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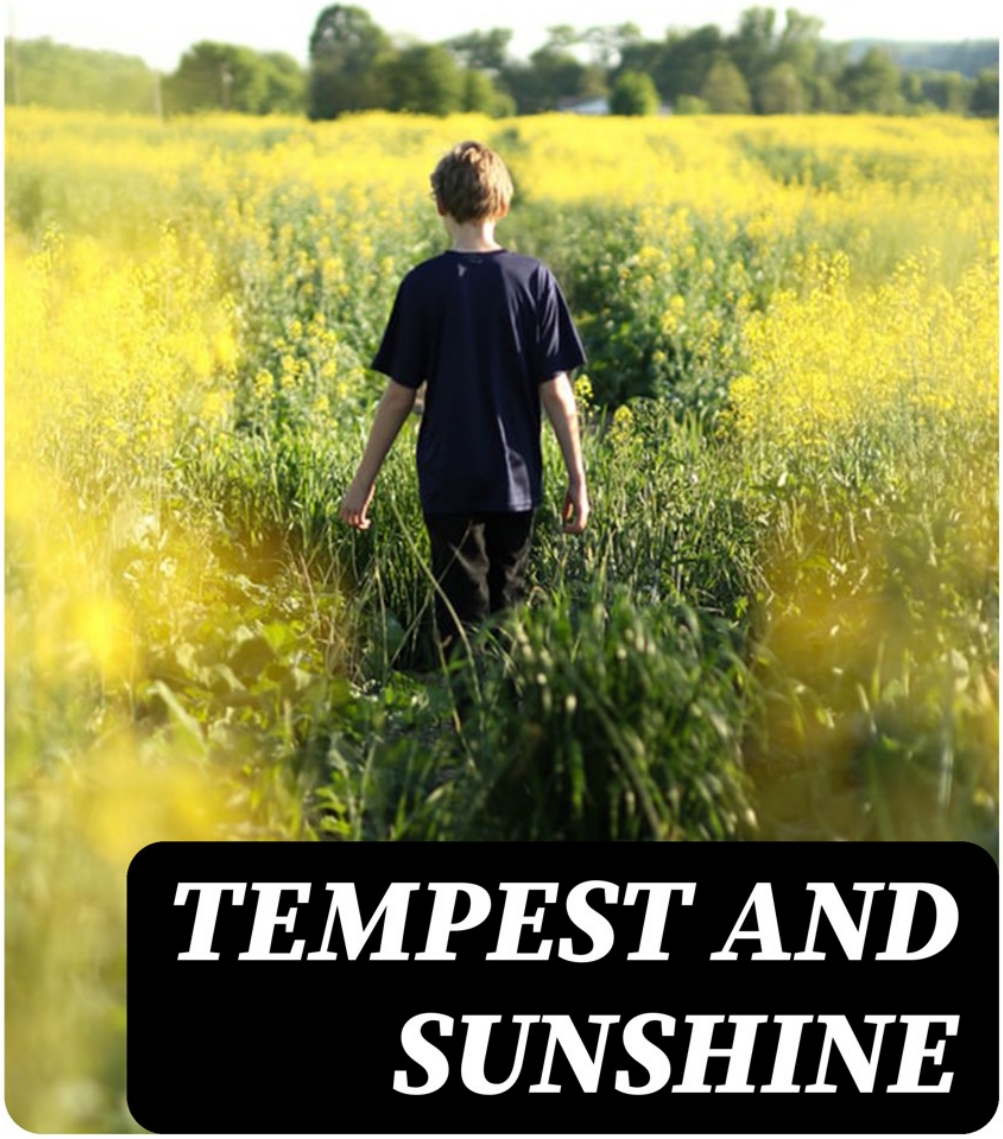

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Mary Jane Holmes

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Chapter I

MR. WILMOT ARRIVES AT MR. MIDDLETON'S

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It was the afternoon of a bright October day. The old town clock had just tolled the hour of four, when the Lexington and Frankfort daily stage was heard rattling over the stony pavement in the small town of V——, Kentucky. In a few moments the four panting steeds were reined up before the door of The Eagle, the principal hotel in the place. "Mine host," a middle-aged, pleasant-looking man, came hustling out to inspect the newcomers, and calculate how many would do justice to his beefsteaks, strong coffee, sweet potatoes and corn cakes, which were being prepared in the kitchen by Aunt Esther.

This good dame divided her time between squeezing the steaks, turning the corn cakes, kicking the dogs and administering various cuffs to sundry little black urchins, who were on the lookout to snatch a bit of the "hoe cake" whenever they could elude the argus eyes of Aunt Esther. When the rattling of the stage was heard, there ensued a general scrambling to ascertain which would be first to see who had come. At length, by a series of somersaults, helped on by Aunt Esther's brawny hand, the kitchen was cleared and Aunt Esther was "monarch of all she surveyed."

The passengers this afternoon were few and far between, for there was but one inside and one on the box with the driver. The one inside alighted and ordered his baggage to

be carried into the hotel. The stranger was a young man, apparently about twenty-five years of age. He was tall, well-proportioned and every way prepossessing in his appearance. [pg 002]At least the set of idlers in the barroom thought so, for the moment he entered they all directed their eyes and tobacco juice toward him!

By the time he had uttered a dozen words, they had come to the conclusion that he was a stranger in the place and was from the East. One of the men, a Mr. Edson, was, to use his own words, "mighty skeary of Northern folks," and as soon as he became convinced that the stranger was from that way, he got up, thinking to himself, "Some confounded Abolitionist, I'll warrant. The sooner I go home and get my gang together, the better 'twill be." But on second thought he concluded that "his gang" was safe, for the present at least; so he'd just sit down and hear what his neighbor, Mr. Woodburn, was saying to the newcomer.

The Kentuckians are as famous as the Yankees for inquisitiveness, but if they inquire into your history, they are equally ready to give theirs to you, and you cannot feel as much annoyed by the kind, confiding manner with which a Kentuckian will draw you out, as by the cool, quizzing way with which a Yankee will "guess" out your affairs.

On the present occasion, Mr. Woodburn had conjectured the young man's business, and was anxious to know who he was, and, if possible, to render him assistance. It took but a short time for the stranger to tell that he was from the East, from New York; that his name was Wilmot, and that he was in quest of a school; and in as short a time Mr. Woodburn had welcomed young Wilmot to Kentucky, but expressed his

regrets that he did not come sooner, for all the schools were engaged. "But," added he, "you had better remain around here awhile and get acquainted, and then there will be no doubt of your eventually getting a situation. Meantime, as you are a stranger here, you are welcome to make my house your home."

Such kindness from an entire stranger was unlooked for by Wilmot. He knew not what to make of it; it was so different from the cold, money-making men of the North. He tried to stammer out his thanks, when Mr. Edson interrupted him by nudging Mr. Woodburn and saying: "Don't you mind old Middleton. He's been tarin' round after a Yankee teacher these six weeks. I reckon this chap'll suit."

Mr. Woodburn hesitated. He did not like to send Mr. Wilmot to such a place as Mr. Middleton's, for though Mr. Middleton was a very kind man, he was very rough and uncouth in his manner and thought his money much better applied [pg 003]when at interest than when employed to make his house and family more comfortable.

At length Mr. Woodburn replied: "True, I did not think of Mr. Middleton, but I hardly like to send a stranger there. However, Mr. Wilmot, you must not judge all Kentuckians by him, for though he is very hospitable to strangers, he is extremely rough."

Mr. Wilmot thanked them for their information and said he thought he would go to Mr. Middleton's that night.

"Lord knows how you'll get there," said Mr. Edson.

"Why, is it far?" asked Wilmot.

"Not very far," said Mr. Edson, "little better than four miles, but a mighty mean road at any time and a heap

worse since the rains. For a spell you can get on right smart, but then, again, you'll go in co-slush!"

Mr. Wilmot smiled, but said he "thought he would try the road if Mr. Edson would give him the direction."

Then followed a host of directions, of which the most prominent to Wilmot were, that "about two miles from the house is an old hemp factory, full of niggers, singing like all fury; then comes a piece of woods, in the middle of which is a gate on the left hand; open that gate and follow the road straight till you come to the mightiest, mean-looking house you ever seen, I reckon; one chimbley tumbled down, and t'other trying to. That is Middleton's."

Here Mr. Woodburn said, "That as the road was so bad, and it was getting late, Mr. Wilmot had better stay at his house that night and the next day they would send him to Middleton's."

Before Mr. Wilmot had time to reply, Mr. Edson called out, "Halloo! Just in time, Wilmot!" Then rushing to the door he screamed, "Ho! Jim Crow, you jackanapes, what you ridin' Prince full jump down the pike for? Say, you scapegrace, come up here!"

Mr. Wilmot looked from the window and saw a fine looking black boy of about sixteen years of age riding a beautiful horse at full speed through the street. He readily divined that the boy was the property of Mr. Edson, and as he had brought from home a little abolitionism safely packed away, he expected to see a few cuffs dealt out to the young African. But when the young hopeful, at the command of his master, wheeled his horse up to the door, gave a flourish with his rimless old hat and a loud whistle

with his pouting lips, Mr. Wilmot observed that his master gave the bystanders a knowing wink, as much as to say, "Isn't he smart?" Then turning [pg 004] to the boy he said, "How now, you Jim, what are you here for, riding Prince to death?"

"I begs marster's pardon berry much," said the negro, "but you see how I done toted all the taters you told me, and missis she 'vise me to ride Prince a leetle, 'case he's gettin' oneasy like when Miss Carline rides him."

"Likely story," said Mr. Edson; "but for once you are in the way when I want you. You know where Mr. Middleton lives?"

"Yes, marster, reckon I does."

"Well, this young man wants to go there. Now jump down quick and help him on. Do you hear?"

"Yes, marster," said the negro, and in a moment he was on the ground, holding the stirrup for Mr. Wilmot to mount.

Wilmot hesitated for two causes. The first was, he was not a good horseman and did not like to attempt mounting the spirited animal before so many pairs of eyes. He looked wistfully at the horse block, but did not dare propose having the horse led up to it. The second reason was he did not know whether to accept or decline the kindness of Mr. Edson; but that man reassured him by saying:

"Come! What are you waiting for? Jump up. I'd a heap rather Jim would go with you than ride Prince to death."

Here Mr. Woodburn spoke. He knew that New York people were, comparatively speaking, inferior riders, and he conjectured why Mr. Wilmot hesitated; so he said:

"Here, Jim, lead the horse up to the block for the gentleman"; then turning to the bystanders, said, as if

apologizing for Wilmot: "You know it is so thickly settled in New York that they do not ride as much as we do, and probably the young man has always been at school."

This was satisfactory to the white portion of the audience, but not to the group of blacks, who were assembled at the corner of the house. They thought it a shame not to be a good rider and when they saw the awkward manner in which Mr. Wilmot finally mounted the horse and the ludicrous face of Jim Crow as he sprang up behind him, they were, as they afterward told Aunt Esther, "dreffully tickled and would have larfed, sartin, if they hadn't knowed marster would have slapped their jaws."

"And sarved you right," was the rejoinder of Aunt Esther.

But to return to Mr. Edson. As soon as Mr. Wilmot, Jim and Prince had disappeared, he felt a return of his fears concerning the "confounded Abolitionist." Thought he, "What a fool I was to let Prince and Jim Crow, too, go off with that [pg 005] ar' chap! Thar's Prince, worth a hundred and fifty, and Jim, at the least calculation, 'll fetch eight hundred. Well, anyway, they can't get far on that dirt road, so if Jim isn't home by nine, I'll go after 'em, that's so." Having settled the matter thus satisfactorily in his own mind, he called for his horse and started for home.

Meantime Mr. Wilmot was slowly wending his way toward Mr. Middleton's. It took but a short time for him to ascertain that the road was fully equal to the description given of it by Mr. Edson. At times he could scarcely keep his head, and he felt conscious, too, that the black machine behind him was inwardly convulsed with laughter at his awkward attempts

to guide the horse in the best part of the road. At length he ventured a remark:

"Jim, is this animal ugly?"

"Ugly! Lor' bless you, marster, is you blind? As handsome a creetur as thar is in the country!"

Mr. Wilmot understood that he had used the word ugly in its wrong sense, so he said:

"I do not mean to ask if the horse is ill-looking, but is he skittish?"

"If marster means by that will he throw him off, I don't think he will as long as I'm on him, but sometimes he is a leetle contrary like. Reckon marster ain't much used to ridin'."

By this time they had reached the gate spoken of by Mr. Edson. To Mr. Wilmot's great surprise the horse walked tip to it and tried to open it with his mouth! Mr. Wilmot was so much amused that he would not suffer Jim to get down and open the gate, as he wished to see if the horse could do it.

"Oh, yes, marster, he'll do it easy," said the negro; and sure enough, in a moment the well-trained animal lifted the latch and pushed open the gate! But it was a rickety old thing, and before Prince had got fairly through it tumbled down, hitting his heels and causing him to jump sideways, so as to leave Mr. Wilmot riding the gate and Jim Crow in quiet possession of the saddle! With a great effort Jim forced down his desire to scream and merely showed twenty-eight very large, white teeth.

Springing from the horse he offered to assist Mr. Wilmot to mount again, but he had no inclination to do so. He preferred walking the rest of the way, he said, and as he

could now easily find the house, Jim could return home. This was not what Jim wanted. He had anticipated a nice time in relating his adventures to Mr. Middleton's negroes, but as Mr. Wilmot [pg 006] slipped a quarter into his hand, he felt consoled for the loss of his "yarn"; so mounting Prince again, he gave his old palm leaf three flourishes round his head, and with a loud whoop, started the horse with a tremendous speed down the road and was soon out of sight, leaving Mr. Wilmot to find his way alone through the wood. This he found no difficulty in doing, for he soon came in sight of a house, which he readily took for Mr. Middleton's.

It was a large, old-fashioned stone building, with one chimney fallen down, as Mr. Edson had said, and its companion looked likely to follow suit at the first high wind. The windows of the upper story were two-thirds of them destitute of glass, but its place was supplied by shingles, which kept the cold out if they did not let the light in. Scattered about the yard, which was very large, were corn cribs, hay racks, pig troughs, carts, wagons, old plows, horses, mules, cows, hens, chickens, turkeys, geese, negroes, and dogs, the latter of which rushed ferociously at Mr. Wilmot, who was about to beat a retreat from so uninviting quarters, when one of the negroes called out, "Ho, marster, don't be feared, 'case I'll hold Tiger." So Wilmot advanced with some misgivings toward the negro and dog.

He asked the negro if his master were at home.

"No, sar, marster's done gone away, but Miss Nancy, she's at home. Jist walk right in thar, whar you see the pile of saddles in the entry."

Accordingly, Mr. Wilmot "walked in where the pile of saddles were," and knocked at a side door. It was opened by a very handsome young girl, who politely asked the stranger to enter. He did so and found within a mild-looking, middle-aged lady, whose dark eyes and hair showed her at once to be the mother of the young lady who had opened the door for him.

Mrs. Middleton, for she it was, arose, and offering her hand to the stranger, asked him to be seated in the large stuffed chair which stood before the cheerful blazing fire. In a few moments he had introduced himself, told his business and inquired for Mr. Middleton.

"My husband is absent," said Mrs. Middleton, "but he will be at home tonight and we shall be glad to have you remain with us till tomorrow at least, and as much longer as you like, for I think Mr. Middleton will be glad to assist you in getting a school."

Mr. Wilmot accepted the invitation and then looked round the room to see if the interior of the house corresponded with [pg 007] the exterior, It did not, for the room, though large, was very comfortable. The floor was covered with a bright-colored home-made carpet. In one corner stood a bed, the counterpane of which was as white as snow, and the curtains of the windows were of the same hue. In another corner was a small bookcase, well filled with books and on a stand near a window were several house plants.

He concluded that the books and the plants were the property of the young lady, whom Mrs. Middleton introduced to him as her eldest daughter Julia. She was an intelligent-looking girl, and Mr. Wilmot instantly felt interested in her,

but when he attempted to converse with her, she stole quietly out of the room, leaving her mother to entertain the visitor.

At last supper was brought in by old Aunt Judy, who courtesied so low to the "young marster," that she upset the coffee pot, the contents of which fell upon a spaniel, which lay before the fire. The outcries of the dog brought Miss Julia from the kitchen, and this time she was accompanied by her younger sister, Fanny, who together with Julia and Aunt Judy, lamented over the wounded animal.

"I didn't go to do it, sartin, Miss July," said Aunt Judy, "Lor' knows I didn't."

"Who said you did, you black thing, you?" said Julia, who in her grief for her favorite, and her anger at Aunt Judy, forgot the stranger, and her bashfulness, too. "You were careless, I know you were," she continued, "or you never could have tipped the coffee over in this manner."

"Never mind, sister," said Fanny, "never mind; of course, Aunt Judy didn't mean to do it, for she likes Dido as well as we do."

"Lor' bless Miss Fanny's sweet face, that I do like Dido," said Aunt Judy.

"Yes, that you do," repeated Julia mockingly, "just as though you could like anything."

Here Mrs. Middleton interposed and ordered Julia and Fanny to take their seats at the table, while Judy cleared away all traces of the disaster. Julia complied with an ill-grace, muttering something about "the hateful negroes," while Fanny obeyed readily, and laughingly made some remark to Mr. Wilmot about their making so much ado over

a dog, "but," said she, "we are silly girls, and of course do silly things. Probably we shall do better when we get old like you—no, like mother, I mean."

Here she stopped, blushing deeply at having called Mr. Wilmot old, when in fact she thought him quite young, and very [pg 008] handsome—in short, "just the thing." She thought to herself, "There, I've done it now! Julia and I have both introduced ourselves to him in a pretty light, but it's just like me—however, I'll not say another word tonight!"

The little incident of the coffee pot gave Mr. Wilmot something of an insight into the character and disposition of the two girls. And surely nothing could have been more unlike than their personal appearance, as they sat side by side at the supper table. Julia was about seventeen years of age and was called very handsome, for there was something peculiarly fascinating in the ever-varying expression of her large black eyes. She was a brunette, but there was on her cheek so rich and changeable a color that one forgot in looking at her, whether she were dark or light. Her disposition was something like her complexion—dark and variable. Her father was a native of South Carolina, and from him she inherited a quick, passionate temper. At times she was as gentle as a lamb, but when anything occurred to trouble her, all her Southern blood boiled up, and she was as Fanny said, "always ready to fire up at a moment's warning." Mr. Middleton called her "Tempest," while to Fanny he gave the pet name of "Sunshine," and truly, compared with her sister, Fanny's presence in the house was like a ray of sunshine.

She was two years younger than Julia and entirely different from her, both in looks and disposition. Her face was very pale and her bright golden hair fell in soft curls around her neck and shoulders, giving her something the appearance of a fairy. Her eyes were very large and very dark blue, and ever mirrored forth the feelings of her soul.

By the servants Julia was feared and dreaded; but Fanny was a favorite with all. Not a man, woman or child on the plantation but was ready to do anything for "darling Miss Fanny." And they thought, too, every one must love her as well as they did, for they said "she showed by her face that she was an angel." This was the opinion of the blacks, and it was also the partially formed opinion of Mr. Wilmot before he finished his supper; and yet he could not help thinking there was something wondrously attractive in the glance of Julia's large, dark eyes.

After supper he tried to engage the girls in conversation in order to ascertain which had the better mind. He found Fanny most ready to converse. She had forgotten her resolution not to talk, and before the evening was half spent seemed perfectly well acquainted with him. She had discovered that his name was Richard, that he had a sister Kate, who called [pg 009] him Dick, that he was as yet possessor of his own heart, but was in danger of losing it! The compliment Fanny very generously gave to her sister Julia, because she observed that Mr. Wilmot's eyes were often directed toward the corner where the dark beauty sat, silent and immovable.

Julia had taken but little part in the conversation and Mr. Wilmot's efforts to "draw her out" had proved ineffectual.

She felt piqued that Fanny should engross so much attention and resolved on revenge; so she determined to show Mr. Wilmot that she could talk but not upon such silly subjects as pleased Fanny. Accordingly, when books were mentioned, she seemed suddenly aroused into life. She was really very intelligent and a very good scholar. She had a great taste for reading, and what books she could not prevail on her father to buy, she would borrow, so she had a tolerably good knowledge of all the standard works. Mr. Wilmot was surprised and pleased to find her so well informed and in the spirited conversation which followed poor Fanny was cast entirely into the background.

Fanny, however, attributed it to her sister's superior knowledge of Latin, and inwardly "thanked her stars" that she knew nothing of that language further than the verb Amo, to love. The practical part of that verb she understood, even if she did not its conjugation. She sat quietly listening to Mr. Wilmot and her sister, but her cogitations were far different from what Julia's had been.

Fanny was building castles—in all of which Mr. Wilmot and Julia were the hero and heroine. She gazed admiringly at her sister, whose face grew handsomer each moment as she became more animated, and she thought, "What a nice-looking couple Julia and Mr. Wilmot would make! And they would be so happy, too—that is if sister didn't get angry, and I am sure she wouldn't with Mr. Wilmot. Then they would have a nicer house than this old shell, and perhaps they would let me live with them!"

Here her reverie was interrupted by Mr. Wilmot, who asked her if she ever studied Latin. Fanny hesitated; she did

not wish to confess that she had once studied it six months, but at the end of that time she was so heartily tired of its "long-tailed verbs," as she called them, that she had thrown her grammar out of the window and afterward given it to Aunt Judy to start the oven with!

This story was told, however, by Julia, with many embellishments, for she delighted in making Fanny appear ridiculous. [pg 010] She was going on swimmingly when she received a drawback from her mother, who said:

"Julia, what do you want to talk so for? You know that while Fanny studied Latin, Mr. Miller said she learned her lessons more readily than you did and recited them better, and he said, too, that she was quite as good a French scholar as you."

Julia curled her lip scornfully and said, "she didn't know what her mother knew about Fanny's scholarship." Meantime Fanny was blushing deeply and thinking that she had appeared to great disadvantage in Mr. Wilmot's eyes; but he very kindly changed the conversation by asking who Mr. Miller was, and was told that he was a young man from Albany, New York, who taught in their neighborhood the winter before.

The appearance of some nice red apples just then turned the attention of the little company in another channel and before they were aware of it the clock struck ten. Mr. Middleton had not returned and as it was doubtful whether he came at all that night, Julia went into the kitchen for Luce, to show Mr. Wilmot to his room. She was gone some time, and when she returned was accompanied by a bright-looking mulatto girl, who, as soon as she had conducted Mr.

Wilmot into his room, commenced making excuses about "marster's old house! Things was drefful all round it, but 'twasn't Miss Julia's fault, for if she could have her way 'twould be fixed up, sartin. She was a born'd lady, anybody could see; so different from Miss Fanny, who cared nothing how things looked if she could go into the kitchen and turn hoe cakes for Aunt Judy, or tend the baby!"

By this time Luce had arranged the room all it wanted arranging, and as Mr. Wilmot had no further need of her services, she left him to think of what she had said. He did not know that the bright red ribbon, which appeared on Luce's neck next morning, was the gift of Julia, who had bribed her to say what she did to him. Julia knew that she had made a favorable impression on Mr. Wilmot by making him think meanly of Fanny.

What Luce said had its effect upon him, too. He was accustomed to the refinements of the North and he could not help respecting a young lady more who showed a taste for neatness. That night he dreamed that a bright pair of dark eves were looking at him from each pane of shingle in the window, and that a golden-haired fairy was dancing the Polka in Aunt Judy's hoe cake batter.

Chapter II

GETTING UP A SUBSCRIPTION SCHOOL

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[pg 011]Next morning before daybreak Mr. Wilmot was aroused from a sound slumber by what he thought was the worst noise he had ever heard. He instantly concluded that the house was on fire, and springing up, endeavored to find his clothes, but in the deep darkness of the room such a thing was impossible; so he waited a while and tried to find out what the noise could be.

At last it assumed something of a definite form, and he found it was the voice of a man calling out in thunder-like tones, "Ho, Jebediah! Come out with ye! Do you hear? Are you coming?"

Then followed a long catalogue of names, such as Sam, Joe, Jack, Jim, Ike, Jerry, Nehemiah, Ezariah, Judy, Tilda, Martha, Rachel, Luce and Phema, and at the end of each name was the same list of questions which had preceded that of Jebediah; and ever from the negro quarters came the same response, "Yes, marster, comin'."

By this time all the hens, geese, turkeys and dogs were wide awake and joining their voices in the chorus, made the night, or rather the morning, hideous with their outcries. At last the noise subsided. Silence settled around the house and Wilmot tried to compose himself to sleep. When he again awoke the sun was shining brightly into his room. He arose and dressed himself, but felt in no hurry to see "his host," who had come home, he was sure, and had given

such tremendous demonstrations of the strength of his lungs.

Mr. Wilmot finally descended to the sitting room, where the first object which presented itself was a man who was certainly six and a half feet high, and large in proportion. His face was dark and its natural color was increased by a beard of at least four weeks' growth! He had on his head an old slouched hat, from under which a few gray locks were visible. As soon as Wilmot appeared, the uncouth figure advanced toward [pg 012] him, and seizing his hand, gave a grip, which, if continued long, would certainly have crushed every bone! He began with—

"Well, so you are Mr. Wilmot from New York, hey? Of course a red-hot Abolitionist, but I don't care for that if you'll only keep your ideas to yourself and not try to preach your notions to me. I've heard of you before."

"Heard of me, sir?" said Mr. Wilmot in surprise.

"Yes, of you; and why not? Thar's many a man, not as good as you, judging by your looks, has had a hearing in his day; but, however, I haint heard of you by the papers. As I was coming home last night I got along to old man Edson's, and I seen him swarin' and tarin' round so says I, 'Ho, old man, what's the row?' 'Oh,' says he, 'that you, Middleton? Nuff's the row. I've done let my best horse and nigger go off with a man from the free States, who said he's going to your house, and here 'tis after nine and Jim not at home yet. Of course they've put out for the river.' 'Now,' says I, 'don't be a fool, Edson; if that ar chap said he's goin' to my house, he's goin' thar, I'll bet all my land and niggers he's honest. Likely Jim's stopped somewhar. You come along with me and

we'll find him.' So we jogged along on the pike till of a sudden we met Prince coming home all alone! This looked dark, but I told Edson to say nothin' and keep on; so we came to Woodburn's fine house, and thar in the cabins we seen a bright light, and heard the niggers larfin like five hundred, and thought we could distinguish Jim Crow's voice; so we crept slyly up to the window and looked in and, sure enough, there was Jim, telling a great yarn about the way you rode and how you got flung onto the gate. It seems he didn't half hitch Prince, who got oneasy like, and started for home. Edson hollered to Jim, who came out and told how he didn't go clear here with you, cause you said you could find the way, and he might go back. Then old man Edson turned right round and said you were a likely man, and he hoped I'd do all I could for you. So that's the way I heard of you; and now welcome to old Kentuck, and welcome to my house, such as it is. It's mighty mean, though, as 'Tempest' says."

Here he turned to Julia, who had just entered the room. Then he went on: "Yes, Tempest raves and tars about the house and can hardly wait till I'm dead before she spends my money in fool fixin's. Devil of a cent she'll get though if she rides as high a horse as she generally does! I'll give it all to 'Sunshine'; yes, I will. She's more gentle-like and comes coaxin' round me, and puttin' her soft arms round my [pg 013] old shaggy neck says, 'Please, pa, if I'll learn to make a nice pudding or pie of Aunt Judy, will you buy us a new looking-glass or rocking chair?' And then 'tisn't in my natur to refuse. Oh, yes; Sunshine is a darling," said he, laying his hand caressingly on Fanny's head, who just at that moment showed her sunny face in the room.

During breakfast Mr. Middleton inquired more particularly into Mr. Wilmot's plans and wishes, and told him there was no doubt that he could obtain a good school in that immediate neighborhood. "Your best way," said he, "will be to write a subscription paper. The people then see what for a fist you write, and half the folks in Kentuck will judge you by that. In the paper you must tell what you know and what you ask to tell it to others. I'll head the list with my two gals and give you a horse to go round with, and I'll bet Tempest, and Sunshine, too, that you'll get a full school afore night."

At the last part of this speech Julia curled her lips and tried to look indignant, while Fanny laughingly said, "Pa, what makes you always bet sister and me, just as though you could sell us like horses? It's bad enough to bet and sell the blacks, I think."

"Ho, ho! So you've got some free State notions already, have you?" said Mr. Middleton. "Well, honey, you're more'n half right, I reckon." So saying, he for the fourth time passed up his coffee cup.

Breakfast being over, he took his young friend to the stable and bade him select for his own use any horse he chose. Mr. Wilmot declined, saying he was not much accustomed to horses; he preferred that Mr. Middleton should choose any horse he pleased.

"Very well," said Mr. Middleton; "from the accounts I have heard of your horsemanship it may be improved; so I reckon I'll not give you a very skeary horse to begin with. Thar's Aleck'll just suit you. He'll not throw you on the gate, for he doesn't trot as fast as a black ant can walk!"

Accordingly Aleck was saddled and bridled and Mr. Wilmot was soon mounted and, with his subscription paper in his pocket, was riding off after subscribers. He was very successful; and when at night he turned his face homeward, he had the names of fifteen scholars and the partial promise of five more.

"Well, my boy, what luck?" said Mr. Middleton, as Wilmot entered the sitting room that evening.

"Very good success," returned Mr. Wilmot; "I am sure of fifteen scholars and have a promise for five more."

[pg 014]"Yes, pretty good," said Mr. Middleton; "fifteen sartin, and five unsartin. Who are the unsartin ones?—old Thornton's?"

Mr. Wilmot replied that he believed it was a Mr. Thornton who had hesitated about signing.

"He'll sign," said Mr. Middleton. "I's thar after you was, and he told me you might put down five for him. I pay for two on 'em. He lives on my premises; and if he doesn't pay up for t'other three, why, he'll jog, that's all."

Mr. Wilmot said he hoped no one would send to school against their wishes.

"Lord, no," rejoined Mr. Middleton; "old Thornton wants to send bad enough, only he's stingy like. Let me see your paper, boy."

Mr. Wilmot handed him the paper, and he went on: "Thar's ten scholars at eight dollars—that makes eighty; then thar's five at eleven dollars, and fifty-five and eighty makes a hundred and thirty-five; then thar's five more at fifteen dollars; five times fifteen; five times five is twenty-five—seventy-five dollars;—seventy-five and a hundred and

thirty-five;—five and five is ten, one to seven is eight, eight and three is eleven—two hundred and ten dollars! Why, quite a heap! Of course you've got clothes enough to last a spell, so you can put two hundred out at interest. I'll take it and give you ten per cent."

Mr. Wilmot smiled at seeing his money so carefully disposed of before it was earned, but he merely said, "There's my board to be deducted."

"Your what?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"My board, sir. I have no other means of paying it. I find I can get boarded for a dollar and a half a week."

"The deuce you can," said Mr. Middleton. "Who'll board you for that?"

Mr. Wilmot gave the name of the gentleman, to which Mr. Middleton replied, "I want to know if he will board you so very cheap!"

"Why, yes. Do you think I should pay more?"

"Pay more!" replied Middleton. "Don't be a fool! Why, here's this infernal old shell of a house wants filling up, and thar's heaps of horses and niggers lounging round with nothing to do; then I've plenty of potatoes, bacon and corn meal—and such fare as we have you're welcome to, without a dollar and a half, or even a cent and a half."

Mr. Wilmot remonstrated at receiving so much at Mr. Middleton's hands, but that good man put an end to all further argument by saying, "Do let me act as I like. You see, I've [pg 015] taken a liking to you, and because I see you trying to help yourself, I am willing to try and help you. They say, or Tempest says they say, I'm a rough old bear, and maybe I am; but I'm not all bad; it's a streak o' fat and a

streak o' lean; and if I want to do you a kindness, pray let me."

So it was settled that Mr. Wilmot should remain in Mr. Middleton's family during the winter. To Julia this arrangement gave secret satisfaction. She had from the first liked Mr. Wilmot, and the idea of having him near her all the time was perfectly delightful. She resolved to gain his good opinion, cost what it would. To do this, she knew she must appear to be amiable, and that she determined to do—before him at least. She had also seen enough of him to know that he set a great value upon talent, and she resolved to surprise him with her superior scholarship and ability to learn. She, however, felt some misgivings lest Fanny should rival her in his esteem; but she hoped by negro bribery and various little artifices to deter him from thinking too highly of her sister.

The following Monday, Mr. Wilmot repaired to his schoolroom, where he found assembled all his pupils. It was comparatively easy to arrange them into classes and ere the close of the day the school was pretty generally organized. Weeks passed on and each day the "Yankee schoolmaster" gained in the love of his scholars, and one of them, at least, gained in the affections of the teacher. Julia had adhered to her resolution of appearing amiable and of surprising Mr. Wilmot with her wonderful powers of learning. This last she did to perfection. No lesson was so long but it was readily learned and its substance admirably told in words of her own. She preferred reciting alone and she so far outstripped the others in the length of her lessons, it seemed necessary that she should do so. Mr. Wilmot often

wondered at her marvelous capacity for learning so much in so short a space of time, for she never took home her books at night, and she said she had plenty of time for her lessons during school hours.

With Fanny it was just the reverse. She got her lessons at home and played all day at school! Sometimes a reprimand from Mr. Wilmot would bring the tears into her eyes and she would wonder why it was she could not behave and make Mr. Wilmot like her as well as he did Julia. Then she would resolve not to make any more faces at that booby, Bill Jeffrey, for the girls to laugh at, nor to draw any more pictures on her slate of the Dame Sobriety, as she called Julia, and lastly, not to pin any more chalk rags on the boys' coats. But she was a dear lover of fun and her resolutions were soon for [pg 016] gotten. Her lessons, however, were generally well-learned, and well recited; but she could not compete with Julia, neither did she wish to. She often wondered how her sister could learn so long lessons, and, secretly, she had her own suspicions on the subject, but chose to keep them to herself.

Meantime the winter was passing rapidly and, to Mr. Wilmot, very agreeably away. He liked his boarding place much and one of its inmates had almost, without his knowledge, wound herself strongly around his heart. For a time he struggled against it, for his first acquaintance with Julia had not left a very favorable impression on his mind. But since that night she had been perfectly pleasant before him and had given out but one demonstration of her passionate temper.

This was one evening at the supper table. Zuba, a mulatto girl, brought in some preserves and, in passing them, very carelessly spilled them upon Julia's new blue merino. In the anger of the moment Mr. Wilmot and his good opinion were forgotten. Springing up, she gave the girl a blow which sent her half across the room and caused her to drop the dish, which was broken in twenty pieces. At the same time she exclaimed in a loud, angry tone, "Devil take you, Zube!" The loss of the dish elicited a series of oaths from Mr. Middleton, who called his daughter such names as "lucifer match," "volcano," "powder mill," and so forth.

For her father's swearing Julia cared nothing, but it was the sorrowful, disappointed expression of Mr. Wilmot's face which cooled her down. Particularly did she wish to recall what she had done when she saw that Fanny also had received some of the preserves on her merino; but instead of raging like a fury, she arose and quietly wiped it off, and then burst into a loud laugh, which she afterward told her mother was occasioned by the mournful look which Mr. Wilmot's face assumed when he saw that Julia's temper was not dead, but merely covered up with ashes.

From this remark of Fanny's the reader will understand that she was well aware of the part her sister was playing. And she was perfectly satisfied that it should be so, for by this means she occasionally got a pleasant word from Julia. She, however, often wished that Mr. Wilmot could be constantly with her sister, for his presence in the house did not prevent her from expending her wrath upon both Fanny and the blacks.