

**Marietta Holley**



*Samantha Among  
the Colored Folks:  
"My Ideas  
on the Race Problem"*

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# **Samantha Among the Colored Folks: "My Ideas on the Race Problem"**



Published by Good Press, 2022

[goodpress@okpublishing.info](mailto:goodpress@okpublishing.info)

EAN 4066338108166

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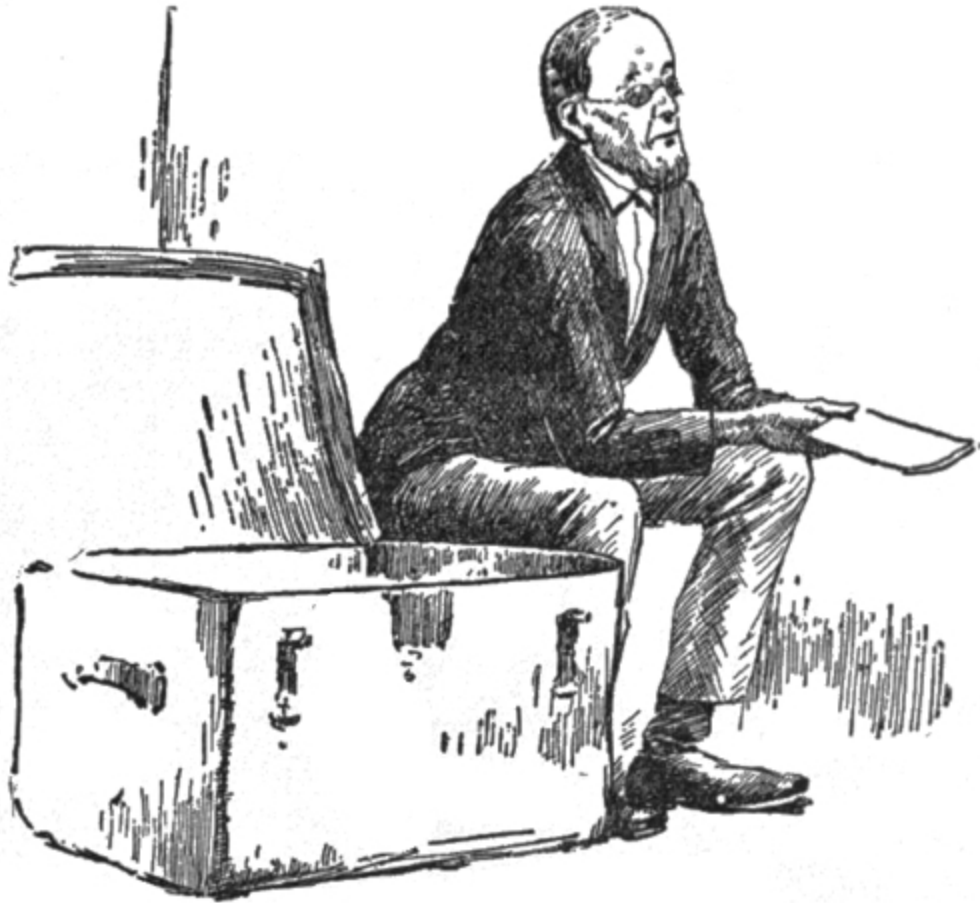
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"THEY WUZ TRACTS AND BIBLES."

# CHAPTER I.

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IT was entirely unexpected and onlooked for.

But I took it as a Decree, and done as well as I could, which is jest as well as anybody ought to be expected to do under any circumstances, either on my side or on hisen.

It was one of the relations on his side that come on to us entirely unexpected and on the evenin' stage that runs from Jonesville to Loontown. He was a passin' through this part of the country on business, so he stopped off at Jonesville to see us.

He come with his portmanty and a satchel, and I mistrusted, after consultin' them signs in the privacy of my own mind, that he had come to stay for quite a spell.

But I found in the fulness of time that my worst apprehensions wuz not realized.

I found instead of pantaloons and vests and things which I suspected wuz in the big satchel, I found out they wuz tracts and Bibles.

Why, I wuz fairly took aback when I discovered this fact, and felt guilty to think I had been cast down, and spozed things that wuzn't so.

But whether they are on his side or on your own, visitors that come when you are deep in house-cleanin', and most all your carpets took up, and your beds oncorded, and your buttery shelves dry and arid, can't be welcomed with quite the cordiality you would show one in more different and prosperous times.



But we found out after a little conversation that Cousin John Richard Allen wuz a colporter, and didn't lay out to stay only one night. So, as I say, I done the best I could with him, and felt my conscience justified.

He had a dretful good look to his face, for all mebby he wouldn't be called beautiful. His eyes wuz deep and brilliant and clear, with a meanin' in 'em that comes from a pure life and a high endeavor—a generous, lovin' soul.

Yes, though it wuz one on his side instid of mine, justice makes me say he seemed to be a good feller, and smart as a whip, too. And he seemed to feel real friendly and cousinly towards us, though I had never laid eyes on him more than once or twice before. Josiah had known him when they wuz boys.

He had lived in Vermont, and had been educated high, been through college, and preachin' schools of the best kind, and had sot out in life as a minister, but bein' broke up with quinsy, and havin' a desire to be in some Christian work, he took to colporterin', and had been down in the Southern States to work amongst the freedmen for years.

He went not long after the war closed. I guess he hated to give up preachin', for I believe my soul that he wanted to do good, and bein' so awful smart it wuz a cross, I know—and once in a while he would kind o' forget himself, and fall into a sort o' preachin', eloquent style of talkin', even when he wuz conversin' on such subjects as butter, and hens, and farmin', and such. But I know he did it entirely unbeknown to himself.

And to the table—the blessin' he asked wuz as likely a one as I ever see run at anybody's table, but it wuz middlin'

lengthy, as long about as a small-sized sermon.

Josiah squirmed—I see he did, he squirmed hard, though he is a good Christian man. He wuz afraid the cream biscuit would be spilte by the delay; they are his favorites, and though I am fur from bein' the one that ought to speak of it, my biscuit are called delicious.

And though I hate to say it, hate to show any onwillingness to be blessed to any length by so good a man and so smart a one—yet I must say them biscuit wuzn't the biscuit they would have been had the blessin' been more briefer, and they had been eat earlier.

Howsomever, they wuz pretty good ones after all, and Cousin John Richard partook of five right along one after the other, and seemed to enjoy the fifth one jest as well as he did the earlier editions. They wuzn't very large, but light, and tender.

Wall, after supper, he and my pardner sot down in the settin'-room, while I wuz a washin' up the dishes, and a settin' the sponge for my griddle-cakes for breakfast.

And I hearn 'em a talkin' about Uncle Noah, and Uncle Darius, and Cousin Melinda, and Sophronia Ann, and Aunt Marrier and her children—and lots more that I had never hearn of, or had forgot if I had.

They seemed to be a takin' solid comfort, though I see that Cousin John Richard every time he got a chance would kinder preach on 'em.

If there wuz a death amongst 'em that they talked over, John Richard would, I see, instinctively and onbeknown to himself preach a little funeral sermon on 'em, a first-rate one, too, though flowery, and draw quite a lot of morals.

Wall, I thought to myself, they are a takin' sights of comfort together, and I am glad on it. I dearly love to see my pardner happy.

When all of a sudden, jest as I had got my sponge all wet up, and everything slick, and I wuz a washin' my hands to the sink, I see there wuz a more excited, voyalent axent a ringin' out in my pardner's voice, I see he wuz a gettin' het up in some argument or other, and I hurried and changed my gingham bib apron for a white one, and took my knittin' work and hastened into the room, bein' anxious to avert horstilities, and work for peace.

And I see I wuz only jest in time; for my companion wuz a gettin' agitated and excited to a high degree, and Cousin John Richard all roused up.

And the very first words I hearn after I went in wuz these offensive and quarrelsome words that do so much to stir up strife and dessensions—

They have madded me time and agin. They proceeded out of my companion's mouth, and the words wuz:

“Oh shaw!”

I see in a minute that John Richard couldn't brook 'em. And I wunk to Josiah Allen to stop, and let Cousin John Richard go on and say what he wuz a minter, both as a visiter, who wuz goin' to remain with us but a short period, and also a relation, and a ex-minister.

My wink said all of this, and more. And my companion wuz affected by it. But like a child a cryin' hard after bein' spanked, he couldn't stop short off all to once.

So he went on, but in fur mellerer axents, and more long-sufferin'er ones:



“Wall, I say there is more talk than there is any need of. I don’t believe things are to such a pass in the South. I don’t take much stock in this Race Problem anyway. The Government whipped the South and freed the niggers. And there it is, all finished and done with. And everything seems quiet so fur as I can hear on.

“I hain’t heard nuthin’ about any difficulty to speak on, nor I don’t believe Uncle Nate Gowdey has, or Sime Bently. And if there wuz much of anything wrong goin’ on, one of us three would have been apt to have hearn on it.

“For we are, some of us, down to the corners about every night, and get all the news there is a stirrin’.

“Of course there is some fightin’ everywhere. Uncle Nate hearn of a new fight last night, over to Loontown. We get holt of everything. And I don’t believe there is any trouble down South, and if there is, they will get along well enough if they are left alone, if there hain’t too much said.”



UNCLE NATE GOWDEY.

Sez John Richard, "I have lived in the South for years, and I know what I am talking about. And I say that you Northern people, and in fact all the nation, are like folks sitting on the outside of a volcano, laughing and talking in your gay indifference, and thinking the whole nation is in safety, when the flames and the lava torrents of destruction are liable to burst out at any time and overwhelm this land in ruin."

And then agin, though I hate to set it down—then agin did my pardner give vent to them dangerous and

quarrelsome sentiments before I could reach him with a wink or any other precautionary measures. That rash man said agin:

“Oh shaw!”

And I see, devoted Christian as John Richard wuz, the words gaulded him almost more than he could endure, and he broke out in almost heated axents, and his keen dark eye a flashin’, and says he:

“I tell you the storm is brewing! I have watched it coming up and spreading over the land, and unless it is averted, destruction awaits this people.”

His tone wuz a very preachin’ one, very, and I felt considerable impressed by it; but Josiah Allen spoke up pert as a peacock, and sez he:

“Why don’t the Southern folks behave themselves, then?”

And sez John Richard:

“Do you blame the Southern white folks exclusively?”

“Yes,” sez Josiah, in them same pert axents; “yes, of course I do.”

“Then that shows how short-sighted you are, how blind!”

“I can see as well as you can!” sez Josiah, all wrought up — “I don’t have to wear goggles.”

Oh, how mortified, how mortified I felt! John Richard did wear blue goggles when he wuz travellin’. But what a breach of manners to twit a visiter of such a thing! Twit ‘em of goggles, blue ones too! I felt as if I should sink.

But I didn’t know Cousin John Richard Allen. He hadn’t give up ease and comfort and the joys of a fireside, for principle’s sake, for nuthin’. No personal allusions could

touch him. The goggles fell onto him harmlessly, and fell off agin. He didn't notice 'em no more'n if they hadn't been thrown.

And he went on growin' more and more sort o' lifted up and inspired-lookin', and a not mindin' what or who wuz round him. And sez he:

"I tell you again the storm is rising; I hear its mutterings in the distance, and it is coming nearer and nearer all the time."

Josiah kinder craned his neck and looked out of the winder in a sort of a brisk way. He misunderstood him a purpose, and acted as if John Richard meant a common thunder-storm.

But Cousin John Richard never minded him, bein' took up and intent on what his own mind wuz a lookin' at onbeknown to us—

"I have been amongst this people night and day for years; I have been in the mansions of the rich, the ruins of the beautiful homes ruined by the war, and in the cabins of the poor. I have been in their schools and their churches, and the halls where the law is misadministered—I have been through the Southern land from one end to the other—and I know what I am talking about.

"I went there to try to help the freedmen. I knew these people so lately enslaved were poor and ignorant, and I thought I could help them.

"But I was almost as ignorant as you are of the real state of affairs in the South. But I have been there and seen for myself, and I tell you, and I tell this nation, that we are on the eve of another war if something is not done to avert it."

My pardner wuz jest a openin' his mouth in a derisive remark, but I hitched my chair along and trod on his foot, and unbeknown to me it wuz the foot on which he wuz raisin' a large corn, and his derisive remark wuz changed to a low groan, and Cousin John Richard went on onhended.

"I went South with good motives, God knows. I knew this newly enfranchised race was sorely in want of knowledge, Christian knowledge most of all.

"I thought, as so many others do, that Christianity and education would solve this problem. I never stopped to think that the white race, of whose cruelty the negroes complained, had enjoyed the benefits of Christianity for hundreds of years, and those whose minds were enriched by choicest culture had hearts encased in bitterest prejudices, and it was from the efforts of their avarice and selfishness that I was trying to rescue the freedmen. We accomplished much, but I expected, as so many others have, choicer Christian fruits to spring from this barren soil, that has grown in the rich garden cultivated for centuries.

"Education has done and will do much—Christianity more; but neither can sound a soundless deep, nor turn black night into day.

"But I never thought of this. I worked hard and meant well, Heaven knows. I thought at first I could do marvellous things; later, when many failures had made me more humble, I thought if I could help only one soul my labor would not be in vain. For who knows," sez John Richard dreamily, "who knows the tremendous train of influences one sets in motion when he is under God enabled to turn

one life about from the path of destruction towards the good and the right?

“Who knows but he is helping to kindle a light that shall yet lighten the pathway of a Toussaint L’Ouverture or a Fred Douglass on to victory, and a world be helped by the means?”

“And if only one soul is helped, does not the Lord of the harvest say, ‘He that turns one man from the error of his ways has saved a soul from death’?”

Cousin John Richard’s eye looked now as if he wuz a gazin’ deep into the past—the past of eager and earnest endeavor, and way beyend it into the past that held a happy home, and the light from that forsaken fireside seemed to be a shinin’ up into his face, divinely sad, bitter-sweet, as he went on:

“I loved my wife and children as well as another man, but I left them and my happy, happy home to go where duty called.

“My wife could not endure that hot climate, and she lay dying when I was so far South that I could not get to her till she had got so far down in the Valley that she could not hear my voice when I spoke to her.”

Ah! the waves of memory wuz a dashin’ hard against Cousin John Richard then, as we could see. It splashed some of the spray up into his bright eyes.

But he kept on: “I was rich enough then to put my children to school, which I did, and then returned to my labors.

“I loved my work—I felt for it that enthusiasm and devotion that nerves the heart to endure any trials—and I



don't speak of the persecutions I underwent in that work as being harder than what many others endured.

"You know what they passed through who preached the higher truth in Jerusalem. The Book says, 'They were persecuted, afflicted, tormented, had cruel buffetings and scourgings, were burned, were tortured, not accepting deliverance.'

"In the early days after the war, in some parts of the South there were hardly any indignities that could be inflicted upon us that we were not called upon to endure. We had our poor houses burned down over our heads, our Bible and spelling-books thrown into the flames; we have had rifles pointed at our breasts, and were ordered to leave on peril of death.

"And many, many more than you Northerners have any idea of met their death in the dark cypress forests and in the dreary, sandy by-ways of the Southern States.

"They died, 'not accepting deliverance' by cowardly flight. How many of them thus laid down their lives for conscience' sake will never be known till that hour when *He* comes to make up His jewels.

"I bear the marks upon me to-day, and shall carry them to my grave, of the tortures inflicted upon me to make me give up my work of trying to help the weak and seek and save them that were lost."

"The dumb fools!" hollered out Josiah. "What did they act so like idiots for—and villains? The Southerners always did act like the Old Harry anyway."



“THE DUMB FOOLS!”

My dear companion is fervid and impassioned in his feelin’s and easily wrought on, and he felt what he said. John Richard wuz a relation on his own side, and he could not calmly brook the idee of his sufferin’s.

But Cousin John didn’t look mad, nor excited, nor anything. He had a sort of a patient look onto his face, and as if he had tried to reason things out for some time.

“Such a state of affairs was inevitable,” sez he.

“Then you don’t blame the cussed fools, do you?” yelled out Josiah, fearfully wrought up and agitated.

Oh, what a word to use, and to a minister too—“cussed”! I felt as if I should sink right down into the suller—I wuz about over the potato ben—and I didn’t much care if I did sink, I felt so worked up.

But Cousin John Richard didn't seem to mind it at all. He had got up into a higher region than my soul wuz a sailin' round in—he had got up so high that little buzzin', stingin' insects that worried me didn't touch him; he had got up into a calm, pure atmosphere where they couldn't fly round.

He went on calm as a full moon on a clear night, and sez he:

“It is difficult to put the blame for this state of affairs on any one class, the evil is so far spread. The evil root was planted centuries ago, and we are partaking of its poison fruit to-day.

“In looking on such a gigantic wrong we must look on it on other sides than the one whose jagged edges have struck and bruised us—we must look on it on every side in order to be just.

“After years and years of haughty supremacy, ambition and pride growing rankly, as they must in such a soil, fostered, it would seem, by Northern indolence and indifference, the South was conquered by armed force—brought down to the humiliation of defeat by a successful, if generous foe.

“And then, what was far harder for them to endure, a race of people that they had looked upon much as you look upon your herd of cattle was suddenly raised from a condition of servitude to one of legal equality, and in many cases of supremacy.

“It was hard for this hot-blooded, misguided, warm-hearted Southern people to lose at once all their brilliant dreams of an independent, aristocratic Confederacy—it was

hard for them to lose home, and country, and wealth, and ambition at one blow.

“It was hard for their proud, ambitious leader to have his beautiful old country home, full of aristocratic associations and sweet memories, turned into the national graveyard.

“And this one tragedy that changed this sweet home into a mausoleum is not a bad illustration of what the Southern people endured.

“No matter what brought this thing about—no matter where the blame rested—it was *hard* for them to stand by the graves of their loved ones, who fell fighting for the lost cause—to stand amongst the ruins of their dismantled homes, and know that their proud, ambitious dreams were all ended.

“But this they could endure—it was the fortune of war, and they had to submit. But to this other indignity, as they called it, they would *not* submit.

“Through centuries of hereditary influences and teachings this belief was ingrained, born in them, bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, soul of their soul, implanted first by nature, then hardened and made invulnerable by centuries of habits, beliefs, and influences—this instinctive, hereditary contempt and aversion for the black race only as servants.

“And they *would not* endure to have them made their equals.

“Now, no preaching, be it with the tongue of men or angels, could vanquish this ingrained, inexorable foe, this silent, overmastering force that rose up on every side to set at naught our preaching.



A BLACK.

“After twenty-five years of Christian effort it remains the same, and at the end of a century of Gospel work it will still be there just the same.

“And those who do not take into consideration this overwhelming power of antagonism between the races when they are considering the Southern question are fools.

“The whites *will* not look upon the negroes as their equals, and you cannot make them—”

“Wall, they be!” hollered out Josiah. “The Proclamation made ‘em free and equal, jest as we wuz made in the War of 1812.”

“But oh, what a difference!” sez Cousin John Richard sadly.

“The American colonies were the peers of the mother country. It was only a quarrel between children and mother. The same blood ran in their veins, they had the same traits, the same minds, the same looks, they were truly equal.

“But in this case it was an entirely different race, necessarily inferior by their long years of degradation, brought up at one bound from the depths of ignorance and servitude to take at once the full rights awarded to intellect and character.

“It was a great blunder; it was a sad thing for the white race and for the black race!”

Josiah wuz jest a openin’ his mouth to speak in reply to Cousin John Richard’s last words, when all of a sudden we heard a knock at the door, and I went and opened it, and there stood Miss Eben Garlock, and I asked her to come in, and sot her a chair.



I never over and above liked Miss Eben Garlock, though she is a likely woman enough so fur as I know.

But she is one of the kind of wimmen who ornament the outside of their heads more than the inside, and so on with their hearts and souls, etc.

She is a great case for artificial flowers, and ribbin loops, and fringes. And the flowers that wuz a blowin' out on her bunnet that day *would* have gone a good ways towards fillin' a half-bushel basket. And the loops that wuz a hangin' all round her boddist waist would have straightened out into half a mile of ribbin, I do believe.

The ribbin wuz kinder rusty, and she had pinned on a bunch of faded red poppies on to the left side of her boddist waist, pretty nigh, I should judge, over her heart.

Which goes to prove what I said about her trimmin' off the outside of her heart and soul.

Her clothes are always of pretty cheap material, but showy, and made after sort o' foamin' patterns, with streamers, and her favorite loops and such. And they always have a look as if they wuz in danger of fallin' off of her. She uses pins a good deal, and they drop out considerable and leave gaps.

Wall, I always use her well; so, as I say, I sot her a chair and introduced her to Cousin John Richard, and he bowed polite to her, and then leaned back in his chair and seemed restin'. Good land! I should thought he'd wanted to.

Miss Garlock seemed real agitated and excited, and I remembered hearin' that forenoon that they had lost a relation considerable distant to 'em. He lived some fifteen or sixteen miles away.

He and Eben Garlock's folks had never agreed; in fact, they had hated each other the worst kind. But now Miss Garlock, bein' made as she wuz, wuz all nerved up to make a good appearance to the funeral and show off.

She had come to borrow my mournin' suit that I had used to mourn for Josiah's mother in; and I am that careful of my clothes that they wuz as good as new, though I had mourned in 'em for a year. Mournin' for some folks hain't half so hard on clothes as mournin' for others; tears spots black crape awful, and sithes are dretful hard on whale-bones; my clothes wuz good, good as new.

But I am a episodin', and to resoom.

Miss Garlock wanted to borrow my hull suit down to shoes and stockin's for Eben's mother, who lived with her. She herself wuz a goin' to borrow Miss Slimpsey's dress—she that wuz Betsey Bobbets—it wuz trimmed more and more foamin' lookin'. But she wanted my black fan for herself, and my mournin' handkerchief pin, it bein' a very showy one. Ury had gin it to me, and I never had mourned in it but once, and then not over two hours, at a church social, for I felt it wuz too dressy for me. But Miss Garlock had seen it on that occasion and admired it.

And then, after I had told her she could have all these things in welcome, she kinder took me out to one side and asked me "if I had jest as lives lend her a Bible for a few days. She thought like as not the minister would call to talk with Eben's mother, and she felt that she should be mortified if he should call for a Bible, for they had all run out of Bibles," she said.

“The last one they had by ’em had jest been chawed up by a pup Eben wuz a raisin’; she had ketched him a worryin’ it out under the back stoop. She said he had chawed it all up but a part o’ the Old Testament, and he wuz a worryin’ and gnawin’ Maleky when she got it away from him.”

Wall, I told her she could have the Bible, and she asked me to have the things done up by the time they got back from Miss Slimpsey’s, and I told her I would, and I did.

Wall, if you’d believe it, I had hardly got them things done up in a bundle and laid ’em on the table ready for Miss Garlock, when that blessed man, John Richard, commenced agin right where he left off, and sez he, a repeatin’ his last words as calmly as if there had been no Garlock eppisode.

“It was a great blunder, a sad thing for the white race and the black race.”

“Wall, what would you have done?” sez Josiah.

“I don’t know,” sez Cousin John sadly—“I don’t know; perhaps mistakes were inevitable. The question was so great and momentous, and the danger and the difficulties seemed so impenetrable on every side.”

“Lincoln did the best he could,” sez Josiah sturdily; “and I know it.”

“And so do I know it,” sez Cousin John. “That wise, great heart could not make any other mistake only a mistake of judgment, and he was sorely tried to know what was best to do. The burden weighed down upon him so, I fancy he was glad to lay it down in any way.

“The times were so dark that any measure adopted for safety was only groping towards the light, only catching at

the first rope of safety that seemed to lower itself through the heavy clouds of war.

“The heavy eyes and true hearts watching through those black hours will never be forgotten by this republic.

“And now, in looking back and criticising the errors of that time, it is like the talk of those who are watching a storm at sea, when, in order to save the ship, wrong ropes may be seized, and life-boats cast out into the stormy waves may be swept down and lost. But if the ship is saved, let the survivors of the crew forever bless and praise the brave hands and hearts that dared the storm and the peril.

“But when the sky is clearer you can see more plainly than when the tempest is whirling about you and death and ruin are riding on the gale.

“You can see plainer and you can see farther.

“Now, it was a great and charitable idea, looking at it from one side, to let those who had tried their best to ruin the Union at once take an equal place with those who had perilled life and property to save it—to give them *at once* the same rights in making the laws they had set at defiance.

“It was a generous and charitable idea, looking on it from one side, but from another side it looked risky, very risky, and it looked dangerous to the further peace and perpetuity of that Union.

“A little delay might not have done any harm—a little delay in giving them the full rights of citizenship.

“And it might, Heaven knows, have been as well if the slaves had had a gradual bringing up of mind and character to meet the needs of legal responsibility, if they had not been *at once* invested with all the rights and responsibilities

which well-trained Christian scholars find it so difficult to assume, if they had not been required to solve by the ballot deep questions of statesmanship, the names of which they could not spell out in the newspaper.

“Could such ignorance make them otherwise than a dangerous element in politics, dangerous to themselves and dangerous to the welfare of the Union?”

“Tossed back and forth as they were between two conflicting parties, in their helplessness and ignorance becoming the prey of the strongest faction, compelled, at the point of the sword and the muzzle of the revolver, to vote as the white man made them—the law of Might victorious over the Right—it was a terrible thing for the victim, and a still worse one for the victor.

“What could happen in such a state of affairs only trouble and misery, evasions and perversions of the law, uprisings of the oppressed, secret bands of armed men intent on deeds of violence, whose only motives were to set at naught the law, to fight secretly against the power they had been openly forced to yield to.

“What could happen save warfare, bloodshed, burning discontent, and secret nursing of wrongs amongst the blacks; hatred towards the Union amongst the whites, towards the successful foe who had humiliated them so beyond endurance by this last blow of forcing them into a position of equality towards their former slaves, and rousing up in them a more bitter animosity towards the poor blacks who had been the innocent cause of their humiliation.”

“Wall, what could have been done?” sez Josiah.

“It is hard to tell,” sez John Richard. “It is a hard problem to solve; and perhaps,” sez Cousin John, lookin’ some distance off—“perhaps it was God’s own way of dealing with this people.

“You know, after the children of Israel had broken the chains of their bondage and passed through the Red Sea, they were encamped in the wilderness for forty years before they reached the Land of Promise.

“Maybe it is God’s way of dealing with this people, to make them willing to press forward through the wilderness of their almost unendurable trials and go forward into their own country, from whence their fathers were stolen by these pale faces, and there, in that free, fresh land to found a new republic of their own.

“And with all the education and civilization they have gathered during these long, miserable years of slavery, helped by all they have learned, taught by their losses as well as their gains, found a new republic that shall yet take its place as one of the great nations of the world—yes, perhaps lead the nations, and reveal God’s glory in higher, grander forms than colder-blooded races have ever dreamed of. For it has seemed as if this people have been peculiarly under His protection and care.

“All through this long, bloody War of the Rebellion, when it would seem as if the black race must be crushed between either the upper or lower millstone of raging sectional warfare, they simply, as if bidden by a higher power than was seen marching with the armies, ‘stood still and saw the salvation of the Lord.’”



“Where would you have ‘em set up for themselves?” sez Josiah, a lookin’ some sleepy, but holdin’, as it were, his eyes open with a effort. “Would you have ‘em go to Mexico, or Brazil, or where?”

“To Africa,” sez Cousin John Richard, “or that is what is in my own mind. I don’t know that it would be better than another place, but I think so.”

“But, good land!” sez Josiah, lookin’ more wakeful, “think of the cost. Why, it would run the Government in debt to that extent that it never would get over it.” He looked skairt at the idee. But Cousin John didn’t; he wuz calm and serene as he went on:

“Thousands and thousands would be able and willing to go on their own account. But if this nation took them all back at its own expense, is it not a lawful debt? Who brought them here in the first place? They did not come of their own accord; no, they were stolen, hunted like beasts of prey amongst their own fields and forests, felled like wild animals, and dragged, bleeding from their wounds, into slave ships to be packed into a living cargo of sweltering agony, and brought off from friends and home and native land for our selfishness’ sake, to add to our wealth.

“It seems to me we owe them a debt that we should pay for our own conscience’ sake as a nation.”

“But the Government couldn’t afford it; it would cost too much.” Josiah is very close.



“THE OLD AND FEEBLE ONES.”

“As I said,” sez Cousin John Richard, “thousands of the more intelligent ones who have property of their own would go at their own expense for the sake of founding free, peaceful homes, where their children could have the advantages of independence, freed from the baleful effects of class antagonism and race prejudices.

“Many of the old and feeble ones, and those who were prosperous and well off, would not go at all. And of those who remained, if the Government should transport them and support them there for a year it would not cost a twentieth part so much as to carry on a civil war.

“And I tell you war will come, Josiah Allen, if something is not done to avert the storm.”

And agin John Richard’s eyes took on that fur-off look, as if he wuz lookin’ at things dretful some distance off.

“Amongst the lower classes you can hear muttered curses and half-veiled threats, and you feel their passion and their burning hatred towards the race that gave them the Indian gift of freedom—gave it, and then snatched it out of their hands, and instead of liberty gave them injustice and worse oppression.

“And the storm is coming up. Evil spirits are in the atmosphere. Over the better feelings of the white race, dominating them, are the black shapes of contempt and repulsion towards the race once their servants, made their equals by a wordy fiction of their enemies, but still under their feet.

“And in their haughty breasts, as of old, only stronger, is the determination to have their own way, to rule this ‘ignorant rabble,’ to circumvent the cowardly will of their Northern foe, who had brought this thing to pass, to still rule them in one way if not in another—rule or ruin.

“And the storm is coming up the heavens. The lightning is being stored, and the tempest of hail, the burning lightning, and deafening thunder peals are awaiting this day of wrath when the storm shall burst.

“And you sit on in your ease and will not believe it.”

His eyes wuz bent on my pardner’s form, who wuz leanin’ back in a almost luxurious attitude in his soft copper-plate-covered rockin’ chair, but I see he didn’t mean him in particeler; no, his eyes had in ’em a wide, deep look that took in the hull country, North and South, and he went on in almost eloquent axents:

“The Northern soldier who twenty-five years ago hung up his old rifle and powder-horn with a sigh of content that the war against oppression and slavery had been won still sits under them in content and self-admiration of his prowess, and heeds not at all the signs in the heavens.

“And the wise men in the National Capital sit peacefully in their high places and read over complacently the words they wrote down a quarter of a century ago:

“‘All slaves are free.’

“And the bandage that Justice wears, having slipped too far down over their wise eyes, they have not seen the handcuffs and chains that have weighed down the still enslaved.

“And they read these words:

“‘We proclaim peace in all your borders.’

“And lost in triumphant thoughts of what they had done, they did not heed this truth, that instead of peace hovering down upon the borders of the fair Southern land, they had blindly and ignorantly, no doubt, let loose the bitter, corroding, wearing curse of animosity and ignorant misrule.

“Yes, those wise men had launched these turbulent spirits instead of peace on the heads of the free and