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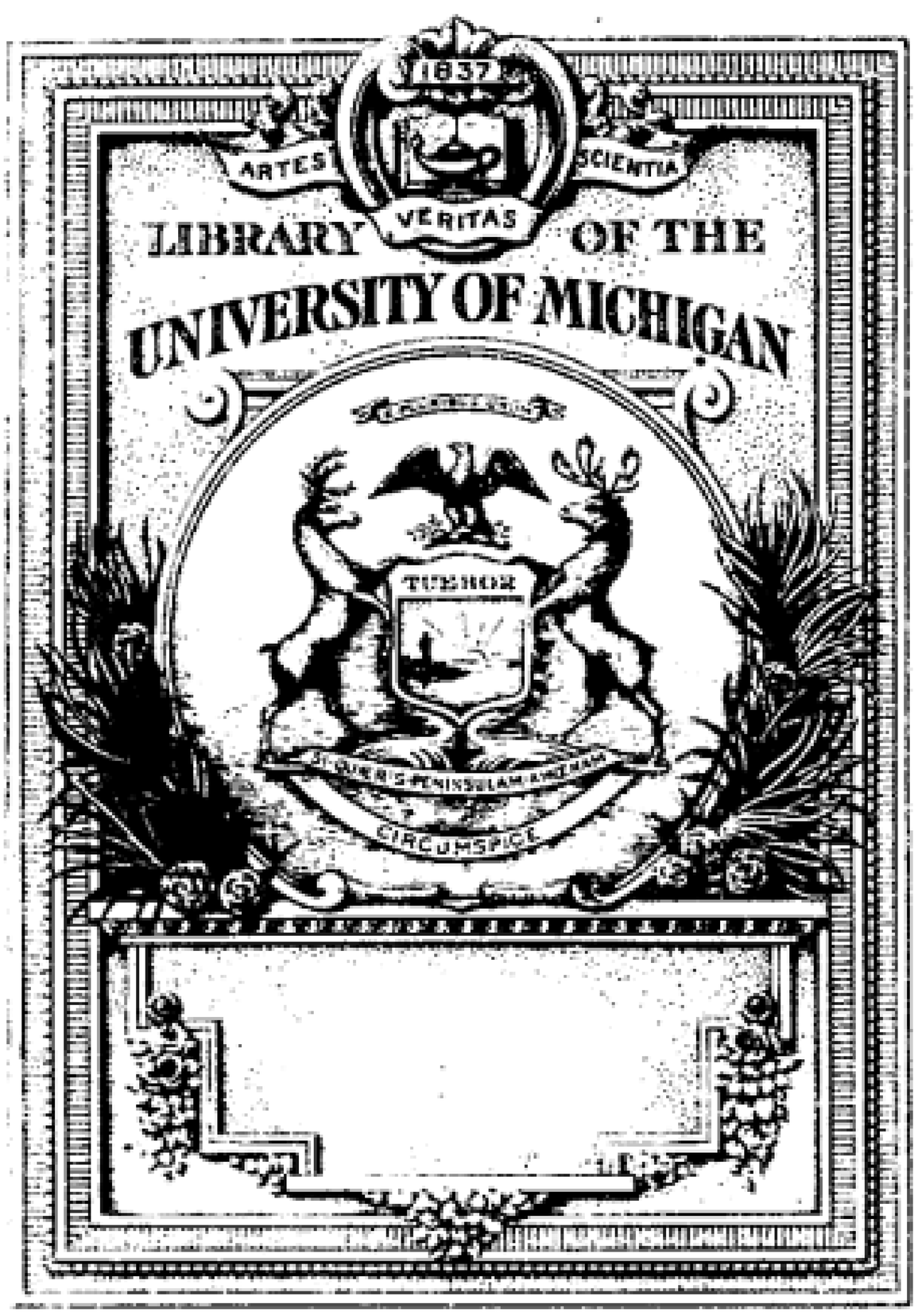

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THERE IS CONFUSION

BY

JESSIE REDMON FAUSET

There is confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble; pain on pain,—
TENNYSON.

BONI AND LIVERIGHT
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1924

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TO MY SISTER

HELEN FAUSET LANNING

WHOSE PERSISTENT FAITH HAS MADE ME

ASHAMED TO FALTER

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THERE IS CONFUSION

CHAPTER I

JOANNA'S first consciousness of the close understanding which existed between herself and her father dated back to a time when she was very young. Her mother, her brothers and her sister had gone to church, and Joanna, suffering from some slight childish complaint, had been left home. She had climbed upon her father's knee demanding a story.

"What sort of story?" Joel Marshall asked, willing and anxious to please her, for she was his favorite child.

"Story 'bout somebody great, Daddy. Great like I'm going to be when I get to be a big girl."

He stared at her amazed and adoring. She was like a little, living echo out of his own forgotten past. Joel Marshall, born a slave and the son of a slave in Richmond, Virginia, had felt as a little boy that same impulse to greatness.

"As a little tyke," his mother used to tell her friends, "he was always pesterin' me: 'Mammy, I'll be a great man some day, won't I? Mammy, you're gonna help me to be great?'

"But that was a long time ago, just a year or so after the war," said Mammy, rocking complacently in her comfortable chair. "How wuz I to know he'd be a great caterer, feedin' bank presidents and everything? Once you know they had him fix a banquet fur President Grant. Sent all the way to Richmond fur 'im. That's howcome he settled yere in New York; yassuh, my son is sure a great man."

But alas for poor Joel! His idea of greatness and his

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Mammy's were totally at variance. The kind of greatness he had envisaged had been that which gets one before the public eye, which makes one a leader of causes, a "man among men." He loved such phrases! At night the little boy in the tiny half-story room in that tiny house in Virginia picked out the stories of Napoleon, Lincoln and Garrison, all white men, it is true; but Lincoln had been poor and Napoleon unknown and yet they had risen to the highest possible state. At least he could rise to comparative fame. And when he was older and came to know of Frederick Douglass and Toussaint L'Ouverture, he knew if he could but burst his bonds he, too, could write his name in glory.

This was no selfish wish. If he wanted to be great he also wanted to do honestly and faithfully the things that bring greatness. He was to that end dependable and thorough in all that he did, but even as a boy he used to feel a sick despair,—he had so much against him. His color, his poverty, meant nothing to his ardent heart; those were nature's limitations, placed deliberately about one, he could see dimly, to try one's strength on. But that he should have a father broken and sickened by slavery who lingered on and on! That after that father's death the little house should burn down!

He was fifteen when that happened and he and his mother both went to work in the service of Harvey Carter, a wealthy Virginian, whose wife entertained on a large scale. It was here that Joel learned from an expert chef how to cook. His wages were small even for those days, but still he contrived to save, for he had set his heart on attending a theological seminary. Some day he would be a minister, a man with a great name and a healing tongue. These were the dreams he dreamed as he basted Mrs. Carter's chickens or methodically mixed salad dressing.

His mother knew his ideas and loved them with such a fine, albeit somewhat uncomprehending passion and belief, that

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in grateful return he made her the one other consideration of his life, weaving unconsciously about himself a web of such loyalty and regard for her that he could not have broken through it if he would. Her very sympathy defeated his purpose. So that when she, too, fell ill on a day with what seemed for years an incurable affection, Joel shut his teeth and put his frustrated plans behind him.

He drew his small savings from the bank and rented a tiny two and a half room shack in the front room of which he opened a restaurant,—really a little lunchstand. He was patronized at first only,—and that sparingly—by his own people. But gradually the fame of his wonderful sandwiches, his inimitable pastries, his pancakes, brought him first more black customers, then white ones, then outside orders. In five years' time Joel's catering became known state wide. He conquered poverty and came to know the meaning of comfort. The Grant incident created a reputation for him in New York and he was shrewd enough to take advantage of it and move there.

Ten years too late old Mrs. Marshall was pronounced cured by the doctors. She never understood what her defection had cost her son. His material success, his position in the church, in the community at large and in the colored business world,—all these things meant "power." To her, her son was already great. Joel did not undertake to explain to her that his lack of education would be a bar forever between him and the kind of greatness for which his heart had yearned.

It was after he moved to New York and after the death of his mother that Joel married. His wife had been a school teacher, and her precision of language and exactitude in small matters made Joel think again of the education and subsequent greatness which were to have been his. His wife was kind and sweet, but fundamentally unambitious, and for a time the pleasure of having a home and in contrasting these days of ease

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with the hardships of youth made Joel somewhat resigned to his fate.

"Besides, it's too late now," he used to tell himself. "What could I be?" So he contented himself with putting by his money, and attending church, where he was a steward and really the unacknowledged head.

His first child brought back the old keen longing. It was a boy and Joel, bending over the small, warm, brown bundle, felt a gleam of hope. He would name it Joel and would instil, or more likely, stimulate the ambition which he felt must be already in that tiny brain. But his wife wouldn't hear of the name Joel.

"It's hard enough for him to be colored," she said jealously guarding her young, "and to call him a stiff old-fashioned name like that would finish his bad luck. I am going to name him Alexander."

Alec, as he was usually called, did not resemble his father in the least. He was the average baby and the average boy, interested in marbles, in playing hookey, in parachutes, but with no determination to be a dark Napoleon or a Frederick Douglass. Two other children, Philip and Sylvia, resembled him, and Joel Marshall, now a man of forty, gave up his old ideas completely and decided to be a good business man, husband and father; not a bad decision if he had but known it.

Then Joanna came; Joanna with a fluff of thick, black hair, and solemn, earnest eyes and an infinite capacity for spending long moments in thought. "She's like you, Joel," Mrs. Marshall said. And because the novelty of choosing names for babies had somewhat worn off, she made no objection to the name Joanna, which Joel hesitatingly proposed for her. "She certainly should have been named for you," the mother told him a month later; "see how she follows you with her eyes. She'd rather watch you than eat."

And indeed from the very beginning Joanna showed her

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preference for her father. The two seemed to have a secret understanding. After the first child, Mrs. Marshall had fretted somewhat over the time and strength expended in caring for the other little Marshalls, but she never had any occasion to worry about Joanna. Joel had his office in his residence, and after Joanna was dressed and fed, all she wanted was to lie in her carriage and later to ride about on the kiddie-car of that day in her father's office, where she watched him with her solemn eyes.

Joel never forgot the first time she asked him for a story. He was in the habit of regaling his youngsters with tales of his early life, of himself, of boys who had grown up with him, of ball-games and boyish pranks. The three older children had a fine catholicity of taste. "Tell us a story," was all they asked, its subject made no difference to them.

But on that certain Sunday before Joanna was five years old she perched herself on her father's knee and commanded astoundingly:

"Tell me a story, Daddy, 'bout somebody great."

Joel didn't know what she meant at first, so far removed was he from the thought of his old dream. And yet the question did seem something like an echo, faint but recognizable of a longing that had once loomed large in his life.

"Great," he repeated. "How do you mean great, Baby? Tall, great big man, like Daddy, hey?" He stood six feet and was broad with it.

Joanna shook a dissenting head. "No, not great that way. I want to hear about a man who did things nobody else could do,—maybe he put out a fire," she ended doubtfully, "but I mean something greater than that."

Joel had her taught to read after that. She was a little frail for school, and did not start until later than the other children, though she was far the most studious. So she had three or four years of solid reading, and always her choice of

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subject was of some one who had overcome obstacles and so stood out beyond his fellows.

At first she thought nothing of color, and it was not until she had gone to school and learned something of discrimination that she began to ponder.

"Didn't colored people ever do anything, Daddy?" But Joel was prepared for that. He told her himself of Douglass and Vesey and Turner. There were great women, too, Harriet Tubman, Phillis Wheatley, Sojourner Truth, women who had been slaves, he explained to her, but had won their way to fame and freedom through their own efforts.

Joanna had a fine sense of relativity. Young as she was, she could understand that the bravery and courage exercised by these slave women was a much finer and different thing from that exercised for instance by Florence Nightingale. "They were like Joan of Arc," she thought to herself, "Joan, wonderful Joan with the name almost like mine." Only an innate, almost too meticulous sense of honesty had kept her from changing her own name to the shorter form.

She used to lie in her bed at night, straight and still with her eyes fixed on the stretch of sky visible even from a house in Fifty-ninth Street and dream dreams. "I'll be great, too," she told herself. "I'm not sure how. I can't be like those wonderful women, Harriet and Sojourner, but at least I won't be ordinary."

She spoke to her father like a little piping echo from the past, "Daddy, you'll help me to be a great woman, somebody you'll be proud of?"

Her words made him so happy; they renewed his life. She was so completely like himself, and he could help her. "Thank God," he used to murmur over his books that daily showed an increase in his earnings.

He took Joanna everywhere with him. One Easter Sunday a great colored singer, a beautiful woman, sang an Easter

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anthem in his church, lifting up a golden voice among the tall white lilies. Afterwards she went home with Mr. and Mrs. Marshall and stayed to dinner. Joanna never moved her eyes from her during the ride home.

After dinner she stood in front of the singer in the comfortable living-room. "I can sing like you," she said gravely, "and I can remember the tune of most of that hymn you sang this morning. Listen."

And with no further introduction she sang most of the anthem. She was only ten then, yet her voice was already free of the shrillness of childhood and beginning to assume that liquid golden quality which so distinguished it later.

Madame Caldwell gasped. She had won her own laurels through bitter experience in various studios, meeting insult, indifference and unkindness with an unyielding front, which brought her finally consideration, a grudging interest, sometimes a genuine appreciation.

She was well on her way to recognition now. Colored people acclaimed her all over the country and she had some local reputation in her home town where black and white alike were very proud of her.

"But no daughter of mine," she used to say bitterly, "if she has the voice of an angel shall go through what I have suffered."

Yet when she heard Joanna sing that Easter Sunday, she seized Joel Marshall's arm. "Get her a teacher, Mr. Marshall. She has a voice in ten thousand. Poor child, how you will have to work!"

But Joanna wasn't listening, her eyes sought her father's. Both of them knew at once that the road to glory was stretching out before her.

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CHAPTER II

JOANNA was like her father not only so far as ambition was concerned but also in her willingness to work. She had a fine serious mind, a little slow-moving at first, but working with a splendid precision that helped her through many a hard place. Her quality of being able to stick to a problem until she was satisfied served in the long run as well as her sister Sylvia's greater quickness and versatility. Eventually, too, Joanna's laboriousness and native exactness produced in her the result of an oft-sharpened knife. The method which she applied to one study, she remembered to apply to another, and if this failed then she was able to make combinations.

Usually she had to have things explained to her from the very beginning, either by a teacher or through directions in a book. But to offset this slowness she had a good sense of logic, a strong power of concentration, and a remarkably retentive and visualizing memory.

Sylvia and she, destined to be such perfect friends in their maturity, were not very sympathetic in their childhood. The older girl was thoughtless, quick to jump at conclusions, natively witty and strongly disinclined toward seriousness. "Joanna makes me sick," was her constant cry, "always thinking of her lessons and how important she's going to be when she's grown-up. So tiresome, too, wanting to talk about what she's going to do all the time, with no interest in your affairs."

Which was not quite true, for Joanna was mightily interested in people who had a "purpose" in life. Otherwise not at all.

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This was where she differed most from her father. With Joel success and distinction had been his dream, his dearest wish. But always he had realized that there were other things which might interfere. With Joanna success and distinction were an obsession. It never occurred to her that life was anything but what a man chose to make it, provided, of course, he did choose to make it something. Her brothers' and Sylvia's haphazard methods were always incomprehensible to her, and this gave her the least touch of the "holier than thou" manner.

Her mother insisted on each child's learning to do housework. Even the boys were not exempt from this, indeed they rather liked it. Sylvia made no complaint though she occasionally bribed Alec or Philip to do her stint for her. Joanna never complained, either, yet she made up her mind early that as a woman she would never do this kind of work. Not that she despised it, she simply considered it labor lost for a person who like herself might be spending her time in more beautiful and more graceful activities. Yet in spite of her dislike, she always lingered longest over her work, and the room or the silver which she had cleaned always looked the best. It is true she never learned to iron especially well, but this was about the only thing in which she yielded place to Sylvia.

Sylvia was like a fire-fly in comparison with Joanna's steady beaconlike flood of light. Sylvia dashed about, worked as quickly as she thought and produced immediate and usually rather striking results. Sylvia with a ribbon, or a piece of lace and a ready needle and thread could give the effect of possessing two dresses, whereas she had only the one. Sylvia dressed the dolls, hiring Joanna's remarkable and usually disregarded assembly of these so that she might make them new clothes. She drove an honest bargain. If Joanna would let her play store with her dolls for a week, one of them could keep the new dress which Sylvia would have made for her; Joanna's dolls were usually in Sylvia's care.

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Yet when Joanna did sew or knit, her stitches and pieces bore inspection much better than Sylvia's. By the same token, however, they missed Sylvia's dash.

In one thing only did Joanna show real abandon, that was in dancing. Sylvia was as light as thistle-down on her feet, but Joanna was like the spirit of dancing. She had grace, the very poetry of motion, and she could dance any step however intricate if she saw it once.

"If you want to get Joanna to play," Maggie Ellersley, Sylvia's chum and school-mate would say impatiently, "you must start some singing or dancing game. She wouldn't play 'I Spy' or 'Pussy wants a corner' with you for worlds."

Any sort of folk-song or dance, though she did not know them by that name, delighted the child. Usually she held herself aloof, but in summer down on Fifty-ninth Street Joanna was one with the children in the street, singing, dancing, jumping rope in unexpected and fancy ways.

Sylvia's and Maggie's and even her brothers' rougher scoffing affected her not at all, not only because she had the calm self-assurance which is the first step toward success, but also because of old Joel's strong belief in her.

Joel believed that all things were possible. "Nothing in reason," he used to tell Joanna, "is impossible. Forty years ago I was almost a pauper in Richmond. Look at me to-day. I spend more on you in a month, Joanna, than my mother and I ever saw in a five-year stretch. One hundred years ago and nearly all of us were slaves. See what we are now. Ten years ago people would have laughed at the thought of colored people on the stage. Look at the bill-boards on Broadway."

It was in the first part of the century when Williams and Walker, Cole and Johnson, Ada Overton and others were at their zenith. Old Joel believed them the precursors of greater things. Since Joanna's gifts were those of singing and dancing, he hoped to make her famous the country over. Of course he

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would have preferred a more serious form of endowment. But such as it was, it was Joanna's, and must be developed. Joel Marshall believed in using the gifts nearest at hand.

"And don't think anything about being colored," he used to say.

"It might be different if you lived in some other part of the country, but here in this section it may not interfere much more than being poor, or having some slight deformity. I have often noticed," said Joel, who had used his powers of observation to no small advantage, "that having some natural drawback often pushes you forward, that is if you've got anything in you to start with. It might even happen," he added, launched now on his favorite theme, "that your color would add to your success. Depend on it if you've got something which these white folks haven't got, or can do something better than they can, they'll call on you fast enough and your color will only make you more noticeable."

Joanna used to listen interestedly. Not that in those early years she always understood fully everything her father said, but his talk created for her a kind of atmosphere which created in turn a feeling of assurance and self-confidence which was really superb.

Another theory of Joel's which he had worked out for himself, and which in no small degree contributed to Joanna's education was his early understanding of the natural rights of men inherent in the mere fact of living. He told Joanna that no class of men remained static throughout the ages,—he had not used these words, it is true, but he had come pretty near it. Somewhere in those early days of his in odd scraps of reading he had learned that Greece had once been enslaved; that Russia had but recently freed her serfs; that England possessed a submerged class.

"All people, all countries, have their ups and downs, Joanna," he would tell her gravely, "and just now it's our turn

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to be down, but it will soon roll round for our time to be up, or rather we must see to it that we do get up. So everyone of us has something to do for the race. Never forget that, little girl."

Joanna was a memorable type in these days. A grave child, brown without that peculiar luminosity of appearance which she was to have later on, and which Sylvia already possessed. She had a mop of thick black hair which was actually heavy, so much so that the back of her head bulged. Joanna knew next to nothing at this time of those first aids to colored people in this country in the matter of conforming to average appearance. If she had known them, it is doubtful if she would have used them, for she had the variety of honesty which made her hesitate and even dislike to do or adopt anything artificial, no matter how much it might improve her general appearance. No hair straighteners, nor even curling kids for her.

"Joanna's ways are so straight, they almost sway back," Sylvia used to say aptly. And indeed Joanna wanted one to see her at her very worst. She did not like to take people by surprise. But as her worst included a pair of very nice brown eyes, with thick, if somewhat short, and curling lashes, an unobtrusive nose, small square hands and exquisite feet, it was not hard to look at. She was always intensely susceptible to beautiful people and to beautiful things. It was the beauty inherent in Joel's ideals, and in all ideals which really underlie success, that most attracted her. And this passion for beauty while informing and indeed molding her character, yet by a strange twist influenced adversely and warped her sympathies.

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CHAPTER III

IT was Joanna's love for beauty that made her consciously see Peter Bye. It is true that almost as soon as she saw him she lost sight of him again, for the boy did not come up to her requirements which, even at the early age at which these two met, were quite crystallized. Joanna liked first of all fixity of purpose. The phrase "When I grow up, I'm going to be" was constantly on her lips. She got into the habit of measuring people, "sizing them up" Joel would have said, in accordance with the amount of steadfastness, perseverance and ambition which they displayed. She had little time for shiftless or "do-less" persons. Sylvia used to say, half angrily, "Joanna, when the bad man gets you, he isn't going to torture you. He's just going to shut you up with lazy, good-for-nothing folks. That will be torture enough for you."

Peter Bye, in spite of the dark arresting beauty which first drew Joanna's glance to him across the other white and pink faces in the crowded schoolroom, was undoubtedly shiftless. "Not lazy," Joanna said to herself, looking at him from under level brows before she dismissed him forever from her busy mind. "It's just that he doesn't care; he just doesn't want to be anybody."

She was too young to understand the power of that great force, heredity. She had no notion of the part which it played in her own life. Peter was the legitimate result of a heredity that had become a tradition, of a tradition that had become

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warped, that had gone astray and had carried Peter and Peter Bye's father along in its general wreckage.

It is impossible to understand the boy's character without some knowledge of the lives of those who had gone before him.

As far back as the last decades of the eighteenth century there had been white Byes and black Byes in Philadelphia. The black Byes were known to be the chattels of Aaron and Dinah Bye, Quakers, who without reluctance had set free their slaves, among them black Joshua Bye, the great-grandfather of Peter. This was done in 1780 according to the laws of Pennsylvania, which thus allowed the Quakers to salve their consciences without offending their thrifty instincts.

Aaron Bye, most people said, was unusually good to his slaves. He had something of the patriarchal instinct and liked to think of himself as ruler over the destiny of many people, his wife's, his children's and more completely that of his slaves. Certainly he was very kind to Joshua's mother, Judy. She was a tall, straight, steely, black woman with fine inscrutable eyes, a thin-lipped mouth and a large but shapely nose. She bore about her a quality of brooding, of mystery, embodying the attraction which she exercised for many men, white and black. But apparently she knew little of this. Her only weakness, if such it might be called, was an inexplicable attachment to the white Bye family. She married, a few years before receiving her freedom, a man named Ceazer, a proud, surly, handsome individual, who refused to adopt the surname of his master; he had belonged to white people named Morton. Since even after freedom Judy would not hear to leaving the Bye family, Aaron Bye greatly pleased by this loyalty offered the position of coachman to Ceazer, which the latter, with his customary surliness, accepted. Later he not only threw up his job, but ran away, vanishing finally into legend.

His was a strange truculent character; he hated slavery,

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hated all white people, hated particularly the Mortons, hated ineffably Aaron Bye. He wanted nothing at his hands. Once he knocked down another Negro who referred to him as "Mist' Bye's man." He was no man's man, he assured the stricken narrator, least of all the man of that damn Quaker. His enmity went to ridiculous lengths. Aaron Bye taught Joshua how to write and gave him a little black testament for a prize. In it he wrote "The gift of Aaron Bye." Joshua, delighted, wrote his own name under the inscription and ran and showed it to his mother. She, it turned out, had not been watching his making of pothooks without purpose. Underneath her boy's name she fashioned in halting crazy characters her single attempt at writing, her own name, Judy Bye. Nothing would serve Joshua then but that he must have Ceazer's name in the book, too. Remembering that his father could not write, Joshua wrote out himself with a fine flourish "Ceazer Bye" and showed the name to its owner, entreating him to make his mark beside it. Ceazer took up the pen in his strong, wiry fingers.

"Which one ob dese did you say were mine?"

Joshua pointed it out, waiting for the cross. Ceazer made a mark, it was true, but it was a thick broad line drawn through his name with a fury which almost tore the thin page. *He* was no Bye!

It was not long after this that he disappeared, a strange, brooding, intractable figure.

Joshua, although born in slavery, had never known the institution in its more hideous aspects. He had been a very little boy when his freedom came to him. And Ceazer, old Judy told him, had fought in the Revolution! So that Joshua knew more of warfare to set people free than of slavery for which war was later to be waged. From him his son Isaiah heard almost nothing of the old régime, though there were many vestiges of it on all sides. All he knew was that Joshua had

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kept on working for Dinah and Aaron Bye after his emancipation, and that they had given him on the occasion of his marriage to Belle Potter a huge Family Bible, bound in leather and with an Apocrypha. On the title-page was written in a fine old script: *To Joshua and Belle Bye from Aaron and Dinah Bye. "By their fruits ye shall know them."*

For a long time to Isaiah, who used to pore absorbedly as a boy over this book with its pictures and long old-fashioned S, this inscription savored of vineyards and orchards. The white Byes, as a matter of fact, were the possessors of very fine peach-orchards in the neighborhood of what is now known as Bryn Mawr, and Isaiah, even as a little fellow, had been taken out there to pick peaches.

His father Joshua had spent his life in making those orchards what they were; a born agriculturist, he had an uncanny knowledge of planting, of grafting, of fertilizing. Many a farmer tried to inveigle him from Aaron Bye. But although Joshua's wages were small, he had inherited his mother's blind, invincible attachment for the Byes. His place was with Aaron.

It was young white Meriwether Bye, youngest son of Aaron's and Dinah's ten children, who told Isaiah what the inscription meant. Joshua had not married until he was nearly fifty and his single son, black Isaiah, and white Meriwether were boys together. Meriwether used to come to the Bye house at Fourth and Coates Streets, which is now Fairmount Avenue, as often as Isaiah used to appear at the Bye house at Fourth and Spruce.

Isaiah showed the inscription to Meriwether, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

"Yes," said young Merry tracing the letters with a fat finger, "that's our family motto." Isaiah wanted to know what a motto was.

"Something," Meriwether told him vaguely, "that your whole family goes by." The black boy thought that likely.

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"Everybody knows Bye peaches, ain't that so? 'Cause of that everybody knows the Byes."

Meriwether, though impressed by this logic, didn't think that that was what was meant. A subsequent conversation with his father confirmed his opinion.

"It means this, Ziah," he said one hot July afternoon walking home with the colored boy from the brickyard where Isaiah worked, "it means it shows the kind of stuff you are. It means—now—you see a bare tree in the winter time don't you, and you don't know what it is? But you do perhaps know an apple blossom when you see it, or a peach blossom. In the spring you see that tree covered, let's say, with apple blossoms. Well, you know it's an apple tree."

"But what's that got to do with us?" Isaiah wanted to know. He was interested, he could not tell why, but his slow-working mind clung to its first idea. "Your father wrote it in the book he gave my father. My father hasn't any fruit trees."

Isaiah never forgot the answer Meriwether made him in the unconscious cruelty of youth. "When it comes to people," said the young Quaker, "it means pretty much the same thing. Now when I grow up, I'm going to be a great doctor," his chest swelled, "but nobody will be surprised. They'll all say, 'Of course, he's the son of Aaron Bye, the rich peach-merchant. Good stock there,'" he involuntarily mimicked his pompous father; "and I'll be good fruit. That's the way it always is: good trees, good fruit; rich, important people, rich important sons."

"What'll I be?" asked Isaiah Bye, grotesquely tragic in his tattered clothes, the sweat rolling off his shiny face, so intent was his interest.

"Well," Meriwether countered judicially, "what could you be?" He pondered a moment, his own position so secure that he was willing to do his best by this serious case. "Your father and your father's father were slaves. 'Course your father's free

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now but he's just a servant. He's not what you'd call his own man. So I s'pose that's what you'll be, a good servant. Tell you what, Isaiah, you can be my coachman. I'll be good to you. And when you're grown up," said Meriwether with more imagination than he usually displayed, "I'll point you out to some famous doctor from France and say, 'His father was a good servant to my father, and he's been a good servant to my father's son.' How'll you like that?" Meriwether tapped him fondly if somewhat condescendingly on the arm.

"You'll never," said Isaiah Bye, drawing back from the familiar touch, "you'll never be able to say that about me." And he turned and ran down the hot street, leaving Meriwether Bye gaping on the sidewalk.

After that his father could never persuade him to enter again the Bye house, or the Bye orchards. Fortunately his mother upheld him here. " 'Tain't as though he had to work for them old Byes," she said straightening up her already straight shoulders. "He makes just as much and more in the brick-yard and in helpin' Amos White haul."

"I know that," Joshua would reply impatiently, "but old Mist' Aaron says—now—he likes to have his own people workin' roun' him. And I don't like to disappoint him."

Belle Bye told Isaiah. "I'm not one of his own people, Ma," he answered stubbornly, "and after that I'm not ever goin' back." Belle was rejoiced to hear this. She would have been an insurgent in any walk of life. Joshua was the genuine peasant type—the type, black or white, which believes in a superior class and yields blindly to its mandates. But Belle had seen too many changes even in her thirty-five years—she was far younger than Joshua—not to know that many things are possible if one just has courage.

Isaiah, on being questioned, told his mother with considerable reluctance about his conversation with Meriwether. Belle, while regretting the breach, understood. She had been glad to

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have her boy the associate of young white Bye. Without expressing it to herself in so many words she had realized that association with Meriwether was an education for Isaiah. Already he was talking more correctly than other colored boys in his group, his manners were good, and though his work was of the roughest kind, his vision was broad, he knew there were other things.

"I don't believe," his mother told him wisely, "that you kin go as fur as you dream. Too many things agin you fur that, boy. But you kin die much further along the road than when you was born. Never forget that."

So Isaiah was saved from the initial mistake of aiming too high and of coming utterly to smash. Yet he accomplished wonders. Who shall say how he increased his slender store of knowledge? How he learned to read wise books borrowed and bought as best he might? How he learned geography and history that made his heart-beats go wild since it told him of the French Revolution and how a whole nation once practically enslaved arose to a fuller, richer life?

The inspiration for all this lay in those careless words of young Meriwether. Although Isaiah met the young fellow many times after that incident, and apparently with friendliness, he never in his heart forgave him. Like Ceazer he developed a dislike for white people and their ways which developed, however, into a sturdy independence and an unyielding pride. No amount of contumely ever made him ashamed of his slave ancestry. On the contrary, to measure himself against old Ceazer and Judy gave him ground for honest pride. "See what they were and how far I've gone," he used to say, pleasantly boastful.

He resented as few sons of freedmen did the assurance with which the white Byes took their wealth and position and power. "Hoisted themselves on the backs of the black Byes." He resented especially the ingratitude of Aaron Bye to Joshua.

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For himself he asked nothing; being content to fight his own way "through an onfriendly world."

The white Byes had gone far, but the black Byes having now that greatest of all gifts, freedom, would go far, too. They would be leaders of other black men.

The upshot of all this was that Isaiah Bye opened a school for colored youth down on Vine Street. No name and no figure in colored life in Philadelphia was ever better beloved and more revered than his.

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CHAPTER IV

ISAIAH did not marry until he was thirty-one, which was an advanced age for his times. Even then he had married earlier than his father. Old Joshua, who died long before Isaiah's marriage, had been inordinately proud of his one son.

"Jes' wouldn't work fer white folks," Joshua used to say, "that weren't good enough fer him."

Isaiah and Miriam Sayres Bye had one son. "Meriwether," Isaiah wrote in Aaron and Dinah Bye's old gift, and under it in a script as fine and characteristic as that of the original inscription: "By *his* fruits shall ye know—*me*." It was a strange but not unnatural bit of pride, the same pride which had made him name this squirming bundle of potentialities, "Meriwether,—Meriwether Bye," a boy with the same name which old white Aaron Bye's son had borne and with as good chances. The Civil War was on the horizon then and Isaiah Bye, with that calm expectation of the unexpected which was his mother's chiefest legacy, was sure that in that grand mêlée all his people would know freedom. So black Meriwether Bye, born like himself in freedom, would know nothing but that estate when he began to have understanding.

Isaiah had accumulated a little, though how that was possible, no one aware of his tiny stipend could guess. It is true he not only taught school, but he had outside pupils, ex-slaves, freedmen, men like himself born in freedom, but unable through economic pressure to enjoy it except in name,—all these crowded his home at night on Vine Street, and sweated nightily over primers and pothooks and the abacus. Twenty-five

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cents an hour he charged them, giving each a meticulous care such as would bring a modern tutor many dollars. He wrote letters, pamphlets, too, for that marvelous organization already well established, the A. M. E. Church. His wife had a sister whose husband kept a second-hand shop and from this source he earned an occasional dollar. When Meriwether was eight, Isaiah owned two houses in Pearl Street, the house in Vine Street, a half interest in his brother-in-law's store and a plot in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

From the very beginning Meriwether knew he was to be a great man—a doctor, his father had said emphatically. And Meriwether repeated it by rote. He was a clever enough child though without his father's solid trait of concentration. But he liked the idea of greatness—that and the profession of medicine came to be synonymous with him as it was already with his father. Otherwise it is likely that both of them would have seen earlier the boy's inaptitude for the calling thus thrust upon him.

Meriwether went to his father's school, to Mr. Jonas Howard's catering establishment, which he loved, to Sunday-School and to his Uncle Peter's second-hand store. In any one of these places he was at home. He might have made a good teacher, caterer, minister or storekeeper. Yet he meandered on, doing absolutely mediocre work, never failing, never shining, and always rather purposely waiting the day which should bring him to the Medical School.

He was waiting for something else, too, though this Isaiah never guessed. He was waiting for some sign of help or recognition from the white Byes. His father had told him of the slaveholder's great debt to old Joshua; he had taken him riding past the Bryn Mawr peach orchards. "By rights part of them ought to belong to us. But I don't mind, no sir-ee! Let 'em have 'em. See where we are to-day without their help. Think of it!"

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Meriwether did think of it and did mind it. He learned that he had been named after the son of his grandfather's patron and somehow it seemed impossible to him that that mere fact should not result in something tangibly advantageous. He lacked the imagination to understand the pride which actuated Isaiah to name his boy as he had. The year before Meriwether was to enter medical school, Isaiah, fortunately for himself, died.

A few months later Miriam died, too. Meriwether was left sole heir to the three houses and two or three hundred dollars. He was tired of school and not at all displeased with the idea of being his own master. He would like a little vacation, he fancied, and a chance to see the world. Somebody told him of a good way to do this—why not get a job as train porter? The idea pleased him; there was travel, easy money, besides his little property in Philadelphia. And afterwards perhaps there would be the patron for whom he had been named, Dr. Meriwether Bye of Bryn Mawr.

Isaiah's mother, Belle Bye, used to say, "Things you do expect and things you don't expect are sure to come to pass." It took Isaiah many years to see the reasonableness of this apparently unreasoned statement. Certainly one of the things he never expected to come to pass was that his boy Meriwether should, first, give up altogether his project of studying medicine and, second, that bit by bit, through sickness, gambling, and a hitherto unsuspected penchant for sheer laziness, he should run through his Philadelphia property, thus wiping away all that edifice of respectability and good citizenship which Isaiah Bye had so carefully built up.

Colored Philadelphia society is organized as definitely as, and even a little more carefully than, Philadelphia white society. One wasn't "in" in those old days unless one were, first, "an old citizen," and, second, unless one were eminently respectable,—almost it might be said God-fearing. Meriwether

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having been born to this estate suffered all the inconveniences coming to a member of a group at that time small and closely welded. His business was everybody's business. His Uncle Peter had upbraided him for not studying medicine. Jonas Howard, the caterer, knew about his first real estate transfer. The young Howards and his cousins knew about his gambling and rebuked him admiringly. On one of his "runs" Meriwether spent a week in New York. This was in 1889. Not a single colored person knew him or cared about him. He rented a room in Fifty-third Street and made that his headquarters. Later he rented two rooms and married a young seamstress who died in 1891 when her boy was born.

Meriwether did do two things after that. First he wrote to Dr. Meriwether Bye telling him who he was and implying he would not disdain a little aid. It is doubtful if the doctor, who at that time was traveling in Europe with his tiny grandson, ever received the letter. Second, he took to drink. More than anything else he fell into a deep, ineluctable mood of melancholia. Here he was, Meriwether Bye, destined to be a great man, a famous physician. Why, he had been a man of property once, with money in the bank! And now he was just a poor nobody, picking up odd jobs, paying his room rent fearfully from week to week, sometimes pawning Isaiah Bye's chased gold watch.

How he worked it out he himself could not have told. But he saw himself a martyr, "driven by fate" from the high eminence of his father's dreams to his own poor realities. Think how he had struggled, sacrificed—he believed it—the fun and freedom of youth to come to this! "How," said Meriwether Bye harking back to Sunday-School days, "how are the mighty fallen!" And how easily might they have remained mighty.

He named his boy Peter after his Uncle Peter, in whose

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second-hand shop in Philadelphia he had spent delightful hours.

Now see the perversity of human nature. Just as his father Isaiah Bye had talked to his son Meriwether about the reward of effort and faithful toil, just so Meriwether talked to Peter about the futility of labor and ambition. And in particular he talked to him about the ingratitude of the white Byes—of all white people.

"It makes no difference, Peter, what you do, or how hard you work. The rewards of life are only for such or such. You may pour your heart's blood out,"—he had a fine gift of rhetoric—"and still achieve nothing. Think of your great-grandfather. Fate favors those whom she chooses. Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall not be disappointed."

Or, "Peter, if life has any favors for you, she'll give them to you without your asking for them. The world owes you a living, let it come to you, don't bother going after it."

How completely his son might be absorbing all this, Meriwether never knew, for Peter, vocal enough with his playmates and others, maintained an owlish silence when his father thus harangued him.

But his aunt knew. She was a tall, stout, yellow woman, with that ineffable look of sadness in her eyes characteristic of a certain type of colored people. She was the sister of Peter's mother, and when Peter's father died, suddenly, inconsequently, she accepted uncomplainingly his son along with her other burdens.

Peter was then twelve; extraordinarily handsome, vivid and alert. Miss Susan Graves riding home from the cemetery reflected that he might be not such a burden after all. Clearly he would soon want to be taking care of himself.

"Peter," she said thoughtfully, "what do you want to do when you grow up?"

"Oh, I don't know," her nephew replied, temporarily remov-

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ing his gaze from the window-pane where it had been glued for twenty minutes. "I'm not bothered about that, Aunt Susan. You see the world owes me a living."

She noticed in him then the first fruits of his father's shiftlessness. But far more deeply rooted than that was his deep dislike for white people. He did not believe that any of them were kind or just or even human. And although he could not himself have told what he wanted from the white Byes, if indeed he wanted anything, he grew up with the feeling that he and his had been unusually badly treated. His grandfather's connection with white people resulted in pride, his father's in shiftlessness; in Peter it took the form of a constant and increasing bitterness.

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CHAPTER V

IT may seem a cold-blooded thing to say, but the dying of Meriwether Bye was about the best thing he could have done for his son, Peter. Certainly that was what Miss Susan Graves thought as she viewed rather grimly the small and motley collection of belongings which Peter transferred to her home in his little express wagon from his father's former landlady, Mrs. Reading. The collection consisted of a well-worn extra suit of clothes, another pair of shoes, some underwear in sad need of patching, some books chiefly on physiology and anatomy, the Bye Family Bible, a little old black testament, and a box of letters. There was also a big railroad map which Peter lugged along under his arm and from which he stubbornly refused to be parted. Meriwether, in his brighter moods, used to refer to his "runs" as "business-trips" and would point out to Peter just where he would go on such and such a date. The boy learned a lot of geography in this way, and was talking to his playmates about Duluth and Jacksonville, Sacramento and Denver, before most of them knew that they personally were living in the country's metropolis.

The books on medicine and anatomy had been well thumbed by Peter, too. Meriwether had received them from old Isaiah, his father, and had carried them around on his runs to impress his co-workers in the Pullman service.

Later he got into the habit of reading from them to Peter who always listened in the grave silence which he usually reserved for his father's effusions. For some reason the little boy's brain retained the various and amazing things which his

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father read to him from the dry old books. Long before he knew his multiplication tables he knew the names of the principal bones of the body and the course of the food. In fact these books were his first readers, for Meriwether, more interested in this dry stuff, now that it was too late to profit him anything, taught his boy how to pronounce the difficult names, so that the latter could read to him. Perhaps the poor fellow, dissolute and weak failure though he was, thought that some of the old "greatness" might still accrue to him by this fiction of studying at medicine.

The Bible was the one thing that Peter knew least about. He looked into it once or twice and hitting on Isaiah Bye's tragically proud inscription: "By *his* fruits ye shall know—*me*," spelled it out laboriously,—he always had trouble in reading script,—and asked his father with some natural perplexity what it meant. But Meriwether snatched the book away from him with such a black look and took such pains to put it out of his reach, that Peter for a long time thought the Bible, or at any rate that inscription, must be something decidedly off color. He waited until his father had gone on his next "business-trip" before investigating again, but finding the book nowhere as exciting as his beloved Anatomy, he gave up the puzzle and attributed his father's defection to the inscrutable whims and vagaries of the genus called parents. He valued that old Bible the least of all his possessions. That was the bitterest day of his life when he found out what it ought to mean to him.

Miss Susan, though not an "old Philadelphian" herself, knew something of colored Philadelphia's pride in the possession of family and tradition. She would have been glad of course if Meriwether Bye had left Peter some money. But of the two she would very much rather have had the Bible with its absolute assurance of the former standing and respectability of the black Byes. She had a family tradition of her own, for she

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was a member of the Graves family of Gravestown, New Jersey, a clan well known to colored people not only in that vicinity, but also throughout Pennsylvania.

The story is that two white sisters in the middle of the eighteenth century fell in love with two of their father's black slaves. The Negroes may have been African Princes for all any one knows to the contrary. Since nothing they could do or say would win their father's consent to such a union, the girls ran away with their lovers, and married them, with or without benefit of clergy it is impossible to relate. Nature and God alike, instead of being disconcerted at this utter contravention of the laws of man, presented each couple with numerous children. When these reached mating age, finding themselves out of favor with both black and white of their community, the cousins solved the problem by marrying each other. The children of each generation did the same, whether driven to it by like necessity or not, history does not say. But by the time the next brood appeared a precedent had been established, and Graves married Graves not only as a matter of course, but as a matter of pride. They were able to do this, being automatically rendered free by the fact that a white woman had married a black man.

Miss Susan Graves had not married for the simple and sufficient reason that in her day there were not enough male Graves to go around. She would as soon have thought of marrying outside her family as a Spanish grandee would have thought of marrying an English cockney. In those days the position of old maid had its decided disadvantages—few people if any gave her the benefit of the doubt that she might have remained single from choice. Yet Miss Susan Graves, in spite of three other offers, soared on family pride above all this and made her career that of housekeeper for the family of a wealthy merchant on Girard Avenue, in Philadelphia. (You

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must marry a Graves, but obviously you obtained work where you could find it.)

There was a younger sister, Alice Graves, not as direct in purpose as Susan, yet in some respects curiously strong. She had always considered the Graves' tradition silly: it was so unexciting marrying someone whom you had known and seen all your life. What was marriage for if not for a change?

When the oldest son of Merchant Sharples of Girard Avenue married and went to New York, Susan Graves went along as housekeeper. And thither Alice Graves followed shortly to do sewing for that intricate but orderly household. Meriwether Bye, who had known both ladies in Philadelphia—for Miss Susan Bye was a frequent visitor both at his father's and his Uncle Peter's house—came to see them in his rare fits of loneliness, and between runs courted Alice Graves in Central Park. Of course it would have been better if Alice could have married a Graves, but Susan resigned herself easily to the matter—for Bye belonged to old stock and must, she thought, make good eventually. But she developed a strong dislike for him before his death, and took Peter not only for his mother's sake but also to dispel if possible his father's doubtless harmful influence.

Peter was a surprise to his aunt. She found him kind but thoughtless, industrious on occasions but unspeakably shiftless, not too proud, not very grateful and with no sense of responsibility. His father of course spoke there. Yet the boy was indubitably charming, never complained, and usually did as he was told. Miss Susan found herself between two minds—she had an impulse to work her fingers to the bone and thus spare Alice's beautiful son the tussle with poverty which he must know, and again a desire to speak and act forcibly and drive him into an acknowledgment of what her loyalty to her sister was leading her to do for a homeless, friendless lad. Actually she struck a medium, made him keep clean, insisted

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on his regular attendance at school, took him to Sunday-School and Church entertainments and induced him to work on Saturdays and holidays by refusing pocket-money to "a boy as big as you."

She could not understand why he chose a job in a butcher's shop. Doubtless Peter hardly knew himself. "I like to watch the man saw the bones," he would have said vaguely. "I can do it, too. I can cut up a chicken or a rabbit just as neatly!"

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CHAPTER VI

IT was Joanna who first acquainted Peter with himself. But neither of the children knew this at the time. And although Peter came to realize it later it was many years before he told her so. For, though he went through many changes and though these two came to speak of many things, he kept a certain inarticulateness all his lifetime.

Joanna and all the older Marshalls went to a school in West Fifty-second Street, one after another like little steps, with Joanna at first quite some distance behind. They were known throughout the school. "Those Marshall children, you know those colored children that always dress so well and as though they had someone to take care of them. Pretty nice looking children, too, if only they weren't colored. Their father is a caterer, has that place over there on Fifty-ninth Street. Makes a lot of money for a colored man."

Peter, unlike Joanna, had gone to school, one might almost say, all over New York, and nowhere for any great length of time. Meriwether had stayed longest at Mrs. Reading's but as, in later years, he more and more went off on his runs without paying his bills, Mrs. Reading frequently refused to let Peter leave the house until his father's return.

"For all I know he may be joinin' his father on the outside and the two of them go off together. Then where'd I be? For them few rags that Mr. Bye keeps in his room wouldn't be no good to nobody."

This enforced truancy was the least of Peter's troubles. He did not like school,—too many white people and consequently, as he saw it, too much chance for petty injustice. The result

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of this was that Peter at twelve, possessed it is true of a large assortment of really useful facts, lacked the fine precision, if the doubtful usefulness, of Joanna's knowledge at ten. When Miss Susan settled in the Marshalls' neighborhood and brought Peter to the school in Fifty-second Street he was found to be lacking and yet curiously in advance. "We'll try him," said the principal doubtfully, "in the fifth grade. I'll take him to Miss Shanley's room."

Miss Shanley was Joanna's teacher. She greeted Peter without enthusiasm, not because he was colored but because he was clearly a problem. Joanna spied him immediately. He was too handsome with his brown-red skin, his black silky hair that curled alluringly, his dark, almost almond-shaped eyes, to escape her notice. But she forgot about him, too, almost immediately, for the first time Miss Shanley called on him he failed rather ignominiously. Joanna did not like stupid people and thereafter to her he simply was not.

On the contrary, Joanna had caught and retained Peter's attention. She was the only other colored person in the room and therefore to him the only one worth considering. And though at that time Joanna was still rather plain, she already had an air. Everything about her was of an exquisite perfection. Her hair was brushed till it shone, her skin glowed not only with health but obviously with cleanliness, her shoes were brown and shiny, with perfectly level heels. She wore that first week a very fine soft sage-green middy suit with a wide buff tie. The nails which finished off the rather square-tipped fingers of her small square hands, were even and rounded and shining. Peter had seen little girls with this perfection and assurance on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia and on Fifth Avenue in New York, but they had been white. He had not yet envisaged this sort of thing for his own. Perhaps he inherited his great-grandfather Joshua's spiritless acceptance of

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things as they are, and his belief that differences between people were not made, but had to be.

Joanna clearly stood for something in the class. Peter noted a little enviously the quality of the tone in which Miss Shanley addressed her. To other children she said, "Gertrude, can you tell me about the Articles of Confederation?" Usually she implied a doubt, which Gertrude usually justified. But she was sure of Joanna. The tenseness of her attitude might be seen to relax; her mentality prepared momentarily for a rest. "Joanna will now tell us,—" she would announce. For Joanna, having a purpose and having been drilled by Joel to the effect that final perfection is built on small intermediate perfections, got her lessons completely and in detail every day.

It was at this time and for many years thereafter characteristic of Peter that he, too, wanted to shine, but did not realize that one shone only as a result of much mental polishing personally applied. Joanna's assurance, her air of purposefulness, her indifference intrigued him and piqued him. He sidled across to the blackboard nearest her—if they were both sent to the board—cleaned hers off if she gave him a chance, managed to speak a word to her now and then. He even contrived to wait for her one day at the Girls' entrance. Joanna threw him a glance of recognition, swept by, returned.

His heart jumped within him.

"If you see my sister Sylvia,—you know her?—tell her not to wait for me. I have to go early to my music-lesson. She'll be right out."

Sylvia didn't appear for half an hour and Peter should have been at the butcher's, but he waited. Sylvia and Maggie Ellersley came out laughing and glowing. Peter gave the message.

"Thanks," said Sylvia prettily. Maggie stared after him. She was still the least bit bold in those days.

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"Ain't he the best looker you ever saw, Sylvia? Such eyes! Who is he, anyway? Not ever Joanna's beau?"

"Imagine old Joanna with a beau." Sylvia laughed. "He's just a new boy in her class. He *is* good looking."

Some important examinations were to take place shortly and Miss Shanley planned extensive reviews. She was a thorough if somewhat unimaginative teacher and she meant to have no loose threads. So she devoted two days to geography, two more to grammar, another to history, one to the rather puzzling consideration of that mysterious study, physiology. Perhaps by now the class was a bit fed up with cramming, perhaps the children weren't really interested in physiological processes. Joanna wasn't, but she always got lessons like these doggedly, thinking "Soon we'll be past all this," or "I'm going to forget this old stuff as soon as I grow up." Poor Miss Shanley was in despair. She could not call on Joanna for everything. Pupil after pupil had failed. Her eye roved over the room and fell on Peter's black head.

She sighed. He had not even been a member of the class when she had taught this particular physiological phenomenon. "Can't anyone besides Joanna Marshall give me the 'Course of the Food?' "

Peter raised his hand. "He looks intelligent," she thought. "Well, Bye you may try it."

"I don't think I can give it to you the way the others say it,"—the children had been reciting by rote, "but I know what happens to the food."

She knew he would fail if he didn't know it her way, but she let him begin.

This was old ground for Peter. "Look, I can draw it. See, you take the food in your mouth," he drew a rough sketch of lips, mouth cavity and gullet, "then you must chew it, masticate, I think you said." He went on varying from his own

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simplified interpretation of Meriwether Bye's early instructions, past difficult names like pancreatic juice and thoracic duct, and while he talked he drew, recalling pictures from those old anatomies; expounding, flourishing. Miss Shanley stared at him in amazement. This jewel, this undiscovered diamond!

"How'd you come to know it, Peter?"

"I read it, I studied it." He did not say when. "But it's so easy to learn things about the body. It's yourself."

She quizzed him then while the other children, Joanna among them, stared open-eyed. But he knew all the simple ground which she had already covered, and much, much beyond.

"If all the children," said Miss Shanley, forgetting Peter's past, "would just get their lessons like Peter Bye and Joanna Marshall."

She had coupled their names together! And after school Joanna was waiting for him. He walked up the street with her, pleasantly conscious of her interest, her frank admiration.

"How wonderful," she breathed, "that you should know your physiology like that. What are you going to be when you grow up, a doctor?"

"A surgeon," said Peter forgetting his old formula and expressing a resolve which her question had engendered in him just that second. He saw himself on the instant, a tall distinguished-looking man, wielding scissors and knife with deft nervous fingers. Joanna would be hovering somewhere—he was not sure how—in the offing. And she would be looking at him with this same admiration.

"My, won't you have to study?" Joanna could have told an aspirant almost to the day and measure the amount of time and effort it would take him to become a surgeon, a dentist, a lawyer, an engineer. All these things Joel discussed about his table with the intense seriousness which colored men feel when they speak of their children's futures.

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Alexander and Philip were to have their choice of any calling within reason. They were seventeen and fifteen now and the house swarmed with college catalogues. Schools, terms, degrees of prejudice, fields of practice,—Joanna knew them all.

"Yes," said Peter, "I suppose I will have to study. How did you come to know so much—did your father tell you?"

"Why, I get it out of books, of course." Joanna was highly indignant: "I never go to bed without getting my lessons. In fact, all I do is to get lessons of some kind—school lessons or music. You know I'm to be a great singer."

"No, I didn't know that. Perhaps you'll sing in your choir?"

Then Joanna astonished him. "In my choir—I sing there already! No! Everywhere, anywhere, Carnegie Hall and in Boston and London. You see, I'm to be famous."

"But," Peter objected, "colored people don't get any chance at that kind of thing."

"Colored people," Joanna quoted from her extensive reading, "can do everything that anybody else can do. They've already done it. Some one colored person somewhere in the world does as good a job as anyone else,—perhaps a better one. They've been kings and queens and poets and teachers and doctors and everything. I'm going to be the one colored person who sings best in these days, and I never, never, never mean to let color interfere with anything I *really* want to do."

"I dance, too," she interrupted herself, "and I'll probably do that besides. Not ordinary dancing, you know, but queer beautiful things that are different from what we see around here; perhaps I'll make them up myself. You'll see! They'll have on the bill-board, 'Joanna Marshall, the famous artist,'—" She was almost dancing along the sidewalk now, her eyes and cheeks glowing.

Peter looked at her wistfully. His practical experience and

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the memory of his father inclined him to dubiousness. But her superb assurance carried away all his doubts.

"I don't suppose you'll ever think of just ordinary people like me?"

"But you'll be famous, too—you'll be a wonderful doctor. Do be. I can't stand stupid, common people."

"You'll always be able to stand me," said Peter with a fervor which made his statement a vow.

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CHAPTER VII

SYLVIA and Joanna, walking through Sixty-third Street on an errand for their mother, came upon groups of children playing games. Italians, Jews, colored Americans, white Americans were there disporting themselves with more or less abandon, according to their peculiar temperament.

"Look," said Joanna suddenly, catching at Sylvia's hand. "See those children dancing! Wait, I've got to see that!"

Out in the middle of the street a band of colored children were dancing and acting a game. With no thought of spectators they joined hands, took a few steps, separated, spun around, smote hands sharply, and then flung them above their heads. One girl stood in the middle, singing too, but with an attentive air. Presently she darted forward, seized a member of the ring:

"Say, little Missy, won't you marry me?"

Their voices were treble and sweet, though shrill, and rang with a peculiar, piercing quality above the street noises and the sounds of the other children's games. The little players were absorbed, enraptured with the spirit of the dance and the abandon of the music. Joanna, too, was in a transport. She watched them going through the motions several times. Presently she caught all the words:

"Sissy in the barn, join in the weddin,'
Sissy in the barn, join in the weddin'"

The child in the center here chose a partner. The others sang:

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"Sweetest l'il couple I ever did see.
Barn! Barn!

They stamped here.

"Arms all 'round me!
Barn!

The two children in the center embraced each other while the rest sang:

"Say, little Missy, won't you marry me?"

Then the two in the center pointed fingers at each other, shrilling:

"Stay back, girl, don't you come near me
All them sassy words you say!

Then all:

Oh, Barn! Barn!
"Arms all 'round me!
Say, little Missy, won't you marry me?
Marry me?"

The last line came as a faint echo.

Joanna rushed forward: "I can play it! Girls let me play it, too!"

The children stared at her a moment, then, with the instinct of childhood for a kindred spirit, two of them unclasped hands and took Joanna in. She outdid them all in the fervor and grace of her acting. Two white settlement workers stopped and looked at her.

"Come on, Joanna," Sylvia called impatiently.

Joanna came running, a string of the children after her. She bade them good-by. "I must go now, but I'm coming back sometime soon, to learn some more." She blew them a kiss, "good-by, oh, good-by!"

She came up to Sylvia flushed and excited. "We'll play it home, Sylvia! Wasn't it lovely and dear? Oh, I could dance

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like that forever!" She went almost all the entire remaining distance on tip-toe.

Life in Joel Marshall's house was not always a serious discussion of the Marshall children's future. Like many of the better class of colored people, the Marshalls did not meet with the grosser forms of color prejudice, because they kept away from the places where it might be shown. This was bad from the standpoint of development of civic pride and interest. But it had its good results along another line. The children took most of their pleasures in their house or in those of their friends and devoted their wits and young originality to indoor pastimes.

The Marshall house was a great center for this kind of thing, and already Friday and Saturday nights were being regularly set apart for the children's amusement and for the reception and entertainment of the various young people who dropped in.

Joanna taught her dance. Sylvia and Philip and Alexander were willing pupils; Joanna was magnetic when in this kind of mood. By the time Harry Portor and Maggie Ellersley arrived, they were all singing and stamping and twirling. Peter came in late, held up by the butcher. "Had to go on an errand for the grand white folks," he explained briefly.

"You'll wear out my carpet to-night for sure," said Mrs. Marshall, but she loved the dancing as much as any of them, and got up and took a turn. Joanna taught the tune to Peter, who had a good ear, and he ran over to the old-fashioned square piano and rattled it off to a wild thumping accompaniment. When Brian Spencer came in, who even in those days was pretty sure to be where Slyvia was—the fun was at its height. Peter, strumming a haunting, atavistic measure; Joanna, dancing like a faun, instructed Maggie Ellersley.

"Now, Maggie, dance up to one of them. All right, take Philip. You point your finger at him,—no both of you. Yes, you're right, Peter. I forgot that. See, Phil, Peter's learned

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it already. Here I'll do it by myself; all of you stand back."

She went through an elaborate pantomime, stretching out her hands as though clasping a partner on each side. She described an imaginary circle for the ring and ran into the midst of it. An imaginary partner was before her and she drew him in, pointed a slim, brown finger at him, rested both hands on her young hips, pirouetted, sang to him gayly:

"Stand back, boy, don't you come near me!"

"My," laughed Brian Spencer, clapping loudly. "Can't you see it all just as plainly? Really, Jan, you ought to go on the stage as an impersonator, I don't believe you could be beat." He was a tall dark boy with fine proud features that looked chiseled. He and Alexander were home from college for the Easter vacation.

Maggie Ellersley, as it happened, had been at a matinée the week before. "It was vaudeville, Joanna, and there was an actress there who took off different people and then she did some Irish folk dances, but she couldn't hold a candle to you. Too bad we're colored."

"It's not going to make any difference to me," said Joanna determinedly. "Mother and father are willing. If I want to go on the stage I'll get there."

"Joanna has the faith that moves mountains," laughed Peter. "If anybody can make it she can."

Peter was a regular visitor at the Marshall home now. Ever since that day four years before when he had told Joanna of his new-born determination to be a surgeon, he had spent all his spare time near her. Miss Susan Graves did not like this at first, not that she resented Peter's absence from her so much, but he was a Bye and she did not choose to have him associate too much with people whom she did not know. It was no part of her plan for Peter to retrograde into the wreck which Meriwether had become. She made it her business to meet Mrs. Marshall at a church affair

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"I think," said Miss Graves, eyeing Joanna's mother with her clear, square gaze, "that my boy has spoken to me of you."

Mrs. Marshall looked puzzled. She thought this was a *Miss* Graves.

"Peter Bye," his aunt continued, "he's my nephew. He often speaks of Joanna Marshall."

"Oh, Peter! Yes, we like to have him at the house. The girls find him great fun. So you're his aunt. You must come to see us, too. Get him to bring you."

Miss Graves came and was impressed enough to let Peter continue, though he would have continued without her permission. But Miss Susan, like Belle Bye nearly a century ago, recognized atmosphere when she saw it. She was poor; Peter was penniless. These were the sort of people her nephew ought to know. She liked Joel's success, his pride, his air of being somebody. She estimated rightly the correctness of the old-fashioned walnut furniture, the heavy curtains, the kidney table in the parlor, the massive silver service and good linen. It is true Sylvia changed much of this—except the silver—for cretonnes and wicker chairs and gay rugs. But as Miss Susan went to the house only a few times she did not know of this.

What she especially liked was the spirit of life, of ambition and hopefulness that pulsed in that household. As Miss Graves grew older, she began to see that her younger sister had had some pretty good views after all, that it did not do to stick to settled views,—"this for me, and that quite other thing for you." The great things of life were for the taking, it was true, but the result of deliberate planning. One did not simply stumble into success. She had lived too long with "the best white people" not to find that out.

Joel knew this, too, she realized. His whole life was devoted to the mapping out of his children's future. His own and Joanna's high enthusiasms had borne fruit. Of late the boys, Philip and Alexander, had talked good solid man-talk.

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"Colored people will be going big pretty soon. We'll have to get in it, too, Pa."

Miss Susan decided this was a good place for Peter. Even if she had the money to do so, she could not send him to a school where he would meet with more inspiration in both precept and actual concrete example. Already in the lesser things this association was bearing fruit. Peter was too handsome, too graceful, too charming ever to be considered a boor. But he had lacked finish, that fine courtliness of manner which Miss Susan noted could convert a man of most ordinary appearance into a prince. She had marked it among Jacob Sharples' grandsons. Peter had not possessed a knowledge of that delicacy, of that attention to trifles which, once gained by a man, gives him passport everywhere. Miss Susan had noticed, to her regret, the boy's tendency to let her carry bundles, to look after even the heavier household duties. It had never occurred to him if the weather were cold or stormy, to offer to go errands for her. And his aunt, practical though she was, shrank from calling his attention to these things. She did not want him to think of her as exacting a return for her kindness.

Now the Marshall boys were fine gentlemen. Joel had made them so by teaching, as well as by his attitude toward their mother and sisters. Joanna and Sylvia, particularly Sylvia, helped the boys out with an occasional stitch, an occasional sewing on of a button. When Alexander was getting ready for college, and was working at nights to help with his expenses, Sylvia used to arrange sandwiches and milk for him when he came in late. And Joanna had recopied his chemistry and history notes. These were only kind trivialities, but the boys treated their sisters like queens. Philip was a little like Sylvia, only neither as handsome nor as lithe and quick. Alexander—Alec, Sandy, the girls called him variously—was slower, like Joanna. Both boys were tall and well set-up.

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The girls used to thrill a little—sisters to them though they were—over the very real and thoughtful gallantry of these two young men.

Miss Susan had remarked this quality as soon as she met them. And she was beginning now to see its reflection in Peter. And as he had beauty and great personal charm to go with it, it distinguished him even more than the Marshall boys. She half way suspected a conscious assumption of this on his part.

"But if he keeps it up, it will become part of him," she thought to herself, "and then—girls be careful." She would have been a little fearful for Joanna had she not noticed immediately in the young girl that indomitable desire for distinction. "Joanna will never fall in love with anybody," she said once to a common friend of herself and the Marshalls. "She'll never be able to take her mind off long enough from her high falutin dreams."

Of course Peter had no conception why his aunt liked him to visit the Marshalls. He was only too glad that she didn't disapprove. He was seventeen now and beginning to know himself in some ways pretty well. He liked Sandy and Philip and Sylvia Marshall—liked them very well, and Joanna! It could hardly be said that he loved her at this time. But he knew that what he liked best of all in the world was to be near her, to watch her, and to listen to her plans. She had little shadowy gleams in her dark thick hair, glints of light that ended abruptly in wavy blackness. He would like to touch it. He remembered that he had once pulled her hair. He had done it often! But now, though she was only fifteen, he did not dare. Yet he often touched Sylvia's.

The night that Joanna taught them all the barn dance, Peter maneuvered until he got Harry Portor at the piano, and said:

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