to be able to say 'I told you so,' but that is just what I told you; now let us get down to the facts," he continued, taking from his pocket a bunch of small paper slips confined with a rubber band; "for, of course, I am interested in you."

"You came here six years ago," he went on, making a memorandum on one of the slips, "without any capital to speak of, and now you have two hundred and twelve acres of land and a big house, and you are one of the crack cotton planters of Craven County. What is that small building on the bluff, just above you?" he asked.

"That is a gin house," Hunt answered. "It stands on the land of my old friend, Scotty Watson, who came down to work for me and now has his own plantation there; but the gin house belongs to him and to myself and to Mr. Warren, our next neighbor, in common, for we found it cheaper to gin our own cotton."

"Scotty Watson and Mr. Warren?" Mr. Chatfield asked. "I think I have heard you mention both those names. Was not Mr. Warren the farmer you used to work for?"

"Yes, sir; he came down here and bought a plantation, and is making money," Hunt answered. "This house is very much like the one he built, and they both front on the creek."

"And Scotty Watson?" Mr. Chatfield asked. "Wasn't he another working boy without any money?"

"Yes; he came down here to work for me," Hunt replied, "and he saved his money and bought a little place, and now he has a profitable cotton plantation of about one hundred acres between this place and Mr. Warren's, so now we are three in a row, all along

the creek, and all comfortable and happy. He almost lost his health in the North, but here it has been fully restored."

"Well, I declare, Hunt!" Mr. Chatfield exclaimed; "you came here poor and now you have a good plantation, and your friend Scotty did the same thing. Now, I tell you what I'm going to do. I know some young fellows working for farmers in Connecticut, poor as church mice and getting a little poorer every year. When I go home I'm going to advise those boys to take a fast train for North Carolina, and go to growing cotton."

"I don't think you could give them better advice, sir," Hunt retorted. "I know from experience that it is a good thing for a young man to do. Now come over to the dining-room," he went on, "and have a bit of lunch before I take you out to see the plantation."

"No, I'm not going to put your sister to that trouble," Mr. Chatfield laughed, "nor let you take the time to make a pan of spoon bread."

"Oh, we don't do the cooking now," Hunt answered, leading the way toward the door; "we have a colored woman who is a very fair cook, for I had to put a stop to Mary's working so hard."

Mary herself here appeared, and seconded Hunt's invitation; and when they had all eaten a bite in the dining-room, the two took Mr. Chatfield out to see the plantation.

The visitor was pleased to see the Maria Louise

still floating at the foot of the bluff, neat and trim, with even her cotton-stuffed cushions still in good order; but in a minute he discovered a brick stairway leading down the bluff to a summer-house, just like Mr. Warren's, and nothing would do but that they must all go down to look at the summer-house and the boat.

"Same old boat!" Mr. Chatfield exclaimed. "Same old chair in her; same old cushions. But I shall not blame my wife if she hardly believes me when I tell her about all these things you have done, Hunt. I was going to have another rest on the Hyde County bed, but this place doesn't look like Hyde County beds. Now let us go and have a look at the stock."

They took him to the large, new barn, and showed him first the pair of horses, fit either for farm work or carriage use; then a pair of mules, Dick the single mule, Bob the ox, and another ox, and then took him to Fannie's little stable to see Fannie, sleek as a kitten, with her side-saddle on, and a handsome saddle blanket; and last of all to the pig park, which now fully deserved its name.

"That's the way to do it, Hunt!" Mr. Chatfield exclaimed. "Cotton crops sometimes fail; but cotton crops and hog crops never both fail in the same year. How many have you here?"

"Something over four hundred," Hunt answered, "and we have forgotten to show you the new smokehouse. We have three now, for we sell a great deal of bacon."

"Let us go back to your broad front piazza," Mr. Chatfield said, after a while. "I want to give my head a chance to settle itself a little, for all this has put it in a sort of a whirl."

Sitting in one of the comfortable rocking-chairs on the piazza, he took out one of the little slips of paper and looked over the memoranda he had made. "Now, do not think," he said, "that I am asking you all about your affairs merely out of curiosity. I meant what I said when I told you that I should advise more of our Northern boys to follow your example and come down here; and so that I can explain to them just about what your circumstances are, after six years in North Carolina, I want you to tell me what mortgages you have on your place."

"Mortgages!" Hunt exclaimed. "Why, Mr. Chatfield, I never gave a mortgage on anything in my life. What you see around us here is our own, for there is no mortgage upon anything. We saved at least a thousand dollars in building this house by being in no hurry about it, but waiting till we could pay cash for everything. I know," he continued, "that some cotton planters not only mortgage the crop while it is growing, but even mortgage the next year's crop before it is planted. I have never done that kind of business, and I should rather go back to working on somebody else's farm than begin it, for it is ruinous."

"You have given me a good idea of your situation, Hunt," Mr. Chatfield said, "and I am obliged to you, for this is a matter that I am very much interested in.

You know how many young men are working in the crowded shops and factories in the North for small pay and with no future to look forward to. I wish I could tell them all what they could do for themselves here in North Carolina."

"So do I," Hunt answered. "Most of them have nothing to lose and everything to gain, and here with ordinary industry they could soon establish themselves comfortably."

Mr. Chatfield sat looking thoughtfully toward New Bern for some minutes, and then said:

"You and your sister must have worked together here in perfect harmony; but your sister is a young lady now, and you are a young man, and you cannot expect to go on forever without some change in your household affairs; have you thought of that?"

"Yes, sir; I try to look forward to the future as well as I can," Hunt replied, "and I have foreseen some changes, but I am glad to tell you, Mr. Chatfield, that the change that seems most likely is satisfactory both to my sister and to myself. It is no secret," he went on, "that Mary has promised to become at some time in the future the wife of Captain Henry Maltby, who is another cotton planter, and Captain Maltby's sister, Ethel, has been good enough to make the same promise to me; but it is well understood among the four of us that when there is one wedding there shall be two. So even if Mary marries, there is no danger of Pine Ridge Plantation being left without a mistress."

"That is a very neat arrangement," Mr. Chatfield declared;" and you are a lucky man to have been able to make it."

"Now I must be starting back for New Bern, or they will think I am lost. No," he continued, "I will not let you sail me over in the Maria Louise this time, for I want to have another look at James City. Besides, I want to take a sail to-morrow if I can hire a sharpie somewhere, and perhaps invite some of my New Bern friends to go fishing with me, for I still have a hankering after Welshmen."

"Then I think there will be no difficulty about your getting a sharpie, Mr. Chatfield," Hunt said, stepping toward the piazza rail and looking out over the creek. "Do you see that sharpie lying at anchor just below us?" he asked. "She carries about three hundred tons. This one is mine, and Mr. Warren has one just like her. We bought them to carry our crops over to New Bern, and we find them very useful; but when there are no crops to carry they are useful for pleasure trips, too, sometimes, and if you will accept the use of mine to-morrow I shall be glad to send her over for you."

Mr. Chatfield willingly accepted the offer of the sharpie, but he could not be induced to remain longer.

"You will soon see enough of me!" he called back, as he went down the shell-paved walk, "for I expect to be in New Bern all winter, and I shall be over to see you often. So good-bye till I see you again,

Hunt, and take good care of the Maria Louise. I know you deserve all you have, but I will tell you fairly that I did not expect to come back to New Bern and find you with so much. It is not luck that has done this for you, but hard work and good management; and I should like to see a thousand other Northern boys doing the same thing."

"So should I!" Hunt called after him, as Mr. Chatfield went down the brick steps and disappeared.

"Wait a minute, please!" Hunt shouted, as Mr. Chatfield turned to wave his hand; "wait just a minute, and I will overtake you with our new runabout, and carry you over to New Bern, where I hope you will give my best regards to Mr. Burrus, for he was my earliest friend in Craven County."

THE END.

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