

THE CAPTAIN'S "HARNT."

A SOUTHERN SKETCH.

By ANNIE WESTON WHITNEY.

"Naw, sir; dey ain't ben a-livin' yere gwine on two year, not sence Mars John die."

"Who does live here, then?"

"Ain't no one a-livin' yere nohow."

The last speaker was a quaint-looking old colored woman, who was sitting in a rush-bottom rocking-chair in front of what was once the kitchen of a large house, — a brick house whose shutters were all closed now, and whose entrance steps were fast falling to decay. Tall trees stretched their gaunt limbs about it on every side, and there was a look of gloom about it that struck a casual passer forcibly. In the moonlight, this gave it a weird, ghostly appearance; for it stood back from the road, and there was such a rank growth of grass and weeds, that it was difficult to tell where there had originally been any kind of pathway. The old woman was the only living being to be seen when the stranger, a tall man of somewhat more than forty summers, approached. Had he not come in the broad light of day, it would not have been surprising had he even mistaken the old woman herself for something uncanny; for, like the witches of old, she had but one front tooth, and her position in her chair left no doubt as to her having a deformity of some kind. The stick protruding from one side of her mouth told a tale of snuff-dipping, — a custom very general among whites of the lower classes, as well as blacks, in the Carolinas. She rested her elbows on her knees as she spoke, and, with hands stretched out almost horizontally, twisted and untwisted a piece of soiled paper.

"Then I would like to enter, and go over the house," said the stranger. "Will you give me the keys, or show me through the house yourself?"

"Naw, sir; yer ain't gwine inside dat place nohow."

"Why not, pray?"

"Kase dem's my orders frum Miss May. I'se neber ter 'low no one ter sot foot inside de do' 'ceptin' yer comes 'ith Mars Hunter, de lyer wat 'tends ter de fambly."

"How long have you lived here?"

"Sense eber I'se bawn inter dis yere worl'. I 'longs ter de fambly."

"But you are free now."

"Naw, sir; I neber is ben free, an' I neber 'tends ter be. Cotch me a-leabin' Miss May, an' gwine off 'ith any o' dem free niggers. Dat ain't Zoe, nohow. What yer tink gwine come ter Miss May an' 'er ma if Zoe gwine ter leabe? Ain't I hilt an' toted Miss May when she's a wee little ting, an' ain't I 'fended 'er in time de war? Who gwine do all dat ef Zoe gwine git free, an' go off de likes o' dat? Naw, sir; dat ain't me. I'se yere ter tends ter de prop'ty now, an' when dey comes back" —

"Then you are the woman who saved Miss Halloway from the soldiers?"

"You're right dar, dat you is," and the old woman emphasized her remark with a vigorous head movement.

"I would like you to tell me all about that time," and the stranger seated himself on an inverted half-barrel, that was evidently used as a washtub.

"Ain't yer neber hearn tell how dey fit dat day? Law, sir, dat de mos' troublesomest time eber I seed; an' when dey come, an' say de Yankees done win, I jes' tink ole missus she gwine die ter wonct, kase yer see she done gut two chillern, Mars' John an' Mars' William, wot's in de war, an' she tinks den they dade sho' nuff. We's a-wokin' ober her, time de Yankees is a-trampin' an' a-trampin' 'long dat road, twell nigh 'bout sun-down. Den dey stop, an' we tinks dey's all gone sho' nuff, an' the dos an' windus is flung open, an' ole missus she jes' gwine ter look like 'ersef, when we hear de clipperty-clip an' de clapperty-clap, an' yere dey is in de gyardan an' all ober it, a-gettin' down from dey hosses, a-singin' an' a-shoutin' like mad. Dat de time I's skart, sho' nuff, an' I runned ober ter de kitchen, an' picked up de baby an' jes' cry ter de Lörd ter sabe me an' de chile, an' I's a-tremblin' like a leaf. Neber was so skeert en all my bawn days; when Miss May, she come a-flyin' 'long, an' kotched holt on me, a-cryin', 'Sabe me, Mammy, sabe me!' Law! Yu kin reckon I warn't skeert arter dat. Naw, sir; I's jes' madderter wild bull, an' I could a tore ebery livin' soul on 'em ter smithers. Old marster, he comed to de do', an' beg 'em fur de love o' Gawd ter keep dey hans offen he chile; but dey jes' larf, an' fling 'im ouden de do'. I knowed den we's all gwine ter be kilt, but I ain't keerin' fur nothin' 'cept Miss May, an' dat de time I flung de flat-irons offen de stove wot had been het fur ter iron out a dress fur Miss May. Yer should a hearn de houlin' den!

"Reckin dey'd a-come fur Miss May agin ef de hossifer ain't come ter de do' den. He's a raa! gemman, sho' yer bawn. I neber did spec' ter see no sich er gemman, a Yankee: naw, sir; an' dem men dey's boun' ter git back on dey hosses, an' ride when he gibs de word. Den he 'splains ter ole marster dat dey ony de tail eend ob de regiment, an' dey jes' done dug up a bar'l o' whiskey dey done foun' som'ers, an' dey's all drunk. An' den he say he gwine stay in de gyarden all night, ter keep

de fambly en peace and quiet ; but ole marster say he a gemman, an' he kin come in de house, ef he *am* a Yankee. Ole missus she stay in de bade-room, but Miss May she holp her par ter talk ter de hossifer, an' make it pleasant-like fur 'im, kase yer see he done sabe her. Dat de 'ginnin', fur it go on a monf two, an' den Mars' Har'l, he 'bleeged ter go way wid de rigiment, an' Miss May she jus' dat full o' trouble dat Zoe monstrous trouble too. Yer see Mars' Har'l, he jes' stay on to de house all de time, an' he an' Miss May dey takes a likin' ter one 'nother, an' fore dey parts Mars' Har'l axes old marster ef dey kin marry when de war done wind up. Reckon it trouble old marster a heap ter tink dat 'is darter gwine marry er Yankee, but when he tink 'bout all Mars' Har'l done fur 'er, he say he ain't got no heart ter say 'no.'

"Den dey come de partin', an' arter dat Miss May she hear, when dey kin git de letters to 'er, an' den come de s'render, an' she 'specs Mars Har'l ebery day. Mars John he come home, an' when he hear 'bout it he say dat ef Mars' Har'l come he gwine tell him dat he can't neber hab Miss May, nohow. He 'bleeged fur wot he done do fur 'er, but he kin neber hab 'er ter marry 'er. Howsomedever, Miss May she gits a letter wot say dat Mars' Har'l he ben sont fur ter git ter he home tol'ble quick, but quick's he able ter leabe he gwine come back an' he ain't gwine way twell Miss May go too. Miss May, she dat please, she jes' like de little chile.

"Den de quare ting happen. Sho's yer bawn I seen it ; matters not wot no one say, I seen it."

"What?" asked the stranger, who had been listening intently to all she had said.

"De harnt ! I seen it Tuesday, a-walkin' in de woods down yander 'ith Mars' John. Fust I tinks it Mars' Har'l he own sef a-walkin' dar, 'cep' he look like's ef he done hab a spell of sickness, he thet white an' thin lookin'. I's a-studyin' 'bout dat ting, an' a-tinkin' dat he ain't a-lookin' peart-like nuff ter suit me, an' I's a-wonderin' ef it gwine ter 'sturbe Miss May, all de time I's a-beatin' de biscuits, but law ! I neber knowed I seen a harnt twell Mars' John come in an' say dat he done got de news dat day dat Mars' Har'l he dade.

"Pore Miss May, she ain't neber been de same sence. She like ter die den, an' de fambly mos' 'stracted ; but she done git well sorter, an' she say she jes' live fur de fambly twell 'er time come, an' she done stick ter it, fur she ain't neber married none."

"But she's had chances of marrying?"

"Law yes, up'ards o' sev'ral, but 'tain't no use."

"You say she and her mother are the only ones left now?"

"Yass sir. Yer see ole marster he go fust, an' Mars' John he de las', an' he jes' a-ravin' 'bout Mars' Har'l mos' de time, an' he say he see he harnt an' dat he aint dade, an' de likes o' dat, twell yer kyarn't make

head ner tail outin it. He scacely kep' still more'n two free times a day, twell Miss May she look like she gwine go de fustest."

The stranger here made some further inquiries about the family, and then asked to be directed to the office of the family lawyer.

"Yer goes down by de pos'-ossif an' den yer turns down by de graded school, an' de nex' lot yer comes ter yer turns to de right an' goes katawampus, an' yer's dar."

Furnished with this information the stranger started off, and, after further inquiry on the way, found the place of which he was in search, — a low, one-story building, whose open door revealed the occupant to be a portly, bald-headed man, with a truly Southern type of face. He was seated before a table, apparently hunting for some particular paper among a heterogeneous mass of written documents of all shapes and sizes.

"I judge I am speaking to Lawyer Hunter," said the stranger, entering the office.

The lawyer looked up, then over his glasses at the new arrival, but before replying turned his head and emitted from his mouth a volume of tobacco-juice, that, taking a graceful downward curve, landed in a spittoon on the opposite side of the room.

"Right you are," he said, turning again to his visitor, and, waving his hand in the direction of a chair whose original seat had been replaced by a piece of rough board, he added, "seat yourself, and rest your hat."

"I am a man of few words, Mr. Hunter," said the stranger, "but I have come to you in the interest of one of your clients, Miss Halloway, and I would be glad if you would furnish me with a few facts concerning her and her whereabouts."

"Yes?" said the lawyer, vigorously sharpening a penknife on the side of his left foot, that had found a resting-place on his right knee.

"You are aware, of course, that she was, at one time, engaged to be married to Captain Harold Carson. Do you know her reason for not marrying him?"

"Died," said the lawyer, proceeding to cut his nails with the newly sharpened knife.

"Did it ever occur to you that there might have been a little mistake about that death business?" asked the other.

This time the lawyer looked up and through his glasses suspiciously.

"And yet," the stranger went on, noting the lawyer's doubt, "when John Halloway told his sister her lover was dead, he was as much alive as you and I are now."

"What proofs can you give me of this?" asked the lawyer eagerly, bending forward, and manifesting for the first time some interest in his visitor.

"Plenty of them later. Let me tell you first the captain's story, that you

may understand my position, and be willing to render me the assistance I desire."

"You are sure he was alive then?"

"Positive."

"Proceed."

"To begin, I will say that the captain was my most intimate friend for many years. Unfortunately, his home was any thing but a happy one. A tyrannical stepmother, with three daughters of her own, had determined to make of him a son-in-law, not on account of the love she bore him, but for the money he had inherited from his mother. How she managed it I hardly know, but he did marry one of the daughters, possibly thinking he would then be left in peace. But no: things grew worse and worse, and when the war broke out he was one of the first to enlist; and I think he welcomed the idea of death in the discharge of a duty to his country. He had not been gone long when he was notified of the death of his wife; and it was after that, of course, that he met and truly loved Miss Halloway. She knew the story of his married life, for he told her more than I have told you. Anxiously and impatiently he looked forward to the time, when, the war over, he could begin life over again; but just when things seemed to point to happiness, he was summoned home, and found, that, instead of having died, his wife had gone off with another man. It was a terrible blow to him, and I do not know what the consequence would have been had not personal feeling been laid aside for the sake of Miss Halloway. It was of her he thought, and he immediately started off to break the news to her through her father, and then to see her personally. There was an interview, however, with the brother, who persuaded him that it would be better for the sister that they should not meet. The brother then, it seems, gave his sister his own story."

"And there are those who believe that John Halloway murdered the captain," said the lawyer, "for there were those who saw him the day John Halloway brought the news of his death. Fortunately for John, the superstition of the negroes was his salvation; for the captain's white, ghastly looks convinced them he was a 'harnt,' and none of them would swear he had been seen in the flesh. The few whites who saw him insisted upon his being alive, but no body was ever found, and there was no direct evidence even of death; and so the whole thing ended in a firm belief everywhere that the place was haunted. John Halloway was never after the same, and after his death, when there were only Miss May and her mother, they left the place; and no one will live there now, for love nor money."

"But will they not come back now, when they hear my story? Captain Carson died last week, and he has made provision in his will for Miss Halloway as long as she lives. That is what has brought me here. The old home can be restored."

"Too late : she's gone !"

"Gone? Where?"

"Gone to meet her lover. She died yesterday."

"And the old home?"

"Like many of our old landmarks, it will be torn down to give place to one of the more modern structures that are crowding out the individuality of Southern homes."

NATURAL MOODS.

By M. A. LOCHMAN.

SUNSET.

FLAMES of crimson, gold and red
Now are darting, now are fled.
Waving banners fill the west ;
Soon the night shall bring us rest.

From hovering cloud and lowly rill,
Placid lake and wind-swept hill,
Fades the glory of the west ;
Coming night doth bring men rest.

NIGHT.

Hushed are all the forest choirs,
Sleeping nature scarce suspires, —
Save the whippoorwill alone,
He all night doth make his moan.

Now at will o'er cloud and lake
Rides the moon, — naught else awake.
Hark ! the whippoorwill alone
Through the night his love doth moan.