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sat. There was a couch to match. The wall-paper was a subdued tan, serving as an excellent background for four brightly coloured reproductions of good pictures. Their brightness was matched by a vase of deep blue that stood on the table. Beside the vase were two rows of magazines placed there for perusal by his patients as they waited admittance to the more austere room beyond. It was comfortable. It was in good taste—almost too good taste, Kenneth thought, for a place like Central City in a section like the southernmost part of Georgia. Some of the country folks and even those in town would probably say it was too plain—didn't have enough colour about it. Oh, well, that wouldn't matter, Kenneth thought. They wouldn't have to live there. Most of them would hardly notice it, if they paid any attention at all to relatively minor and unimportant things like colour schemes.

Kenneth felt that he had good reason to feel content with the present outlook. He lighted a cigarette and settled himself more comfortably in the deep chair and let his mind wander over the long trail he had covered. He thought of the eight happy years he had spent at Atlanta University—four of high school and four of college. He remembered gratefully the hours of companionship with those men and women who had left comfortable homes and friends in the North to give their lives to the education of coloured boys and girls in Georgia. They were so human—so sincere—so genuinely anxious to help. It wasn't easy for them to do it, either, for

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father always told him that the best way to get along with white people was to stay away from them and let them alone as much as possible?

Through his mind passed memories of the many conversations he had had with his father on that subject. Especially that talk together before he had gone away to medical school. He didn't know then it was the last time he would see his father alive. He had had no way of knowing that his father, always so rugged, so buoyantly healthy, so uncomplaining, would die of appendicitis while he, Kenneth, was in France. If he had only been at home! He'd have known it wasn't a case of plain cramps, as that old fossil, Dr. Bennett, had called it. What was the exact way in which his father had put his philosophy of life in the South during that last talk they had had together? It had run like this: Any Negro can get along without trouble in the South if he only attends to his own business. It was unfortunate, mighty unpleasant and uncomfortable at times, that coloured people, no matter what their standing, had to ride in Jim Crow cars, couldn't vote, couldn't use the public libraries and all those other things. Lynching, too, was bad. But only bad Negroes ever got lynched. And, after all, those things weren't all of life. Booker Washington was right. And the others who were always howling about rights were wrong. Get a trade or a profession. Get a home. Get some property. Get a bank account. Do something! Be somebody! And then, when enough Negroes had reached that stage, the ballot and all the

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other things now denied them would come. White folks then would see that the Negro was deserving of those rights and privileges and would freely, gladly give them to him without his asking for them.

That was the way he felt. When Bill Van Vleet had urged him to go with him to dinners or the theatre, he had had always some excuse that Bill had to accept whether he had believed it or not. Good Old Bill! They never knew during those more or less happy days what was in store for them both. Neither of them had known that the German Army was going to sweep down through Belgium. Nor did they know that Bill was fated to end his short but brilliant career as an aviator in a blazing, spectacular descent behind the German lines, the lucky shot of a German anti-aircraft gun.

Graduation. The diploma which gave him the right to call himself "Dr. Kenneth B. Harper." And then that stormy, yet advantageous year in New York at Bellevue. Hadn't they raised sand at his, a Negro's presumption in seeking that interneship at Bellevue! He'd almost lost out. No Negro interne had ever been there before. If it hadn't been for Dr. Cox, to whom he had had a letter of introduction from his old professor of pathology at school, he never would have got the chance. But it had been worth it.

Kenneth lighted another cigarette and draped his legs over the arm of the chair. It wasn't bad at all to think of the things he had gone through—now that they were over. Especially the army. Out of Bel-

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build, but of the same rich colouring of skin and with the same hair and features.

In spite of these physical resemblances between the two brothers, there was a more intangible difference which clearly distinguished the two. Kenneth was more phlegmatic, more of a philosophic turn of mind, more content with his lot, able to forget himself in his work, and when that was finished, in his books. Bob, on the other hand, was of a highly sensitized nature, more analytical of mind, more easily roused to passion and anger. This tendency had been developed since the death of his father just before he completed his freshman year at Atlanta. The death had necessitated his leaving school and returning to Central City to act as administrator of his father's estate. His experiences in accomplishing this task had not been pleasant ones. He had been forced to deal with the tricksters that infested the town. He had come in contact with all the chicanery, the petty thievery, the padded accounts, that only petty minds can devise. The utter impotence he had felt in having no legal redress as a Negro had embittered him. Joe Harper, their father, had been exceedingly careful in keeping account of all bills owed and due him. Yet Bob had been forced to pay a number of bills of which he could find no record in his father's neatly kept papers. These had aggregated somewhere between three and four thousand dollars. Various white merchants of the town claimed that Joe Harper, his father, owed them. Bob knew they were lying. Yet he could do nothing. No court in South Georgia

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would have listened to his side of the story or paid more than perfunctory attention to him. It was a case of a white man's word against a Negro's, and a verdict against the Negro was sure even before the case was opened.

Kenneth, on the other hand, had been a favourite of their quiet, almost taciturn father. Always filled with ambition for his children, Joe Harper had furnished Kenneth, as liberally as he could afford, the money necessary for him to get the medical education he wanted. He had not been a rich man but he had been comfortably fixed financially. Starting out as a carpenter doing odd jobs around Central City, he had gradually expanded his activities to the building of small houses and later to larger homes and business buildings. Most of the two-story buildings that lined Lee Street in the business section of Central City had been built by him. White and coloured alike knew that when Joe Harper took a contract, it would be done right. Aided by a frugal and economical wife, he had purchased real estate and, though the profits had been slow and small, had managed with his wife to accumulate during their thirty-five years of married life between twenty and twenty-five thousand dollars which he left at his death to his wife and three children.

Kenneth had been furnished with the best that his father could afford, while Bob, some ten years younger than his brother, had had to wait until Kenneth finished school before he could begin his course. Bob felt no jealousy of his favoured brother, yet

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the experiences that had been his in Central City while Kenneth was away had tended towards a bitterness which frequently found expression on his face. He was the natural rebel, revolt was a part of his creed. Kenneth was the natural pacifist—he never bothered trouble until trouble bothered him. Even then, if he could avoid it, he always did. It was not strange, therefore, that he should have come home believing implicitly that his father was right when he had said Kenneth could get along without trouble in Central City as long as he attended to his own business.

Kenneth talked on and on, unfolding the plans he had made for the extending of the influence of his hospital throughout the South. Bob, occupied with his own thoughts, heard but little of it. Suddenly he interrupted Kenneth with a sharply put question.

"Ken, why did you come back to Central City?" he asked. He went on without waiting for a reply. "If I had had your chances of studying up North and in France, and living where you don't have to be afraid of getting into trouble with Crackers all the time, I'd rather've done anything else than to come back to this rotten place to live the rest of my life."

Kenneth laughed easily, almost as though a five-year-old had asked some exceedingly foolish question.

"Why did I come back?" he repeated. "That's easy. I came back because I can make more money here than anywhere else."

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cause I called his hand on a note he claimed papa owed the bank. He knew I knew he was lying, and that's what made him so mad. They're already saying I'm not a 'good nigger' like papa was and that education has spoiled me into thinking I'm as good as they are. Good Lord, if I wasn't any better than these ignorant Crackers in this town, I'd go out and jump in the river."

Bob was working himself into a temper. Kenneth interrupted him with a good-natured smile as he said:

"Bob, you're getting too pessimistic. You've been reading too many of these coloured newspapers published in New York and Chicago and these societies that're always playing up some lynching or other trouble down here——"

"What if I have? I don't need to read them to know that things are much worse to-day than they were a few years back. You haven't lived down here for nearly nine years and you don't know how things are changed."

"It's you who have changed—not conditions so much!" Kenneth answered. "What if there are mean white folks? There are lots of other white people who want to see the Negro succeed. Only this morning Dr. Bennett told mamma he was glad I came back and he'd do what he could to help me. And there're lots more like——"

"That's nice of Dr. Bennett," interjected Bob. "He can afford to talk big—he's got the practice of this town sewed up. And, most of all, he's a white man. Suppose some of these poor whites get it into

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their heads to make trouble because you're getting too prosperous—what then? Dr. Bennett and all the rest of the good white folks around here can't help you!"

"Oh, yes, they can," Kenneth observed with the same confident smile. "Judge Stevenson and Roy Ewing and Mr. Baird at the Bank of Central City and a lot others run this town and they aren't going to let any decent coloured man be bothered. Why, I'll have a cinch around this part of Georgia! There aren't more than half a dozen coloured doctors in all this part of the country who've had a decent medical education and training. All they know is ladling out pills and fake panaceas. In a few years I'll be able to give up general practising and give all my time to major surgery. I'll handle pretty nearly everything in this part of the State. And then you'll see I'm right!"

"Have it your own way," retorted Bob. "But I'm telling you again, you haven't been living down here for eight or nine years and you don't know. When all these Negroes were going North, some of these same 'good white folks' you're depending on started talking about 'putting niggers in their place' when they couldn't get servants and field hands. You'll find things a lot different from the way they were when you went up North to school."

"What're you boys fussing about? What's the trouble?"

Bob and Kenneth turned at the voice from the doorway behind them. It was their mother.

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"That's right," was Mrs. Harper's comment. "Draw your chairs up to the table. You're not goin' to have any trouble here in town, Ken, and we're mighty glad you came back. Mrs. Amos was in this afternoon and she tells me they're having some trouble out near Ashland between the coloured share-croppers and their landlords, but that'll blow over—just as it's always done."

"What's the trouble out there?" asked Kenneth. He wasn't much interested, for he could hear Mamie, in the kitchen beyond, singing some popular air to the accompaniment of chicken-frying.

"It's a case where coloured farmers claim they can't get fair settlements from their landlords for their crops at the end of the year," explained his mother.

"Why don't they hire a lawyer?" Kenneth asked, with little interest.

"That shows you've forgotten all about things in the South," said Bob with mingled triumph and despair at his brother's ignorance. "There isn't a white lawyer in Georgia who'd take a case like this. In the first place, the courts would be against him because his client's a Negro, and in the second place, he'd have to buck this combination of landlords, storekeepers, and bankers who are getting rich robbing Negroes. If a white lawyer took a case of a Negro share-cropper, he'd either sell out to the landlord or be scared to death before he ever got to court. And as for a Negro lawyer," here Bob laughed sardonically, "he'd be run out of town by the Ku Klux

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CHAPTER II

SITUATED in the heart of the farming section of the State, with its fertile soil, its equable climate, its forests of pine trees, Central City was one of the flourishing towns of South Georgia. Its population was between eight and ten thousand, of which some four thousand were Negroes. The wealth and prosperity of the town depended not so much on the town itself as it did on the farmers of the fertile lands surrounding it. To Central City they came on Saturday afternoons to sell their cotton, their corn, their hogs and cows, and to buy in turn sugar, cloth, coffee, farming-implements, shoes, and amusement. It was divided into four nearly equal sections by the intersection of the tracks of the Central of Georgia Railroad and of the Georgia, Southern and Florida Railway. Drowsy, indolent during the first six days of the week, Central City awoke on Saturday morning for "goin' t' town" day with its bustle and excitement and lively trade. Then the broad dustiness of Lee Street was disturbed by the Fords and muddied wagons of farmers, white and black. In the wagons were usually splint-bottom chairs or boards stretched from side to side, occupied by scrawny, lanky "po' whites" with a swarm of children to match, clad in single-piece garments, once

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nearly always some attempt at flower-cultivation, the tiny beds bordered with bottles, shells, and bits of brightly coloured glass. The ugliness of the houses in many instances was hidden in summer-time by vines and rambler roses that covered the porches and sometimes the fronts of the houses.

Around these houses, in the streets, everywhere, there played a seemingly innumerable horde of black and brown and yellow children, noisy, quarrelsome, clad usually in one-piece dresses of the same indeterminate shade of grey or red or brown that was seen on the country children on Saturday. In front of many of the houses, there sat on sunny days an old and bent man or ancient woman puffing the omnipresent corn-cob pipe. . . .

A half-mile westward from "Darktown," and separated from it by the Central of Georgia Railroad tracks, stood the Central City Cotton Spinning-Mill. Clustered around its ugly red-brick walls stood dwellings that differed but little from those of "Darktown." Here were the same dingy, small, unsanitary, unbeautiful, and unpainted dwellings. Here were the same muddy or dusty unpaved streets. Here were the same squalor and poverty and filth and abject ignorance. There were but few superficial or recognizable differences. One was that the children wore, instead of the brown plumpness of the Negro children, a pale, emaciated, consumptive air because of the long hours in the lint-laden confines of the mills. The men were long, stooped, cadaverous-appearing. The women were sallow, unattractive, sad-looking,

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each usually with the end of a snuff-stick protruding from her mouth. The children, when they played at all, did so in listless, wearied, uninterested, and apathetic fashion. The houses looked even more gaunt and bare than those in the quarter which housed the poorer Negroes, for the tiny patches of ground that fronted the houses here in "Factoryville" were but seldom planted with flowers. More often it was trampled down until it became a hard, red-clay, sun-baked expanse on which the children, and dogs as emaciated and forlorn, sometimes played.

Here there was but one strong conviction, but one firm rock of faith to which they clung—the inherent and carefully nurtured hatred of "niggers" and a belief in their own infinite superiority over their dark-skinned neighbours. Their gods were Tom Watson and Hoke Smith and Tom Hardwick and other demagogic politicians and office-seekers who came to them every two or four years and harangued them on the necessity of their upholding white civilization by re-electing them to office. But one appeal was needed—but one was used—and that one always successfully. Meanwhile, their children left school and entered the mill to work the few years that such a life gave them. And, in the meantime, the black children they hated so—deprived by prejudice from working in the mills, and pushed forward by often illiterate but always ambitious black parents—went to school. . . .

This, in brief, was the Central City to which Kenneth had returned. A typical Southern town—rea-

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sonably rich as wealth is measured in that part of Georgia—rich in money and lands and cotton—amazingly ignorant in the finer things of life. Noisy, unreflective, their wants but few and those easily satisfied. The men, self-made, with all that that distinctly American term implies. The women concerned only with their petty household affairs and more petty gossip and social intercourse. But, beyond these, life was and is a closed book. Or, more, a book that never was written or printed.

The companionship and inspiration of books was unknown. Music, even with the omnipresent Victrola, meant only the latest bit of cheap jazz or a Yiddish or Negro dialect song. Art, in its many forms was considered solely for decadent, effete "furriners." Hostility would have met the woman of the town's upper class who attempted to exhibit any knowledge of art. Her friends would have felt that she was trying "to put something over on them." As for any man of the town, at best he would have been considered a "little queer in the head," at the worst suspected of moral turpitude or perversion.

But two releases from the commonplace, monotonous life were left. The first, liquor. Bootlegging throve. The woods around Central City were infested with "moonshine" stills that seldom were still. The initiated drove out to certain lonely spots, deposited under well-known trees a jug or other container with a banknote stuck in its mouth. One then gave a certain whistle and walked away. Soon there would come an answering signal. One went back to

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the tree and found the money gone but the container filled with a colourless or pale-yellow liquid. . . . Or, the more affluent had it brought to them in town hidden under wagon-loads of fodder or cotton.

The other and even more popular outlet of unfulfilled and suppressed emotions was sex. Central City boasted it had no red-light district like Macon and Savannah and Atlanta. That was true. All over the town were protected domiciles housing slatternly women. To them went by circuitous routes the merchants whose stores were on Lee Street. To them went the gangs from the turpentine camps on their periodic pilgrimages to town on pay-day. And a traveller on any of the roads leading from the town could see, on warm evenings, automobiles standing with engines stilled and lights dimmed on the side of the road. Down on Harris and Butler Streets in "Darktown" were other houses. Here were coloured women who seemed never to have to work. Here was seldom seen a coloured man. And the children around these houses were usually lighter in colour than in other parts of "Darktown."

Negro fathers and mothers of comely daughters never allowed them to go out unaccompanied after dark. There were too many dangers from men of their own race. And even greater ones from men of the other race. There had been too many disastrous consequences from relaxation of vigil by certain bowed and heart-broken coloured parents. And they had no redress at law. The laws of the State against intermarriage saw to it that there should be none.

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Central City inhabitants knew all these things. But familiarity with them had bred the belief that they did not exist—that is, they were thought a natural part of the town's armament against scandal. One soon grew used to them—and forgot them. The town was no worse than any other—far better than most.

It was a rude shock to Kenneth when he began to see these things through an entirely different pair of eyes than those with which he had viewed them before he left Central City for the North. The sordidness, the blatant vulgarity, the viciousness of it all—especially the houses on Butler and Harris Streets—appalled and sickened him. Even more was he disgusted by the complacent acceptance of the whole miserable business by white and black alike. On two or three occasions he tentatively mentioned it to a few of those he had known intimately years before. Some of them laughed indulgently—others cautioned him to leave it alone. Finding no response, he shrugged his shoulders and dismissed the whole affair from his mind. "It was here long before I was born," he said to himself philosophically, "it'll probably be here long after I'm dead, and the best thing for me to do is to stick to my own business and let other people's morals alone."

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clerks, and the boys fresh from school who chiefly made up the fighting forces. Their lives had been too largely confined to the narrow ways to enable them to realize the immensity of the event into which they had been so suddenly plunged. Their most vivid memories were of "that damned second loot" or of *beaucoup vin blanc* or, most frequently, of all-too-brief adventures with the *mademoiselles.* With the end of the war and demobilization had come the short periods of hero-worship and then the sudden forgetfulness of those for whom they had fought. The old narrow life began again with but occasional revolts against the monotony of it all, against the blasting of the high hopes held when the war was being fought. Even these spasmodic revolts eventually petered out in vague mutterings among men like themselves who let their inward dissatisfaction dissipate in thin air.

More deep-rooted was this revolt among Negro ex-service men. Many of them entered the army, not so much because they were fired with the desire to fight for an abstract thing like world democracy, but, because they were of a race oppressed, they entertained very definite beliefs that service in France would mean a more decent regime in America, when the war was over, for themselves and all others who were classed as Negroes. Many of them, consciously or subconsciously, had a spirit which might have been expressed like this: "Yes, we'll fight for democracy in France, but when that's over with we're going to expect and we're going to get some of that

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of his own reactions towards life. He had read the plays of Bernard Shaw, garnering here and there a morsel of truth though much of Shaw eluded him. Theodore Dreiser's gloominess and sex-obsession he liked though it often repelled him; he admired the man for his honesty and disliked his pessimism or what seemed to him a dolorous outlook on life. He loved the colourful romances of Hergesheimer, considering them of little enduring value but nevertheless admiring his descriptions of affluent life, enjoying it vicariously. Willa Cather's *My Antonia* he delighted in because of its simplicity and power and beauty.

The works of D. H. Lawrence, Kenneth read with conflicting emotions. Mystical, turgid, tortuous phrases, and meaning not always clear. Yet he revelled in Lawrence's clear insight into the bends and backwaters and perplexing twistings of the stream of life. Kenneth liked best of all foreign writers Knut Hamsun. He had read many times *Hunger*, *Growth of the Soil*, and other novels of the Norwegian writer. He at times was annoyed by their lack of plot, but more often he enjoyed them because they had none, reflecting that life itself is never a smoothly turned and finished work of art, its causes and effects, its tears and joys, its loves and hates neatly dovetailing one into another as writers of fiction would have it.

So too did he satisfy his love for the sea in the novels of Conrad—the love so many have who are born and grow to manhood far from the sea. Ken-

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neth loved it with an abiding and passionate love—loved, yet feared it for its relentless power and savagery—a love such as a man would have for an alluring, yet tempestuous mistress of fiery and uncertain temper. In Conrad's romances he lived by proxy the life he would have liked had not fear of the water and the circumstances of his life prevented it. Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant he read and reread, finding in the struggles of *Emma Bovary* and *Nana* and other heroines and heroes of the French realists mental counterparts of some of the coloured men and women of his acquaintance in their struggles against the restrictions of stupid and crass and ignorant surroundings. The very dissimilarities of environment and circumstance between his own acquaintances and the characters in the novels he read, seemed to emphasize the narrowness of his own life in the South. So does a bedridden invalid read with keen delight the adventurous and rococo romances of Zane Grey or Jack London.

But perhaps best of all he admired the writing of Du Bois—the fiery, burning philippics of one of his own race against the proscriptions of race prejudice. He read them with a curious sort of detachment—as being something which touched him in a more or less remote way but not as a factor in forming his own opinions as a Negro in a land where democracy often stopped dead at the colour line.

It was in this that Kenneth's attitude towards life was most clearly shown. His was the more philosophic viewpoint on the race question, that problem so

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close to him. The proscriptions which he and others of his race were forced to endure were inconvenient, yet they were apparently a part of life, one of its annoyances, a thing which had always been and probably would be for all time to come. Therefore, he reasoned, why bother with it any more than one was forced to by sheer necessity? Better it was for him if he attended to his own individual problems, solved them to the best of his ability and as circumstances would permit, and left to those who chose to do it the agitation for the betterment of things in general. If he solved his problems and every other Negro did the same, he often thought, then the thing we call the race problem will be solved. Besides, he reasoned, the whole thing is too big for one man to tackle it, and if he does attack it, more than likely he will go down to defeat in the attempt. And what would be gained? . . .

His office completed, Kenneth began the making of those contacts he needed to secure the patients he knew were coming. In this his mother and Mamie were of invaluable assistance. Everybody knew the Harpers. It was a simple matter for Kenneth to renew acquaintances broken when he had left for school in the North. He joined local lodges of the Grand United Order of Heavenly Reapers and the Exalted Knights of Damon. The affected mysteriousness of his initiation into these fraternal orders, the secret grip, the passwords, the elaborately worded rituals, all of which the other members took so seriously, amused him, but he went through it all with an out-

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wardly solemn demeanour. He knew it was good business to affiliate himself with these often absurd societies which played so large a part in the lives of these simple and illiterate coloured folk. Along with the strenuous emotionalism of their religion, it served as an outlet for their naturally deep feelings.

In spite of the renewal of acquaintances, the careful campaign of winning confidence in his ability as a physician, Kenneth found that the flood of patients did not come as he had hoped. The coloured people of Central City had had impressed upon them by three hundred years of slavery and that which was called freedom after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, that no Negro doctor, however talented, was quite as good as a white one. This slave mentality, Kenneth now realized, inbred upon generation after generation of coloured folk, is the greatest handicap from which the Negro suffers, destroying as it does that confidence in his own ability which would enable him to meet without fear or apology the test of modern competition.

Kenneth's youthful appearance, too, militated against him. Though twenty-nine years old, he looked not more than a mere twenty-four or twenty-five. "He may know his stuff and be as smart as all outdoors," ran the usual verdict, "but I don't want no boy treating me when I'm sick."

Perhaps the greatest factor contributing to the coloured folks' lack of confidence in physicians of their own race was the inefficiency of Dr. Williams, the only coloured doctor in Central City prior to

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He kept his hair straightened, wore it brushed straight back from his forehead like highly polished steel wires, and, with pomades and hair oils liberally applied, it glistened like the patent leather shoes which adorned his ample feet.

His stout form filled the Ford in which he made his professional calls, and it was a sight worth seeing as he majestically rolled through the streets of the town bowing graciously and calling out loud greetings to the acquaintances he espied by the way. Always his bows to white people were twice as low and obsequious as to those of darker skin. Until Kenneth returned, Dr. Williams had had his own way in Central City. Through his fraternal and church connections and lack of competition, he had made a little money, much of it through his position as medical examiner for the lodges to which he belonged. As long as he treated minor ailments—cuts, colic, childbirths, and the like—he had little trouble. But when more serious maladies attacked them, the coloured population sent for the old white physician, Dr. Bennett, instead of for Dr. Williams.

The great amount of time at his disposal irritated Kenneth. He was like a spirited horse, champing at the bit, eager to be off. The patronizing air of his people nettled him—caused him to reflect somewhat bitterly that "a prophet is not without honour save in his own country." And when one has not the gift of prophecy to foretell, or of clairvoyance to see, what the future holds in the way of success, one is not likely to develop a philosophic calm which en-

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