INTERPOSITION NULLIFICATION
OR
WHAT THE NEGRO MAY EXPECT,

Factual Fiction

by

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Foreword

INTERPOSITIONNULLIFICATION! Before reaching the age of discretion, which begins about mid-life, I wish to tell you exactly what the average Negro thinks about it.

By “age of discretion” I mean that period of life wherein a man begins to defer to the opinion of others and to consider what they think or say about what he says, thinks, or does; as a result of which he modifies his tone, reaction, and concept of truth, excuses misbehavior, and grants honesty of purpose to those in authority when, as a matter of fact, no such honesty exists.

The subject of this discourse is the average Negro family: neither illiterate nor college trained, neither rich nor poverty-stricken, not even thoroughbred Negro. Just a product of the South, subjected to the training and treatment of Negroes in accordance with the Southern Way of Life.

This being true, the blood of historical characters courses through the veins of both subjects and narrator.

Having been denied the privilege of established public schooling—or much of any other, for that matter—I question whether I should have attempted to write this. On the other hand, I know of many competent writers who should never have written, and I believe there are others, incapable of writing, whose thoughts and experiences ought to be preserved for posterity. Therefore, I have tried.

Since these narratives are not intended as prescriptions of uplift or moralization but rather as a record of Southern as well as general American practice, I wish to make it specifically clear that there are thousands of white persons whose minds and hearts are pure, whose humbly just and Christ-like spirit of democracy I have never doubted; but they fear the others
to the extent that, although they protest, they join in the plan. They offer their sympathy—but share in the plunder of Negroes—i.e., practice interposition nullification.

The fear of being dubbed Nigger Lover becomes a moral weakness and would not exist here if only a few, a very small minority, were prejudiced, but this hypocritical situation is national; for years we tried to make the South believe we only had to leave and go North to get justice and respect; of course we knew better, and now they know better too.

An astonishing number of Negroes carry white blood in their veins; as you look farther South the proportion increases. Some of these Negroes remain where they are and suffer segregation and insults from the public—half brothers, half sisters, and other degrees of relationship—while others turn white and are lost except through their vilification of the Negro proper.

It must be admitted to their credit, however, that their voluntary tirades are used only to strengthen and solidify relations and mutual respect of those he now claims as race pure neighbors.

How much contamination is there represented here?

So much for the Negro, but how much does it affect the white race?

Since color alone neither stamps one a Negro nor absolves him of the blight, it stands to reason that much confusion exists. The whites hesitate to make the charge, waiting in most cases for the Negroes' self-incrimination by habit or hesitation. This he soon overcomes by changed situation or location; thus his transition is perfect, but what about his white associates? He preaches Negro hatred, along with the families who love it already, introduce it in organizations, schools, churches before people who are neutral, and try any and all means to impress even Christian people that God himself established and approves their ways. This is, in itself, contaminating, but think of his home in its purity, his wife in her piety, his children in their innocence, being exposed daily to the hypocritical spleen venom of race hatred.

The number of this type of parent is problematical. Negroes suspect, rightfully or wrongfully, that there are many, and if they are correct in suspecting the loudest, most vociferous of them of being Negroes themselves or having Negro connection, their numbers are legion.

There is a growing suspicion among the white youth that much of the hatred drilled in them from babyhood is unjustified, that the inherent inferiority of the Negro or superiority of his own family has been exaggerated, and he knows that the spirit of democracy, practice of Christianity and human brotherhood and temporal justice, is a farce, and may be inspired by the animal desire to deprive others of that which they enjoy themselves, politically, economically, socially and otherwise.
Automatic KKK Membership

To become a Ku Klux, you don't have to join.
You are a true member if crosses you burn.
The spirit of Ku Klux is wrapped in the soul
That joyously revels when fires they behold.

Young Man and Young Woman! He speaketh to thee,
Saying, "Take up your crosses and follow with me."
You persecute Jesus, exhibit your ire
When shamefully setting the cross upon fire.

The cross is my symbol of love and of peace,
Admonishing strife between brothers to cease.
A person applying the match or the oil
Himself is dishonored. His soul he doth soil.

The millions of people, of church and of state,
He shamefully saddens with actions of hate.
Your manhood and honor do suffer a loss
When you are disdainfully burning the cross.

Oh, God! In Thy mercy, withholding the rod,
Please show them that they are displeasing their God,
That this is your symbol of love, and not hate,
That they are all guilty, who thus desecrate.

And while they are burning a man or the cross,
Ten thousand are yearning for souls of the lost.
God! Give us a David to meet this Goliath!
Convert ONE among them! Extinguish the fire!

—A. H. YANCEY
Sic Semper Similarity!

A youngster at school, more sedate than the rest,  
Once had his integrity put to the test.  
His comrades had plotted an orchard to rob,  
And asked him to go and assist in the job.

He was very much shocked, and his answer was, "No!  
What? Rob our good neighbor? I pray you don't go.  
Besides, he is poor, his orchard's his bread.  
Just think of his children, for they must be fed."

"You speak very fine, and you look very grave,  
But apples we're wanting, and apples we'll have.  
If you go with us, we'll give you a share;  
If not, you shall have neither apple or pear."

They spoke, and he pondered: "I see they will go.  
Poor man! What a pity to injure him so!  
Poor man! I would save him his fruit if I could,  
But staying behind them will do him no good."

"Since they will go there, I think I will too.  
Hell lose none on me, though I do get a few."  
His conscience he squandered, and felt more at ease.  
He went with his comrades, the apples to seize.

He blamed and protested, but joined in the plan;  
He shared in the plunder, but pitted the man.  
Now, this is the practice on Negroes today.  
We hope it is banished in this U. S. A.

Chapter One

It was Sunday morning, May 1, 1881. The varicolored birds  
sang merrily in the deep-green foliage of the massive oaks  
along the roadside in the county of Cherokee, north Georgia.  
Roses were in full bloom, and many were the maidens and  
swains wearing them this Sunday morning on their way to New  
Harmony Church, in the county of Forsyth.  

There was a two-room log cabin with a lean-to and porch,  
on the south side of the road in the county of Cherokee, that  
was owned and occupied by Mr. Green Yancey, his wife Julia,  
and his son, Homer, who was less than two years old. Mr.  
Yancey's small tract of farmland adjoined the next county. In  
fact, his fence formed the county line.  

Mr. Yancey was a fine physical specimen: six feet four,  
straight, strong, 200 pounds, brown eyes, yellow-to-red  
complexion, and jet-black hair that covered a fine, intellectual head  
and hung in loose ringlets when allowed to grow long. His  
wife was five feet four, fair, with a wealth of straight, jet  
black hair that reached well below her waist when done in  
braids. It would have appeared burdensome to one less robust, when  
collared with tucking comb at the back of her neck.  

It would be an understatement to say that she was pretty.  
She had lovely brown eyes, a round face with peaches and  
cream complexion, and a well-chiseled and shapely nose that  
threatened a turn upwards from a pair of perfect Cupid-bow  
lips that smilingly exposed a row of pearly white teeth. Added  
to this was a curvacious and fully developed figure with the  
waistlike waist, hour-glass or Anna Held style, that was still to  
be reckoned with. She was beautiful.  

Homer was fair, with blond hair and light blue eyes that  
served diverse purposes later in life, and remained blue to his  
dying day.
Mr. Green Yancey was a man of sound judgment, aggressively determined to succeed at whatever he attempted to do. Indeed, this quality was shown in his selection of, and desire to own, these acres on this public highway, with a lovely spring of fresh water a few steps across the road under the hill directly in front of the cottage. You will understand the extent of his daring when I tell you that Southern custom decreed that he, or his like, should not live out on the public road, but on blind or settlement roads in the backwoods.

He was still working to pay for this little farm, which was destined to be his one and only home in this world of prejudice and changing fortunes, and the birthplace of all his children—a family of eleven, counting a son who was born four or five months after his death.

That morning he was particularly busy with barnyard and housework, awkwardly fixing breakfast for himself and little Homer, and all the time casting anxious glances toward the combined living room and bedroom, from which came low moans and words of sympathy and encouragement, as an old woman rustled about, apparently performing duties of great importance.

It was near midday. Preaching at New Harmony Church, a full half-mile away, had reached its height, and could be heard across the county line. Mr. Green Yancey had finished the housework and barnyard chores, and sat listening and thinking.

Suddenly the old woman appeared in the doorway and smilingly announced the arrival of a boy.

"Well, I will be John Browned!" exclaimed Mr. Yancey. "This is indeed fortunate."

At the same time there arose the alto voice of the lusty new arrival, completely drowning out the noises made by the horses, the mules, and the Reverend Cochran at New Harmony Church.

Yes, Mr. Green Yancey had another heir, as he was fond of calling his children in the years that followed, but to what? This has never been quite clear to the writer.

Having arrived nameless, the new heir was jokingly dubbed Athrolayama Henrique Yancey but the death of a United States President and the unreasonable length and sound of the name served to reduce it to Arthur Henry, and so we knew him as "Ayeh" thereafter.

The air, food, and scarcity of raiment must have agreed with the boy, for he grew, and life was merely routine. He remembers in detail the funeral of Captain A. J. Lumnus, which took place across the county line, under the auspices of Free Masonry, when he was less than five years old. A recent examination of the tombstone verifies his recollection.

About this time something happened that has always been a mystery—but let him tell it in his own way, for then you may get his viewpoint. You might give sympathy or, what is better, your influence towards relief, if there is anything to relieve. You, dear reader, must be the judge, because there are many opinions in this perplexing muddle.

My earliest memory of home is of a log and lean-to cabin beside the road, facing north, with a high rail picket fence at the front, and a triangular topped gate on wooden hinges fastened with a wood latch. A rick-rack rail fence surrounded the back yard. To the left was the barnyard, with two small stables having fodder lofts above them. There was also a little corn crib capable of holding about 100 bushels of corn in the hut.

On the east side there arose (six miles away) a large, scalloped mountain, apparently blue in color, and resembling (in profile) a camel lying on the ground with its head pointing north, where the sun seemed to rise in the spring. It was always a mystery to me that the sun rose at the camel's head during the happy, care-free days of spring, but when melancholy days of fall came, it rose at the camel's tail.

My paternal grandmother, a Cherokee Indian quarter-breed, called this mountain range Heapsawnee or Sawnee Mountain. All through the years, whenever I think of home, the thought of whether the sun is rising up or down the camel's back is first in my mind, for the profile of Sawnee, as it appears from the home of Mr. G. Yancey, is, to me, a unique image.
My brother Homer and I played in the backyard most of the time, perhaps for several reasons. It was the south side, warm and sunny. It was private, and passers-by could neither see nor interfere with us, or with Mother by talking. Besides, our clothing was hardly what Mama would have had us wear in public. Be this as it may, it caused me to love a certain corner in that rail fence, a sanctuary or altar of privacy, that served me through the years. It was a place where I could go when I was bubbling over with happiness, and be unrestrained; a place where I could go when I was puzzled, and ponder perplexities, some of which are yet unsolved; a place where I could go when I was weighted down with sorrow, and many were the heartbroken sobs with which my childish breast heaved there. Many were the briny tears shed over subjects beyond my years, in this fence corner.

It would be difficult to say what events first sent me to this corner. I believe they were happy ones, but, as newspaper headlines prove, few people are interested these days in child-like happiness. Interest evidently lies principally in the criminal, the sordid, and the immoral. Therefore, I shall chronicle the first permanently distasteful one over which I puzzled—one that is yet unresolved.

It was late in the summer of 1886, shortly past noon, that Mrs. G. Yancey was hurrying through the dinner dishes and changing her dress in order to visit a neighbor's wife. Henrietta was the wife of Dr. Francis Jones and they lived down the road, across the sandbar, and around a beautiful wooded curve. It was not more than a ten-minute walk from the Yancey's.

The Joneses had four children, of whom Elmer, the only boy, was next to the youngest. All of them were older than the Yancey children.

Dr. Jones practiced some in the Yancey family, and Julia helped Henrietta in sewing, millinery, and in emergencies, such as housework. In fact, they were very agreeable neighbors, and it was by no means a one-sided affair. Many were the meals cooked, floors swept, and washings done by Henrietta and other neighboring white women for Mr. G. Yancey and Julia during childbirth and illness. It was this fact that was causing the hurried visit by Julia to Dr. Jones on wasday.

Having changed her dress, she prepared Aytch to accompany her, as Homer had gone with his father to the mill and would return by way of Dr. Jones' later in the day.

After his bath, Aytch was dressed in a white-pleated bodice, or waist. It had buttons in front and around the waistline, to which was attached a little blue box-pleated wooden skirt, or kilt, which was worn by little boys at that time.

How well we remember the upward and outward pitch of that kilt from his little body, so recently distended by a hearty meal.

Gathering up her skirts in true Southern style (no woman elsewhere on earth does it quite so well), Julia took Aytch by the hand and passed through the gate out onto the highway, followed by Trippy, their little yellow bench-legged dog.

At this moment there was not a happier child in the world. He was proud of his dog, proud of his home, his father, his brother, the world, and, above all, his beautiful mother.

Arriving at Dr. Jones' a few minutes later, they found the doctor out on a call, and his wife, assisted by the two older girls, trying to finish the wask's wash. Both girls and their mother were rather shabbily dressed, with rents in their dresses and old, discarded shoes, without laces or buttons, upon their feet. In the country, wasday is usually a sloppy affair at best.

The doctor's wife greeted Mrs. G. Yancey cheerily. "You are just in time to take up and serve dinner, for we were hoping to get through the wash before Doctor returned."

Aytch began looking for Elmer, who was a husky, red-headed, freckle-faced mischief maker of about seven years, and at once the torture and torment of all three sisters. He was fast becoming a burden upon the heart of an indulgent mother, and a disciplinary problem to a doting father.

Aytch soon spotted Elmer cown below the washplace, where all the water used and discarded during the morning had been dammed up, forming a red-and-white clay puddle.

Elmer's nice pants were muddy, and his waist, feet, face,
and hands were as dirty as they could possibly be. Without referring to the mud or Elmer's condition, Mrs. Yancey ordered Aytech to play on the opposite side of the house. She knew she would be obeyed.

As little Aytech disappeared around the house, he was heartily glad that Elmer was following him. The mud and dirt were not objected to at all by Aytech, although Henrietta wanted Elmer to be clean, too. She was a good woman, and Aytech said that, if his mother should die, he would be Dr. Jones' boy.

Despite their mother's jovial manner, the two older girls were sullen or silent until the wash was hung up and they had gone to their rooms, whence they emerged well dressed and apparently happy.

For a while, Elmer was agreeable and playful, but, being older, he soon tired of Aytech's company. When his cousin, Bob Hollbrooks, came up, Elmer proceeded to place his wet, dirty hands on Aytech's clothing, throw sand in his hair, and turn up his clothes.

Among the many jeering remarks made by Bob and Elmer was one charge that Aytech could not understand, and, but for the word "dirty," its significance might have dawned differently, or at least left a very different impression.

Elmer was not always disagreeable. On the contrary, it was real fun to be with him when Homer was present. Perhaps Aytech was too young to interest Elmer, but we are inclined to believe the arrival of his cousin Bob at this particular moment was indirectly the cause of this remark. Be that as it may, Elmer yelled, "Aytech is a nigger! Aytech is a nigger!"

"What is a nigger?" the child asked.

"You!"
They both laughed loudly.

"What does a nigger do?" the child inquired.

"Nothing!"
They continued to laugh.

"Is a nigger big?" (Meaning quality.)

"No! You are a dirty little nigger! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not!" Aytech disputed, not understanding the nigger, but thoroughly understanding the dirty.

A review of the afternoon's happenings flashed through his mind. His mama's dress as she arrived on the scene. The doctor's wife and daughters in shabby clothes. His own clean outfit. Elmer's muddy condition at this moment, and Bob's tidy appearance.

Mentally comparing himself with the two boys, he felt keenly the points in his favor, and again and again he loudly disputed the fact that he was a dirty anything.

"Yes, you are a nigger, because my ma and pa both said so." Aytech thought that Elmer wanted to modify the charge, since he had dropped the word "dirty" from it, but this still felt the boy puzzled.

He planned to ask his father and mother about it.

The announcement of dinner and the arrival of Dr. Jones, Mr. Yancey, and Homer broke up the controversy.

"Papa! Am I a nigger?" Aytech called before the doctor and Mr. Yancey had reached the piazza.

(What caused Elmer and Bob to draw their heads downward between their shoulders and run stealthily behind some shrubbery?)

Mr. Yancey did not answer.

The boy put the question again.

Dr. Jones answered first by asking, "Who said you were a nigger, Aytech?"

At that moment the doctor's wife came out to meet her husband and she heard the child's reply.

"Elmer said I was a nigger! He said his mama told him I was a dirty nigger!" sobbed the child. He was still infinitely more upset over the dirty than over the nigger.

The doctor's wife was mortified.

"Where is Elmer?" she demanded. "I never dreamed of saying such a thing in my life!"

"Oh, that's all right," said Mr. Yancey. "Won't you please
tell Julia that we are ready to go if she is through? Never mind, Doctor, Aytch can run around the house for her. Go, boy, and don't get so angry about nothing."

The doctor and his wife had entered the house from the front. Aytch, still snuffling, slowly poked around the house, expecting, at each step, to encounter Elmer and Bob, who had so unjustly called him a dirty nigger. He, who was as muddy as the proverbial hog, by comparison.

When he reached the back yard, Elmer was leaning over a basin of water, while his mother washed his face, hands, and neck, scolding him all the while.

"You talk too much!" said she to him!

"Well, Mama, you did say he was a nigger. You know you did. You said all the Yanceys were niggers, even though Homer is white and I am red, with freckles and red hair."

"What if I did?" rejoined his mother. "Do you have to tell every nigger you see what I say about them?"

Suddenly seeing Aytch standing there, she was reminded to call, "Julia, Green is waiting at the gate for you!"

"Thank you," Julia replied. "Tell him to wait a few minutes and I will be through."

On the way home, the incident was discussed by Mr. Yancey and his wife with little or no clarification for Aytch. As they entered the gate of the Yancey home, he broke down and cried so long that his father threatened to spank him, whereupon he withdrew to the fence corner, while Homer entertained Papa and Mama with the wonders he had observed at the mill.

"Elmer and Bob called me dirty, when I am clean," soliloquized the child. "He also called me 'nigger.' Is that true? Papa did not deny it when I asked him, and neither did Dr. Jones. If it is true, if it is wrong, when did I do it? Elmer's mama said she did not say it, but she did. I heard her myself. If I have done wrong, I will get my own sweet mama to show me how to do it right, and I won't be a nigger when I see Elmer again."

It was growing dusky when Aytch left his fence corner to eat his bread and milk and go to bed. Mentally reassured, he was soon wrapped in slumber, in the questionable security of the American Negro in these United States.

There is a county road between the counties of Cherokee and Forsyth that runs south along the east side of the Yancey home, past the home of Christopher Denison, another very agreeable neighbor who lived with his wife and five children. His wife, Sarah Jane, was a pleasant, snuff-dipping woman who doted on Chris and on her children—Bob, Millida, Mary, Ida, and Josephine. Bob, who was much older than the Yancey boys, was a fine playmate with an abundance of manly qualities. He was exceptionally strong, but he had none of the bullying traits that are common in the young and strong. He was treated as an equal by his father, and his mother and sisters idolized him. He taught the Yancey boys running, jumping, swimming, hunting, fishing, and how to make traps and bows and arrows.

Many afternoons, he and his sisters, with other neighbor girls and boys, would gather at the Yancey home to play croquet, horseshoes, and marbles, until twilight, when, for some natural human reason, the game would suddenly change to hide-and-go-seek. This darkness provided opportunity for girls to tell boys where they were going to hide, and vice versa. The Yancey boys learned how endearing a girl could make herself during these games.

There were other, more distant families, such as the Coxes and the Edwards, who had two sons or more each. They were sometimes friendly, sometimes disagreeable, but all of them had, at one time or another, aided, or been aided by, the Yancey family in sickness, fire, rain, or corn shuckings. There was, however, no Negro family nearer than four and one-half miles, and they lived over the county line in Forsyth County. The Yancey boys, therefore, rarely saw boys other than their white neighbors.

There was Lumpkin Hollbrooks, who was as dark almost as Mr. Yancey and was often mistaken for him, especially since he often worked on the Yancey farm. There was another neighbor, Lewis Hawk, who was much darker than anyone in the
Yancey family. Becky Elliott was a white woman with two Negro daughters. Uncle Ben, Uncle Lum, and Uncle Fayette Allen had white wives, so their children never thought about color.

The home of Captain A. J. Lummus was a large white house with green blinds and lightning rods. It became awe-inspiring when, a few months later, the Captain died. He was buried above ground in a sealed marble sepulcher, which gave birth to many weird stories about his roving ghost. Some said vultures sat on the tomb at night, while others said the Captain’s ghost had a nightly tryst with the Devil.

Years later it was a source of grave concern to Aytech to pass the cemetery, as he was compelled to do on his way to and from the Post Office each evening after his day’s work on the farm. Not many boys would dare pass New Harmony Cemetery after dark.

One twilight evening Aytech was on his way to the Post Office shortly after a man from the lower settlement had died. A grave had been dug for him, but it was now nearly dark and the cortège had not yet arrived.

“Old Man Dryman will not get buried today,” the boy thought.

Returning from the Post Office, Aytech saw something white rise slowly up over the new grave, and then sink back down again.

His blood froze, so to speak. The skin over his vertebrae began crawling upward, and his hair stood on end. What could he do? If he had already passed the grave, he could have outrun the Devil, but it was still in front of him. He stood, waiting for what seemed like ages, but nothing happened. Perhaps he had been mistaken. Perhaps it had been the shadow of moving plants on a white tombstone.

Afraid to go forward and afraid to turn back, he stood pondering. Time was passing, he must do something.

He began walking. Now he was even with the grave, and he was gaining confidence. Now he was well past it, and, growing bolder each minute, he turned and looked back at the pile of dirt. In the belief that it was, after all, nothing, he decided to establish his bravery by going back and looking in. As he walked he dragged his feet in the hope of finding a stone for a weapon, just in case, but although he knew the ground was covered with stones, his feet failed to touch a single one. He reached the pile of soft clay, completely confident now, when up came a snow-white object that appeared twice as big as the grave. Aytech fell backward, the soft dirt preventing him from running or even turning around. He froze stiff and would certainly have died on the spot, but for the soft, wheezy squawk of the old gander.

The fowl had fallen into the new-made grave and was trying to get out. With the aid of a long fence palings, the boy lifted the gander out, and they went up the road together.

Captain Lummus had several sons. One was W. J. Lummus, who lived just beyond the Post Office in a modern house with seven gables. He was a gentleman of sterling worth, a civic leader, and a man who believed in simple justice for all. Moreover, he had the courage to sustain his convictions, as we will see later. His wife was the daughter of a Superior Court Judge, and the mother of five children.

Another son, Billie, himself the father of three sons, died in the middle of a crop year. One of his younger brothers was dispatched to the home to assist the widow in gathering the crop. To prove the unrelenting way of Nature, the boy and his brother’s widow became so enamored of each other that a wedding resulted, and they lived happily ever after.

Gossip had it that the celebrated widow often told her friends and associates that she could not hesitate to marry the baby boy in order to keep her family connection.

There were many other neighbors, of course. Some were kind, others spiteful; many helpful, others destructive; many approachable, others repulsive; but all were of accord when it came to granting equal rights with themselves in their association with the family of G. Yancey.
Grounds of common accord could always be found in respectful association when there were no white witnesses present. This was true regardless of wealth or intelligence, manners, morals or age; but the relationship suddenly became strained if dealings or social contact became exposed to the public.

The morning after the night on which we left Aytech in bed, he arose rather early, and, during the breakfast hour he asked, "Mama, what is a nigger?"
"The word is Negro, Aytech, not nigger."
"Well, what is Negro?"
"A person born of African or Negro parents."
"Am I born of African Negro parents?"
"Well, no—and yes."
"Then, is it wrong to be a nigger—Negro?"
"Well, no—and yes."
"Tell me how I should do, so Elmer and the others won't laugh and crook a dirty finger at me."
"Now, baby," replied Mrs. Yancey, "you must not notice or think of these things. Remember that God made you, just as He made everything and everybody else, and if people are so mean, or so conceited, as to assume they are better than you, you must prove them wrong by doing better than they. Be honest, truthful, kindhearted, more polite and thoughtful than they are, more law-abiding and patriotic, industrious, helpful as a neighbor. Above all, do right. Beyond this, my dear child, you are likely to be ostracized and insulted as long as you live in the States."
"But Mama, have they the right to treat me this way all my life?"
"No, my son, they don't have a right, but when all persons agree to do wrong, they usually continue until God stops them."
"Well, then, I wish God would stop some of them," he said, leaving the room.

As Aytech reached the front gate, he saw Dr. Jones' wife and children coming up the road with a bevy of other neighbor children, including Bob Holbrooks.

"Why, hello, Aytech," said Elmer's mother in a cheery and friendly voice. "I have a crowd to play with you, but first I want you and Elmer to go to the store and get me a box of Macaboy snuff. I will tell your Ma I sent you."

Cordially greeting Mrs. Yancey, Elmer's mother entered the house, while the crowd went around to the back, where Homer was working.

On the way to the store, Elmer was so pleasant that Aytech never thought of the past bitterness. Would to God that men could forget and forgive as easily as a child!
"Oh, Elmer, I am so glad you came to play! Let's hurry back, and perhaps we can all hang the swing on the big high limb. I know Homer can't do it by himself. If we can, our swing will go sky high! Won't it, boy?"
"Yes," replied Elmer, "we will have a good old time. But only two can swing at a time. What will the others be doing? I wish Bob had brought his wagon—some of us could ride."
"Say, Elmer, don't we pass right by Bob's house? Why can't we take it back with us? I know Bob would like it."
"Yes, but Bob's Ma will hardly let us have it," replied Elmer.
"She is a mean old woman."
"Tell you what," said Aytech. "I will ask her, if you will go in and stand right by me. I won't be afraid. Besides, I know right where he keeps it."

Elmer agreed, and, as they returned with the snuff, they went into Bob's front yard.
"Good morning, Ma'am," said Aytech to Bob's mother, who had answered their knock.
"What do you'u's want?" she asked, looking rather harsh and ignoring the greeting.

Aytech remembered what Elmer had said, and his heart beat fast. He wished he was well out of it. However, there was nothing to do now but ask her and take the scolding.
"We just stopped to get Bob's wagon. He's up to my house, playing. We've been to the store."
"Did Bob tell you to get it for him?"

This was an awful question, and totally unexpected. Aytech hesitated a moment. There was a long lane on the way home
for gentle gliding, two sharp declines for swift coasting, and just two to ride all the way. If you have never been a boy, you don’t know the temptation.

The hesitation gave Elmer a chance to say, “Yes, Ma’am, Bob wants it.”

“Shut up!” thundered the woman. “I’m talking to Aytech.”

If there had been doubt in the boy’s mind about her being a mean woman, it was thoroughly removed now.

Elmer turned to the gate, but Aytech grew bolder, as a crisis seemed near, and answered, “No, Ma’am, he did not, but you see, we have just one swing and a flying jenny, and no wagon at all. If we had the wagon, all of us could take turns, and play without waiting so long. Homer and I would ride most on Bob’s wagon and let the others use our swing and flying jenny, because we will have the swing and flying jenny all the time and they won’t.” He stumbled into persuasive ambiguities, to the merriment of the lady.

During this explanation, the face of Bob’s mother was turning from harsh resentment to twinkling amusement. When it ended, she laughed as if she had heard a real good joke.

“Go get the wagon,” she said, “and tell Bob to be home before dark and bring it back with him.”

Elmer was first to reach the wagon. They drew it out and were happily on their way, arriving home before they were expected. There was a fullness in Aytech’s breast, a humble pride and approbation of conscience, that carried with it a fixed determination in several matters of principle that was to last through his life.

The weak attempt to be truthful, and the utter human selfishness of the scheme, was readily apparent to Bob’s mother. Perhaps she had a kind heart beneath a rough exterior, and perhaps she was not mean, but was merely influenced by the fact that she was, by the grace of God, a mother. At any rate, the day was pleasantly spent by all the children, and not a word relative to the “dirty little nigger” was mentioned. Aytech felt confident that he had heard the last of it. That he was sadly mistaken is a reflection upon free Christian America.

“Come, boys,” said Mrs. Yancey, “it is time you learned to read and write.” She had already taught them to form all the letters of the alphabet. Using straws and grass stems to form letters and numerals, her dexterity and ingenuity were remarkable. When the older son had learned to form and recognize the letters, she was surprised to learn that Aytech knew them as well as, and formed them much better than, his brother.

When Mrs. Yancey’s kindergarten course was finished to her satisfaction, Mr. Yancey bought two slates with wooden frames and two beautiful slate pencils that had paper American flags wrapped around them. From that day, Aytech loved the Stars and Stripes, the glorious Red, White, and Blue.

Mr. Yancey ruled each slate on one side with a pocketknife and straight-edge. This was for writing, and the other side, unruled, for “ciphering.”

Julia set copy material in a Spencerian hand, with the shading and flourishes so popular at that time. Mr. Yancey set examples in arithmetic. Jointly they taught the boys reading and spelling, so that, by the time they were of school age, their primary training was somewhat superior to that of their contemporaries.

Now that Aytech could read, write, spell, and cipher as well as Elmer or Bob, he was anxious to go to school with his two friends, both of whom had been attending school for two years. He expected to go into the first grade when they went into the third.

Professor Alf Landrum was the teacher at the New Harmony school. Aytech had passed the building many times, and, finding the door open occasionally, he would go inside and dream of the days he was to spend there. He even selected the seat he wished to occupy, dwelling at length upon his behavior and his replies to Professor Landrum’s questions.

The professor was accustomed to pass the Yancey home in the evening, after school. Once he set a number of copies for Aytech to work on, and a picture of a bird in flight.

The professor had lost an eye in an accident and was often snickered at by ill-mannered students, but Aytech thought no
men on earth to be the equal of his father and the professor. Professor Landrum never left their home without complimenting Mr. Yancey upon his family of bright, well-mannered boys.

One day, when school was about to open, the professor was on his way to look the building over, and stopped for a drink from the spring. Aytech asked him if he knew that a recent birthday had made Aytech eligible for school.

The professor replied that he did know, and that he would speak to Mr. Yancey about it. This so pleased Aytech that he stayed up late that night to tell his father about the conversation.

"Oh, Papal!" exclaimed Aytech as Mr. Yancey entered the door. "I saw Professor Landrum today, and told him that I was six years old and ready to enter school. He said that he knew it, and would see you about it. I hope he sees you Sunday, so that I can go with the others on Monday. May I, Papa?"

This bit of intelligence, so exciting and gratifying to Aytech, seemed extremely depressing to his mother, who never once looked up from the over upon whose lid she continued, nervously, to pile hot coals. His father sat down, looking straight at his wife, but her face was averted. Turning from her, the boy leaned upon his father's knee, determined to press the unanswered question. He looked into his father's eyes—and saw pathos, misery, untold suffering, twitching of facial muscles, and heaving of a broad, strong breast.

Then, in such a loving and indulgent tone of voice, Mr. Yancey said, "Go, son. I will see about it later."

Aytech was not sure, but he was beginning to feel that something awful was mixed up with the subject.

The question was not settled on the following Sunday, nor was it mentioned for many months thereafter. It seemed to the boy that the subject of school did not anger or annoy his parents; rather, it seemed to hurt them, so, saying no more about it, he spent hours in the fence corner, studying, puzzling, worrying over the matter.

One day Professor Landrum was passing, and, as usual, he stopped to discuss current events. Mr. Yancey, who read the newspapers extensively, enjoyed a modest reputation as a well-informed man.

Throughout the professor's stay, Aytech lingered within earshot, hoping that the matter of his schooling would be raised. Finally, the professor was about to leave, and despair seized Aytech as he looked into the teacher's face.

"By the way, Yancey, Aytech wants to go to school, and I was thinking that, since there is no school here for them, and there probably never will be, we could put seats at the back of the schoolhouse for your boys. I would be willing and glad to teach them."

"No, no, Professor Landrum, I would not think of such a thing. However, I want you to know that I appreciate deeply your offer and attitude."

"But what are you going to do? The nearest school for colored people is four and one-half miles away, and they cannot walk that far at their ages."

"That is probably true, but you must not forget the state laws and your own liability, to say nothing of the criticism to which you would be subjected. You might be driven from your profession and ruined socially by your own people. My answer, my dear professor, is no—a thousand times no—for your own good, to say nothing of mine."

"Well, I want to say this, Green. Those boys would be a credit to any classroom—I don't give a cuss who in hell was in it. Under the U.S. Constitution and the original Public School Act of this state, they are entitled to it, even if they never get it."

"Thank you, Professor, for your kind words and your offer of liberal justice, but I will have to figure some other way."

"Think of it, Christian, just, and liberty-loving Americans! These are native-born children of American parentage, carrying within their veins the blood of Southern historical characters of renown! But they are Negroes!"

Thus ended the boy's hope of entering school at the age of six.

In the fence corner, Aytech pondered. Why did Professor Landrum propose to put seats in the back of the schoolroom? He knew for a fact that there were many vacant seats throughout the room, even on the day school opened, and that, by closing time, only a little more than half were occupied. Besides,
he had already selected a seat far up front. Of course, he would have accepted any of the vacant ones, and sat wherever the professor wished. Why had the teacher suggested new seats, when they would have been glad to occupy old ones?

"Papa thinks a lot of Professor Landrum, but I blame him for Papa's refusing to let us go to school."

This was Aytech's discouraged conclusion after another long session of study and thought in the fence corner.

Some months later, Mr. Yancey was gathering corn when the farm bell rang loudly, and he heard a shotgun fired from the direction of the Holbrooks' home. A few seconds later the great black smoke told him only too clearly that fire had broken out, and he was needed. Mounting his horse, he rode as fast as he could, and found, upon arrival, that many neighbors had already formed a bucket brigade from the burning house to a nearby spring. He joined the crowd, and soon was lost among them in the hopeless task of trying to save the farmhouse, which was burning rapidly in a dry east wind.

In his haste and excitement, Mr. Yancey failed to give Homer and Aytech any orders, so they followed him as fast as their little bare feet could carry them. Arriving just as the roof caved in, leaving the tall brick chimney tops exposed, Aytech's first thought was of Bob's red wagon underneath the floor at the end of the house. The fire had not yet reached the ground, but the smoke was dense, and the way was barely discernible.

Without a moment's hesitation, Aytech opened the gate, ran to where he thought the wagon was, and began searching for the handle. The smoke was so dense that when he stood up, he began to suffocate. Finding that he was better able to breathe lying down, he determined to try again to find the wagon, and this time he was successful. He decided to remain on his hands and knees, crawling and drawing the wagon after him.

He was doing just that when the bucket brigade decided to give up the struggle and run to the front of the house. As he ran, Mr. Yancey stumbled over a child. Springing upright, he caught the child by the arm and dragged it to safety. Imagine his surprise when he saw his own child, whom he had thought

half a mile away, blackened almost beyond recognition by smoke, and clinging like grim death to Bob Holbrooks' red wagon!

Homer had followed Aytech into the dense smoke, but he had soon run out and into the presence of his father and Bob's dad. Mr. Yancey's first impulse was to scold and punish, but Bob's father intervened.

"Don't, Green!" he admonished. "Don't you see that the wagon is the only thing saved?"

News of the fire spread rapidly. School was dismissed early, and a host of his schoolmates accompanied Bob to the naked, ghost-like chimneys and dying embers that marked the location of his once-beautiful home.

For a while, Bob, as well as the others, took keen delight in the exciting situation, but, as the embers died out and twilight came on, one by one his friends deserted him for their own cozy homes, and the significance of the affair dawned fully upon him. Taking a seat on his red wagon, Bob hid his face and wept bitterly.

"Papa," whispered Aytech, tugging at his father's pants pocket, "Bob has nowhere to sleep. May I ask him to stay with us? We have a good bed that two can sleep in."

"No, no," was the answer. "He will get a good place, so never you mind." Mr. Yancey put both boys on his horse, and led the way home.

When they arrived home, Aytech was almost asleep. He ate supper, went to bed, and fell into a restless slumber. The red wagon . . . the falling housetop . . . the smoke, the blaze . . . the deafening crash, falling walls . . . crowding school children . . . darkening embers . . . approaching night . . . and Bob, poor Bob, sitting on his red wagon, crying!

Throughout the night the boy mumbled invitations to Bob to come into his house. Sometimes the whole Holbrooks family was sitting on the wagon miles away. Sometimes they appeared very near.

At last it was daylight. Aytech could smell the delicious ham that his mother was frying. He reached over to awaken Homer—and discovered, lying fast asleep between them, Bob Holbrooks!
Aytch learned later that, a little after dark, the Holbrooks had accepted a neighbor's invitation to spend the night. As they passed the Yanceys' home, Bob had insisted on spending the night with "the boys." He retired after Aytch had fallen asleep.

The red wagon was in the front yard.

One day, when Aytch was about eight years old, Mr. Yancey said to his boys, "Get ready, for we are going to school! I'll walk down there with you this morning, so that you may learn the way. We'll have to go over dirt roads, through woods, across pastures, over footpaths and footlogs. I hope you'll be able to return home alone this afternoon, and I want you to learn the shortest way, because at best it will be about four miles."

The school was in the county of Forsyth. In order to have a school, Mr. Yancey and perhaps a dozen other citizens had organized a school proposition under the name of Harrell Mission. They had petitioned the county, through its school commissioner, Colonel H. L. Patterson, for recognition and a teacher. Ordered by the commissioner to furnish a schoolhouse, they asked, and were granted, free of charge, the use of a one-room log cabin in the backwoods. This grant was made by a wealthy, kind-hearted white farmer, Newt Harrell. Years later, when he wanted the cabin for his own use, he gave the mission the privilege of building another further back on his property. For added room, Mr. Yancey moved an unused log barn from his property to the school.

We settled down to school.

After a while, someone informed the Commissioner that the Yancey boys were from another county, and therefore not entitled to go to the Harrell Mission School. On arriving there one morning, they were so informed by the teacher, and they returned home.

Mr. Yancey carried the matter to his County Commissioners, who agreed to pay Forsyth County's claim. Thus the boys were able to continue at the Harrell school, even though there were three white schools much closer to them, one in the county in which the Yanceys lived and paid taxes.

One morning the boys walked up the road behind their father, carrying their slates, books, and lunch pail. Facing eastward, they saw the camel-like mountain against the horizon, with the sun that had just risen over its back. Listening to the songs of the birds in the oak trees, Aytch was filled with thrilling anticipation.

The county of Forsyth was new territory to Aytch. They passed through the yard of an old vacant house, in which there was a boarded-up well and a great big windlass. They passed a creek where a foot-log made by a fallen tree and a handrail of saplings served the public during high waters.

The next attraction was a combination gin, sawmill, and gristmill owned by one John Neal. Its massive overshot waterwheel was fed by a long millrace filled with water and fish that came down from a great dam. There were also a boiler and steam engine used only during cotton-ginning time. The boiler had a steam whistle of which Aytch grew mortally afraid, later on, when the owner's son, Charlie, lay in wait to terrorize the passing child with its unearthly screams. John Neal was later caught in the breast of his cotton gin and bled to death.

A short distance past the mill was the rude cottage belonging to the nearest of the Negro families that lived along the route.

Talking with their oldest son, Aytch learned that there was no father in this family, nor had there ever been one.

The mother was as black as David's ink, and the oldest boy was of the same hue. His name was Noah, and a quieter, braver, more even-tempered or manly boy was not to be found. Willie, his brother, was Noah's antithesis—spiteful, resentful, mean, dangerous, and fair of skin. The three sisters were beautiful girls, especially the platinum blonde. They had slender waists, long, shapely necks, round faces, and hair that fell below their waistlines. They were often mistaken for, but were really more beautiful than, the two Neal girls, to whom it was common knowledge they were related.

"We are nearing the schoolhouse," Yancey remarked as they emerged from a wooded pasture by climbing through a closed cattle gate.
They followed a footpath that led under a large chestnut tree. Some of the sharp chestnut burrs lay upon the ground, and they did not have to be told to be careful with their bare feet! The winding path was shaded by large trees, and they framed an opening through which could be seen the schoolhouse.

And such a schoolhouse! It was built of large logs split in half and notched down at the corners, the bark side outward. The windows were mere openings without glass, only shutters, and there were so many cracks in the floor that stray dogs and cats could be seen underneath it.

By comparison with the New Harmony School, it was disappointing. The boys felt this keenly, and sincerely hoped their father was joking when he said, "Here is your school."

This hope vanished, however, when a young brown-skinned man came up, followed by a crowd of colored children, and introduced himself as the teacher, Mr. S. I. X. Floyd.

Mr. Yancey left, after instructing Professor Floyd to dismiss the boys an hour early, because of the distance they had to travel.

Mr. Floyd began with a long invocation. He prayed earnestly for strength and guidance, for the health and progress of the pupils, and for the well-being of the trustees, the donor of the building, and civic officials on the local, state, and national levels. His sincerity convinced Aytch that he was impelled by some strong internal force. Otherwise, why would he be so thankful for so poor a building? Why, it was worse than the Yanceys' log home!

Professor Landrum's prayer on opening days was not nearly as long, or half so thankful, but his schoolhouse was made of sawed, painted boards, and the windows were glazed. Thus reasoned Aytch.

He concluded that Professor Floyd might have gotten a better building if he had not liked this one so well.

As the teacher busied himself making out the roll and grading the students, there arose a heart-rending wail from Alexander, a big boy sitting on a bench against the wall. He had poked his arm through the crack between the logs of the wall, and now he could not draw it back. To add to the difficulty, a motherly girl had caught his hand, and was holding on for dear life. His wails were increasing, and the pupils crowded around him, so that Mr. Floyd could not see what the trouble was. He went outside, and managed to release Alexander from there.

After the grading had been completed, Aytch found himself in a class with older boys and girls, some of whom were six feet tall. They were standing shoulder to shoulder across the front of the room. The point at Mr. Floyd's extreme right was the place of honor, or "head of the class," and each student strove to get and keep it.

The ten yards of calico in which each girl was swathed almost obscured little Aytch, much to the teacher's merriment.

When all was quiet, great spiders would leisurely cross the floor. Lizards often chased each other over the logs, and before the first day was over, a snake had been killed under the floor.

The big boys spent recess climbing trees for chestnuts, berries, and persimmons, while most of the girls gathered chinquapins, stringing them together and wearing them for beads. Aytch spent his time sitting on a log, looking into the dark woods beyond and wondering what they contained.

Someone read a poem that first day. Unconsciously, Aytch committed it to memory—and deeper still. It was a toy, at first, just as children's rhymes are today; but as time passed, the words took on meaning, and became a guide, a mandate, a principle by which to live; a dynamic fact!

Be the matter what it may,
Always speak the truth.
If at work or if at play,
Always speak the truth.
Never from this rule depart:
Always speak the truth.
Grave it deeply on your heart——
Always speak the truth.
When you’re wrong, the folly own;
Always speak the truth!

There’s the vict’ry to be won:
Always speak the truth.
He who speaks with lying tongue
Adds to wrong a greater wrong;
Then with courage true and strong
Always speak the truth!

What a sad contrast with poems and stories fed to the minds of children today!
Returning to the schoolroom from lunch, Aytch noticed that the boys who had played hardest were the first to fall asleep, and the slowest to learn their lessons.
The afternoon recess found the Yancey boys being quizzed by everyone because they were strangers in the neighborhood.

“Whose place do you live on?”
“Our father’s.”
They laughed.

“We means, who’s your white folks?”
“We don’t have any.”
They laughed.

“How many horses and mules have you?”
“One.”
They laughed long and loud.

“Who owns that one?”
“Our father.”

Then they all began reciting the lands, livestock, mills, gins, stores, and even weapons their respective white folks owned. At first it was intended to discredit the Yancey boys, but soon disputes and rivalries arose among them. It would probably have ended in a fight had the bell not rung. All the while, Aytch was wondering at their interest in other people’s possessions, and their want of it, and failure to discuss the things that were their parents’ or their own.

Dear child! He had yet to learn that these were the victims of a social order sponsored by the best members of our ruling class, their hypocritical assertions to the contrary notwithstanding. The rich, the poor, the educated, and the illiterate, all believe in and practice this. Even if you learn and live up to every precept laid down in textbooks written for white youth, though you obey every law and Biblical injunction, you are doomed to have these poor, depraved, ignorant, downtrodden people held up to you as shining examples of the “Good Negro” as approved by American society. They are of the mold into which they will try to force you: “The Negroes that know their place.”

Later in the afternoon, Professor Floyd dismissed the Yancey boys and enjoined them to go straight home. Gathering up their equipment, and led by Trippy, the little yellow dog that had steadfastly refused to be separated from Aytch, they left school.

Once outside, Trippy became lively, and, single file, they walked down the path.

Just before the school would disappear from sight, the small boy stopped and looked back.

For a moment, all was quiet, save for the drone of the bees and the birds’ songs.

This was school! This was the object of long anticipation! It was not what Aytch had thought: In a crude way, it was beautiful—and perhaps its very crudeness made it more impressive.

One would not notice the clothes or accomplishment of the students, but rather their lack. Not their recitations, but their failure. They sat on benches made from sawmill slabs, and no one, save the few whose benches were against the wall, could rest his back. The most impressive feature of the whole set-up was the unity of the students—their sympathy when one of their number was in trouble.

The boys reached home a few minutes before sundown. Mr. Yancey, trying to appear unconcerned, stood in the front yard as they hove into sight, and Mother sat stringing beans for the next day’s dinner. The joy of the parents at the return of their children shone on their faces. Their joy was not lessened by the fact that the three who had been gone all day seemed
concerned mostly with the contents of the cupboard and the big apple pie on the dinner table.

Thus ended the first day at school.

Some weeks later, when the boys had become thoroughly familiar with the route, the boyish desire to stray from the beaten path and meddle with things along the way asserted itself. One such episode threw a damper on those activities, and made them try to exercise precaution.

It was a bright, sunny day in August. The farmers had finished “laying by,” and no one was around. They were passing the vacant house that had a well in the yard, and they began throwing stones into the well to hear the splash. The sound was good, and they looked for larger rocks with which to make a bigger splash. Finding no rock big enough, they decided to lift the windlass off and throw it into the well. The windlass was roughly eight feet long and they juggled it on the edge of the well. As it fell, the crank caught Aytch’s sleeve, and carried him down with it.

Down, down he fell. It seemed a long time, but the big, satisfying splash finally came. He was in water up to his shoulders. Fortunately, the crank was still caught in his sleeve, for the water would have more than covered him.

Homer promised to get help. He went to a neighbor to borrow a rope, ostensibly for the purpose of driving home a calf.

“This rope is not long enough,” said Homer. “The calf is in a ditch.”

The neighbor’s questions called forth one fib after another, and his suspicions were aroused.

“Where is Aytch?” he finally asked.

Homer broke down and told the whole story, and the neighbor rushed to the well. They lowered the rope, and Aytch was hauled to safety.

When the neighbor reported the incident to Mr. Yancey, he wept openly. He placed Aytch’s head between his knees and talked of what might have happened, emphasizing his words with a hickory switch. Through his tears, he repeatedly affirmed that this was hurting him more than it could possibly hurt Aytch. At the time Aytch felt that his father’s pain was exaggerated, but years later, when his own first-born was killed by an X-ray machine, he realized what his father had meant.

When does a boy first notice a girl? The authorities on the subject would say, “When he first knows she is a girl” but you and I know this is no satisfactory answer. The subject is a delicate one, but with proper approach and handling, it is not obscene or vulgar. Let Aytch tell it.

As a baby, I played with my hands, fingers, and toes, and scratched my nose, just like other babies. Later I located heels, elbows, eyes, ears, navel, penis, and scrotum, in regular order, and played with them all with equal interest.

When I learned that water was evacuated through the penis, it became an object of special interest. Since this occurred at regular intervals, I was constantly reminded of the organ, and play with it was habit-forming. I would pass my hand from my navel downward to where I always found the little round-headed grubworm. Later, with my heels in the air, I discovered a little sack that contained pellets. They were nice to hold, but easy to hurt.

Up to that time, I don’t think I had ever seen it, but once my brother and I played together in the bath, and at last I saw myself in him. After this I was anxious to see other children’s apparatus, but my experience with Elmer Jones, who had the despicable habit of turning up my kilt before every boy in the neighborhood, filled me with loathing for anyone who would even attempt to turn up a dress without permission. It did not matter whom the dress was worn by. The loathing persists to this day.

Having no sisters at the time, I suppose I had never seen a female genital. I played with little girls, but they voided water by merely squatting.

There was one memorable day, however, when I was about five years old, and Ethel, three. It was after a rain, and the sand was wet. Ethel’s mother sent us to the store for a box of
Macaboy Smiff. We stopped along the way, and began to make "frog houses" on the wet sand by packing it over our feet, then withdrawing the feet.

Ethel and I were squatting, our little bottoms nearly touching the sand, when suddenly I looked at her and noticed that I could see under her skirt. For the first time, I realized she was not like me.

It was an interesting picture, and I was anxious to see it again. In fact, from that day, the sight would arouse my curiosity as did no other.

Ethel and I would play on the floor in front of our mothers for hours at a time. We would roll and tumble over each other in a rough manner. I never could bear much weight upon my body, so, in order to keep her off me, I tried to stay on top of her. To my surprise, she did not seem to mind my weight at all. Many times, when she was lying on her back with me on top of her, she would hold me when I tried to get away. In later years I found this trait not uncommon.

My next notice of female structure was in playhouse making. Being of a mechanical turn of mind, I was adept at planning playhouses, and the girls, especially the big ones, wanted me as the "papa" because of my building skills. I was playing with Alice one day, and we removed her dress, which opened in back, and turned it around, so that she might nurse her babies as our mothers did. She had many dolls, and I could never understand why she chose to "nurse" the cold, wet one, instead of the pretty china or silk ones. She had improvised a doll out of rotten pine wood that absorbed water easily, and she always kept it wet. It was this one that she invariably chose for nursing.

At times I played with Ida or Rachel, each of whom was somewhat older than I, and their custom was similar. Little Ethel, with whom I would much rather have played, would come and sit near us with a forlorn, unhappy look at those times, and I would enjoy the sight of her pretty bottom. Once I told her that I would make a playhouse for her in a few minutes. She looked happy, and I honestly believe her little bottom smiled at me.

Sometime later, while playing on the floor, I ran my hand down her stomach and between her thighs. What a strange feeling! The sight had been strange, and now the feeling was stranger. I had an obstruction down there, but she had nothing! It made me think of the wet sand and my first peep.

I was continuing my strokes without apparent interest or resistance on her part. Ethel just looked Heavenwards and relaxed. This had gone on for a few minutes when, simultaneously, our mothers shouted, "Get up off that floor!" Their tone was so harsh, it frightened us. I went to my mother, and Ethel to hers. Neither said anything—they just looked at each other.

When I started wearing underwear, I found it hard to align the two flies in order to urinate, and I got the older girls to help me. I rather enjoyed this experience.

Once, during a steady rainstorm, we were all playing on the lattice-enclosed porch when one child exclaimed, "I want to tee-tee!" She could not reach the yard toilet in the rain but the remark (auto-suggestion) caused me to find a hole in the lattice and let my water fly—out into the rain.

"Look, Mamal Daddy, look at Aytchi!" Ethel called. "Ain't that a handy thing!"

Her mother laughed, and her father laughed so long and heartily that I became prouder than ever, little realizing that it was Ethel's expression and not my accomplishment that amused them.

Up to then, the idea of matching our organs had not occurred to me. Our mothers' screams had made us aware of something, but the critical lecture I had gotten from my mother made me secretive. I still wanted to see it when nobody was around, but Ethel must have received a stern lecture from her mother, for, when she at last consented to allow me my former privileges, she looked carefully around before she raised her dress.

It was evident that we were both enjoying the childish play even more because of the prohibition. "Thou shalt not" was beginning to have its effect.
My mother seemed bent upon keeping me with her at all
times, keeping me away from other children, especially girls. 
She was forever demanding that I play with someone other 
than those "little old white gals." When Mama referred to a girl as 
"gal," I knew she was criticizing, and the more we were kept 
apart, the more the girls wanted to play.

Ethel would take me by the hand and pull, while I would 
act as if I did not want to go. One morning Ethel was tugging, 
while I was pulling back and looking at Mama.

"Julia, let them go out and play awhile," Ethel's mother said. 

I was scowling as if I did not want to go. Ethel knew what 
never failed to please me, so, after a few minutes of unsuccessful 
play, she asked that we turn her dress around. We did this, and 
while I was buttoning the dress, she raised her skirt. We were 
oblivious to everything, when suddenly I heard my mother say, 
"You see?"

Looking up, we saw my mother holding Ethel's mother by 
the sleeve, and looking at us.

In playing with Ethel, I had noticed that her back did not 
look like a boy's. I could now distinguish a girl's figure from a 
boy's at a glance, and each new discovery made Ethel appear 
prettier and more desirable.

Playing on wheat straw or in the cotton house, we remained 
curious about each other's make-up, the more so since we were 
conscious of being watched. It had reached the point where she 
would show me all of herself as I earnestly and convincingly 
told her how pretty she was.

I had never seen the genitals of a grown person, and I was 
getting curious. One day, when my father was putting on a 
shirt, I got a good look at his body. It was like mine, only larger.

Another time my father saw me holding my penis in my 
hands. He scolded me severely and ordered me to keep my 
hands off it, remarking that, if I did not, it would grow crooked 
and would not be as big as a knitting needle. From then on, 
I was careful not to hold it. I was too proud of it to want it to 
be crooked or small.

After Ethel and I had been browbeaten into secretiveness, 
I noticed that the older girls were secretive, too. When their

mothers had company, or were otherwise occupied, we really 
played papa and mama. They would let me help turn their 
dresses around, in order that they might "nurse" their babies. 
I would "go to work" and "come home," like Papa. I noticed 
that the older girls' chests were not so flat as Ethel's—or mine.

Time continued to pass, and I still liked Ethel, who was 
more companionable than the other girls. Many weeks later I 
noticed that my chest was not keeping up with hers.

She wanted to appear big, like Althea, who, it was said, was 
going to have a baby. We stuffed a large rag doll under her 
dress, and she was put to bed in the cotton by one of the big 
girls, who was going to wait on her. I, being the papa, was 
dispatched for the doctor. When I returned, Ethel was covered 
with the buggy blanket. Then I became the doctor. I reached 
under the blanket and withdrew the rag doll while Ethel 
groaned . . . and we had a new baby.

I began to notice other phenomena within myself—an 
increasing sense of shame before grown women, increased 
heartbeat when playing with or fondling girls.

So—when does a boy first notice a girl?

It is when she begins to look, act, and feel the way he has 
been feeling for some time.

This friendship and clandestine association continued until 
I was about thirteen, she around eleven. While I was considered 
a strapping little kid, Ethel had developed mature character- 
istics far beyond mine, some of which neither she nor I 
understood too well, but we both realized that some of our play 
days were over. Spring came and her father sold his business and 
moved from the county.

As I grew older, I became more and more cognizant of the 
racial gulf that separated us socially. Though I could have kept 
track of her through inquiry, I did not, and do not think it 
would have been wise.

Today I feel a friendly and respectful concern for her and 
hope she has been supported and loved as she so richly 
deserved. At least, I sincerely hope she has had the pleasure and 
honor that have been mine to enjoy.
CHAPTER TWO

TO LIVE IN A RURAL DISTRICT has, of course, many drawbacks. It leads many persons to believe, in later life, that they have been seriously handicapped, and that they would have achieved much more in science or the arts had it not been for their environment. It would be difficult to prove this; but there can be no doubt of the fact that being "country-bred" produces a patience and hardihood that backs up adult determination.

Not many will admit, at the close of life's day, that, barring hours of willful idleness, they have accomplished all of which they were capable. But such is usually the case.

Aytch found, after a few days, that the novelty of school was wearing off. The preparation of lessons grew monotonous. One may speculate as to how far this would have gone had it not been for a stinging rebuke administered to the entire class by Professor Floyd.

Everyone seemed stupid that day, reciting inaccurately or carelessly saying, "I don't know." Thoroughly disgusted, the young teacher dashed his book upon his desk and charged us all with constitutional ignorance by comparison with the children of the "ruling class." Knowing that he had grown listless, Aytch felt the rebuke keenly. He vowed that he would study and improve but it took a remark by the School Commissioner, who visited the school later, to crystallize within him the will to progress.

"Lay your books aside and sit in order!" directed Professor Floyd as a forty- or fifty-year-old man with red whiskers on his chin entered the school.

The man was given the teacher's chair, and introduced to us as "Colonel Patterson," our School Commissioner. Mr. Floyd remained standing throughout his visit.

"I am going to talk to you children about thought," announced Colonel Patterson. "Every act of a human being worthy of note is the product of thought. Animals of the lower orders act instinctively, without rule, predetermination, or reason, but man . . ."

The speech continued until Aytch fell into a semi-conscious state. He heard nothing that was said, and saw only the man's Adam's apple traveling upward when his voice was high, and threatening to disappear into his shirt collar when the tones were low, with his red chin whiskers fanning like the tail of a beaver.

"In conclusion," Colonel Patterson said suddenly, in a tone that shook Aytch from his reverie, "I want to say to you colored children: Don't be too everlasting y and infernally lazy to think for yourselves!"

This admonition by the Commissioner was remembered ever after. Aytch also had reason to remember Colonel H. L. "Snack" Patterson in later life.

Dr. Jones was a sick man! Mr. Yancey was doing all that he could to help the doctor and his family run the little farm that he always operated to supplement his practice.

His illness had long since put an end to most of his active practice, and he was no longer able even to feign payment for the services given freely by the neighbors who dropped in from time to time to help. Dr. Jones was a sensitive, independent man, and he felt his reduced circumstances keenly. Further to complicate matters, he was badly in need of a sum of money with which to meet an obligation nearly due. He finally explained his predicament to Mr. Yancey, who at once offered all his available cash, with the doctor's personal note as security.

"My health does not improve as it should," said Dr. Jones, "so I don't want it that way. I will deed five acres of my land, which adjoins yours, to you as security. If I ever repay you, you can reconvey the property."

"Well, just say three acres," said Mr. Yancey, "and you may have the money."
This arrangement seemed to relieve the doctor so much that it was thought, for a while, that he would recover; but many weeks later he died. The transaction is a matter of record in the county of Cherokee.

The death of his widow and the marriage of his two oldest daughters broke up the doctor's household, and the premises were soon occupied by another, and less desirable, family.

Nan Edwards, sister-in-law of Newt Edwards, was the new neighbor. She was, at that time, a grass widow; that is, her husband was staying elsewhere. She had four children: Dora, sixteen; Mag, twelve; Art, eight; and Belle, six. They had cousins, the sons of Newt Edwards, who were in their teens, and if any of them attended school a single day, we don't know of it. They visited the Edwardses at will, sometimes for days at a time.

The Yanceys treated them just as they had the Joneses, although they spent more time visiting the Yanceys than was thought necessary or desirable. Mr. Yancey had warned his wife to beware of Nan Edwards' tongue.

Late in the spring of their first year as neighbors, the family was stricken, one by one, by a terrible malady that puzzled the doctors. It was characterized by a red rash that broke out all over the body, accompanied by cholera morbus, together with a debilitating fever that lasted for days, after which the patient was weak and helpless. All the children had caught it, and Nan was on the brink of total exhaustion.

For weeks Mrs. Yancey spent most of her nights relieving Nan and attending to the sick. During those nights she was accompanied by Ayteh and Homer, and it was then that Julia and her boys really came to know the Edwards cousins.

If there was a want of character in Elmer Jones, there was a double portion of deficiency in these two. Bart and Fed Edwards were about fifteen and thirteen years of age, respectively, and their pleasure consisted largely in hanging around distilleries, showing disrespect to adults, and plaguing the young or helpless.

Just when the sick appeared to be recovering and those nursing them were planning, at last, a full night's rest, Fed Edwards came in with teeth chattering and face blanched. The signs were all too plain. He was put to bed, and within a short while he was burning with fever. For two days his condition grew worse, and finally the doctor reported that there was little hope for him. This being so, Mrs. Yancey decided to take a chance and give the boy some of her blackberry cordial. After some hours of this treatment, he sank into what appeared to be either a coma or a sound sleep.

"Dear God! What is happening?" she asked in a whispered prayer. She had knelt by his bed and sponged his hands, face, and bosom. Now she was asking God for his life, as if he were her very own.

The vigil continued throughout the night. The east grew red from the rays of a glorious sun that would soon appear over the camel-like back of Heapsawnee Mountain, and still he slept. Mrs. Yancey sat beside the bed and waited. Presently, Fed opened his eyes. Smiling, he placed his right hand over those of Mrs. Yancey, and uttered her name—Julia!

(In the near future you will have cause to remember that right hand, Julia Yancey!)

Mr. Yancey had secured employment as a gold miner with the Creighton Mining and Milling Company, some four miles away. His ten-hour work day made it necessary for him to leave the house at four A.M., and he did not return until nine in the evening. One day a man came to the Yancey home and pleasantly introduced himself as an executive of the company for which Mr. Yancey worked. No, he did not wish to see Mr. Yancey, he said, but he had purposely come at that hour to see Julia. He explained at length that he had plenty of money.

That explanation was overheard by Ayteh, who had suddenly been called to his mother's side shortly after the stranger arrived. She steadfastly refused to let the boy leave, or to explain why she had called him. The man asked that the boys be sent off to the neighbors, and repeated that he merely wished to talk with her, and that he had plenty of money. She indignantly refused.
Then he asked for a drink of fresh water. Mrs. Yancey dispatched the older boy across the road to the spring, but held on to the hand of the younger. While Homer was gone, the man grew restless, and wanted water from the house. He offered to go and get it himself, and was given permission to do so. Evidently this did not please him, and, when Homer appeared with the water, he made some curt remark that the boy did not understand, and rode away, emitting a vile oath.

A few days later the same man rode by, singing a dirty song. Many times Aytc asked his mother what it meant, but apparently no one knew. Why a man with plenty of money would sing bad words when passing was another puzzle, and the reason his mother held the hands of one or both of the boys whenever the mining boss was around was still another subject for the fence corner.

As Aytc grew older, he became aware of a studied attempt by the larger boys to get between him and the big girls when they were holding hands in ring-games. It did not seem to be the girls’ idea; in fact, there were occasions when a girl would refuse to unclasp hands, and one instance in which a girl retired from the game in protest.

There were times when girls would show him deep and abiding friendship, but it became increasingly evident that they did not want that friendship known by others or exhibited in any way.

It was Mr. Yancey’s custom to discuss, before his family, the men he knew and the measures they advocated. Very often, he referred to the Bible or the U. S. Constitution as authority. Although he never professed the Christian religion, he believed in its teachings, and what is more, he practiced them. No one could charge him with a falsehood, and he would suffer privation rather than owe one penny. Neither would he accept one cent more than legal interest. Like those of many of his white neighbors, his hands and pocketbook were among the first to be offered for charity and neighborly relief.

Such was the home in which his children were reared. They were encouraged to speak of the good things that people did, and, in so far as they could, to remain silent about shortcomings or vices; to obey and respect officers of the law, who were described always as their friends and protectors. Their father assured them that they would always receive justice when they were in the right.

Aytc and his brothers believed implicitly in these teachings, and their standing in the esteem of the community is a matter of public record today.

Now let us see how the “ruling element” conducted themselves.

It was Sunday afternoon. Homer and Aytc were down in the Densmore pasture, playing with Robert. Occasionally other boys would join them in the daring displays with which boys show their prowess.

The Yancey boys had been trained by Robert Densmore, who was much older than they, and they had acquired strength, deftness, and cunning beyond their years. The other boys might excel, sometimes—or at least break even—at baseball, football, tennis, or croquet; but the Yancey boys were unbeatable at jumping ditches, riding animals, and climbing trees. When the visitors would lose at these rural sports, they would always console themselves by saying, “All right—but you are still niggers.” When Robert expressed his resentment, they would reply, “We aren’t talking about you, Robert. We’re talking about the two ‘yaller niggers.”

Later on this Sunday a large group of boys and girls showed up at the Densmore home. Robert and the boys walked back to the house. The boys all drifted to the well, where they drew water and spoke of things that were only of interest to boys. The girls gathered around the porch, where they began discussing a recent social gathering at which a new boy, named Bobo, had been introduced. From the beginning, Bobo had paid marked attention to Mildy, Robert’s sister—and this was a source of great interest to all the girls.
Robert's parents were seated on the porch, enjoying the discussion of their oldest daughter's conquest and the display of jealousy by the other girls.

Bobo was an expert cyclist, and he owned his own racing wheel. Think of it! Many of the girls had never seen a bicycle, and fewer than half the boys had ever touched one. They were so ignorant of riding techniques that they could not even understand how the bicycle was made to stand up on only two wheels.

If the reader is a man, he may never understand how each girl present felt that it was her sacred duty to humble Mildy, to take her down a peg or a button-hole, so to speak. If the reader is a woman, the story will come as no surprise.

One girl questioned Bobo's parentage; another, his education; others, his religious affiliation, his father's name and occupation, his mother's family, his age.

Each criticism was favorably supported by at least one of the girls, and at last nothing was left but Bobo's personal appearance.

"I don't like his looks!" said one.

"Nor do I!" said another.

This argument was irrefutable, and within a few moments all the girls agreed that Bobo did not look good at all. One girl had not been at the social, and, being anxious to know what Bobo really looked like, she asked Mildy's parents.

With spirit and in concert, they replied, "He is one of the finest-looking boys I have ever met!"

This reply encouraged Mildy, who had been fast breaking down before the assault, and she was emboldened to defend Bobo.

"He is tall, straight, mannerly, educated, refined, and highly intelligent," she said. "In fact," she continued, "he reminds me, in many respects, of Homer Yancey!"

All eyes turned upon Homer—tall, blue-eyed, fair-haired Homer. He was somewhat confused by the turn the discussion had taken, and for many seconds not a sound could be heard.

It was a tense moment. Finally, Mildy's father said, casually, "Yes. In speech, dress, and general appearance, he reminds me a great deal of Homer Yancey."

A harmless comparison, thoughtlessly made. Yet it was not until years later, when Homer was attending an out-of-state school, that references to "Homer Yancey and a white girl" finally ceased being made.

The following summer Homer obtained a temporary job at the Industrial Institute he and Aytech were attending. Summer-time is country school-time, and two young undergraduate coeds from a nearby city were teaching in the vicinity. These girls were attracted to the Yancey home, which had been turned into a modern structure with long, cool piazzas. The Yanceys had splendid mules, and Aytech was a fine buggy driver—and Mrs. Yancey's culinary art was not to be ignored or sneezed at.

These attractions kept the girls coming, and soon they had, with Aytech, visited most of the points of interest in North Georgia. One Saturday morning they planned to visit a gold mine at which some 150 men, most of them white, were employed. The city girls had wanted to visit a real gold mine for a long time.

After an early breakfast they left in an open surrey, Aytech at the reins. One of the teachers was seated beside him. The other shared the back seat with one of the Yancey girls.

They had driven about two miles when they met an old Negro minister on his way to keep his "pintment" with his little flock. At the same moment they heard the shrill "Yeehaw!" of a band of youthful white ruffians who were speedily overtaking the Yancey surrey. Aytech spoke cheerily to Uncle Peter Zachary, but he did not stop the carriage. He hoped to drive around a curve in order that the horde might meet the old preacher first. Perhaps thus he and the girls would be spared the indignities which he knew, from experience, were in store for them. He was trying to act cheerful and confident—but his feelings were otherwise.

The plan worked. They met poor old Uncle Peter first, and greeted him with, "Hello, old nigger! Where ye gwine?"
Uncle Peter answered, "To church," and kept on driving.
"Wait, ole man. God damn it, what's yo' hurry?"

One of them jumped out of his cart and grabbed Peter's horse by the reins.

"You should know better than to drive off from a white man without saying, 'Please, sir.'"

"Men," replied Peter, "I'm not bothering you all."

"Well, I guess not, damn your ole black hide! Do you s'pose we would stand for you to bother us?"

Note how the old man tried to pass them an honor by calling them "men." None of them was even twenty-one, however.

Aytch lashed the mule forward as fast as he felt he could without exhibiting panic. He pulled off the main road and took a rough settlement road that was shorter, hoping thus to elude the assailants that were sure to overtake him when they had finished abusing Uncle Peter. He learned later that they had detained Peter for nearly two hours, forcing him to exhibit his body and heaping indescribable indignities upon him.

The reader may imagine how the boy felt about the pleasures that lay in store for him during the remainder of the trip.

Aytch knew most of the rowdies, but there was no advantage in this. Their arrest and conviction were out of the question, since there had been no violation of rights that a white boy was bound to respect. In court, the matter would have been termed a boyish prank.

Arriving at the gold mine, Aytch applied to the superintendent for permission to look over the plant. It was granted, and they began the tour. The miners and foremen were uniformly courteous and obliging throughout the day, and as they explored the shafts and mills, the morning's experience was nearly forgotten.

Finally they prepared to leave. As they drove past a shaft opening, they heard again that blood-curdling yell: "Yeeap! Niggers!"

No one was in sight, but Aytch knew enough to expect trouble. He told the girls to look straight ahead, and urged the mule along.

After half a minute of silence, there arose a torrent of curses and blackguarding that would have shamed cattle in a pasture. This lasted for a full minute, then stopped as suddenly as it had begun. Then Aytch heard a voice with which he was familiar, calling, "Yancey! Yancey!" He looked back and saw Big Cicero calling, standing in the road as naked as the day he was born, his white skin covered from head to foot by a heavy growth of black hair. He was accompanied by several others who were quickly stripping off their clothing.

A curve in the road took them out of sight, but not out of ear-shot. And then there arose a song, the words of which are too filthy to reproduce. Aytch remembered having heard them once before, when, as a little boy, he stood next to his mother and watched a bewhiskered gentleman who had plenty of money.

A very peculiar character by the name of Aaron Dudgeon was employed by the family of Captain A. J. Lummus. He was neither red, yellow, white, nor black, but rather, it seemed, a combination of them all. In dress, he combined the habit of men and women. His hair, which he wore eighteen or twenty inches long, was coarse and kinky, and it was usually worn in a braid, but sometimes it was wrapped with twine or snakeskin thongs after the custom of Negroes.

His teeth were good, and his reddish-tinted skin was smooth and healthy. His nose was high, thin, and hooked. He was about five feet five inches tall, and he bent his body slightly forward, walking with the frisky, sweeping movement characteristic of Southern white women at that time.

He wore trousers, low-quartered shoes, a gingham bonnet, and an apron. The apron had long sleeves, and fell straight from his shoulders to his knees. Small white buttons set close together fastened it in back.

No one seemed to know where he came from. He preferred to assist the women with housework, and he seldom consented to work in the fields with men. When he did, it was never for more than a few hours at a time. He loved laundry work, and
his person and quarters were always immaculately clean. He was forever busy, and his favorite bed was a mattress upon the floor, with little or no linen.

He was a good cook, and he seemed to be at his best when his friends, especially his white friends, were enjoying the products of his labor and praising his ability and faithfulness as a cook.

He acted and felt superior to Negroes, and at large gatherings he could be found either among whites or alone. To my knowledge, he never visited a Negro family. He stopped at the Yancey place many times, and stayed and talked for hours, but he was always just passing.

Once insulted, he never forgot, and he would seek redress at the first opportunity.

The moral rottenness of some of the neighboring young people became current, and everyone knew that Aaron was in possession of all the facts. His employer and others questioned him relentlessly until he told the truth, and thereby implicated his employer’s son, as well as others. Angered by the disclosure, a mob came to Aaron’s room a few nights later, carried him away to the woods, and beat him unmercifully. It seemed as if they meant to kill him, and they probably would have had it not been for the forcible intercession of his employer’s son, who was himself injured in the mêlée.

Aaron was confined to bed for weeks. He was tenderly cared for by white women, and supplied with everything he needed by white men. Not a single Negro visited him during his recovery, and it was a certainty that he was reconciled to his beating and thoroughly cowed. Like the Negro, he appeared now to be thoroughly submissive.

Like the white man, he did a lot of thinking on his sickbed, and he kept his own counsel.

He was game to fight. He secured counsel from another area, paid them well, and built up so strong a case that true bills and indictments flew thick and fast, until nearly all the men in that circle were in jail or under bond.

Early in the trial, it became apparent that his employer’s son would be heavily incriminated. Aaron ultimately refused to testify against the boy, and he lost his case. I saw him last at work in Shadburn’s Hotel, Cummings, Georgia.

I don’t know what became of him.

Aytch stayed out of school the following season, and worked for a nearby farmer named Tom Ellington. His salary was eight dollars per month, plus room and board. Despite this, Aytch’s pride led him to return home to sleep each night, rather than accept the inferior quarters assigned to colored laborers. This he had agreed to accept in his contract, else he would never have been hired; but he was so prompt and ever-present for duty that Mr. Ellington never tried to enforce compliance with this part of the contract.

Though over fifty years old, Ellington had a young wife, and the oldest of his three children was not yet four. Mrs. Ellington was rather careless with her housekeeping and kitchen work, and the boy often questioned the superiority of white people in this respect. She was nursing her infant, and she seldom bothered to fasten her dress between feedings.

Aytch thought of his mother, whose bosom was equally beautiful, but whose modesty made her much more circumspect.

Aytch was the only laborer on the farm working for wages. The others had been convicted of misdemeanors, and were working to repay Ellington for the money he had advanced to pay their fines. They felt no conscientious responsibility for behavior or service.

The owner recognized this quality in his men, and while he tried to be kind and considerate to all, it was plain that Aytch had his confidence. The boy was not slow to realize this, and he settled many of the difficulties that arose between Ellington and the workers.

Farm life, though routine and humdrum, can be interesting. It requires patience and fortitude to feed and curry kicking mules, slop dirty shoats, tote milking stools, and watch butting goats for a whole year for ninety-six dollars.

Aytch was assigned the biggest mule on the farm to plow
and drive. It was a dangerous beast, and had never been ridden, and the convicts' contract protected them from known dangers. The boy was at the age when he was willing to try anything thought to be impossible, and he would have been mortified to walk to and from the field while everyone else rode.

He led the animal to work the first morning, but he determined to ride the mule back at noon. At noon they all unharnessed their animals and mounted. Aytech took the harness from the mule, gathered the reins, planted both hands firmly on the animal's withers, and sprang astride.

The spasmodic contraction of every muscle in the animal's body demonstrated its surprise. Its back curved upwards, and Aytech felt as if he were sitting on top of Mount Vesuvius. Bucking violently, the mule flew toward the barn, making the trip in half the normal time. Aytech remained upon its back until the others arrived. They had managed to keep the whole performance in view, and now they were cheering lustily.

Aytech slipped to the ground and removed the bridle. The mule turned away, shook himself off, and quietly went to his stall and to hay.

The boy was not able to work the same ruse next day. For the rest of the season they matched wits. Once aboard, he was safe, but climbing on was the problem. Sometimes the boy won, and sometimes the mule; but at the end of the season the animal had still not become a safe mount.

Another situation developed that pointed up a similarity in behavior between the mule and the Negro—in that, if he does not win in his endeavor, he always keeps after it in one way or another.

When plums began to ripen on the farm, the men would ride past the plum thicket on their way to the barn and pick some fruit to eat. Big Sam Johnson was so engaged, one day, when a wasp stung his little mule. The animal jumped clear out from under Big Sam, leaving him standing at the thicket. The animal scampered away to the barn, and Big Sam had to walk.

On the next trip they were all eating plums and talking about Sam's bad luck, when the mule, probably remembering the sting, finched—and Big Sam fell off. He swore that the mule threw him, but nobody believed it.

Sam had to walk again.

Thereafter he would always get off the mule to eat plums. He said that he was not afraid of a little mule—he just liked to eat standing up. But we knew better.

Tom Ellington had a married daughter, by his first wife, who lived up in Ringold. She was taken critically ill, and her father was sent for. That evening he asked whether the boy felt that he could take charge of the farm for ten days or two weeks. Assured of Aytech's willingness, Tom said, "I am going to ask another favor of you. I want you to stay here with my family night and day until I return. I don't expect any trouble, but you know that all of my hands were brought out of jail."

"I understand," replied Aytech, "and I feel I can handle the situation quite as well as if you were here. Go ahead, and don't be uneasy. I know what is to be done, and all the hands are accustomed to my telling them what to do. They like me, and I anticipate no trouble."

They had to leave many hours before daylight in order to catch the train. The previous evening, Aytech had instructed all hands to take up where they had left off the day before.

On the way to the train, it was agreed that Aytech would say nothing of the owner's whereabouts unless he were specifically asked, and then he would say that Tom was expected back at any moment.

Aytech returned to the farm just before noon. Doing his chores, he could see that the mistress had not prepared the room he had expected to occupy. He had expected to stay on the place each night, in order to fulfill his promise, and, as night came on, he was somewhat embarrassed.

When all the chores were done, Aytech closed the outer doors, sat down before the bookcase, and selected a volume. At this point the mistress called him into the parlor, where she
had prepared the guest bed, and pointed out the extra blanket, in case it turned cold during the night. She asked him to sleep with the doors open, explaining that she was mortally afraid of being alone.

"I do not mean for you to retire now," she said, "unless you want to. I am not at all sleepy, and I would like to hear you read something more of First Mortgage, by E. U. Cook, that book you were reading at noon yesterday."

The evenings thereafter were without mental strain, and passed pleasantly in reading or conversation. The boy watched carefully for the first sign of weariness on her part, and a sigh or yawn was sufficient to make him excuse himself and retire.

This experience taught the boy, as no amount of talk could have done, that individual members of the white race can and will recognize and respect character and intelligence in the Negro race. They may do so reluctantly, but it is important to realize that this respect exists, and that it should be cultivated, not for selfish or personal reasons, but as a lasting foundation upon which to build the future of both races and the nation.

But why must white persons wait for an emergency to be decent to a Negro? Why must the white man suffer before he can recognize the value and faithfulness of Negro friendship? It would be far better to practice charitable decency at all times, leaving ill-mannered misbehavior to the supposedly inferior, who might be justified in a plea of ignorance.

The following week was a very busy one for Aytch. The daily planning of work for half a dozen farmhands was not easy for one so young, but by careful arrangement, he was able to keep them out of each other's way, and by taking particular notice of the location of tools and equipment, he prevented much loss of time and impressed the men as a first-class superintendent who meant business.

A few days after Ellington went to Ringold, there appeared a family in a covered wagon. Drawing up before the house, the man alighted, and politely asked for water for his family and team. The mistress granted his request, and he was profuse in his expressions of thanks. All in all, he had a very pleasing personality, and the mistress seemed to accept him at face value, but Aytch distrusted him, not because of his manner, but because of a casual remark that indicated his knowledge of Ellington's absence. No one but Aytch seemed to have noticed the slip. Having been charged with the responsibility for the safety of the family, he grew more and more uneasy, although he did not know precisely why. He did not fear violence; help was readily available, and besides, the man seemed kindly disposed. There was, however, something that appeared sinister beneath the surface of his studied manner.

After lunching with his family and chatting for a while, the man asked permission to drive into a farm road and camp for a few days, to rest his team. Mrs. Ellington had no objection to this, but a few hours after he moved in, the man began moving the fence, using part of it to make a pen for his pig. Aytch reported this to the mistress, and she suggested that the man camp on the left side of the road instead.

This suggestion did not meet with the stranger's approval. Aytch suggested that he sign an agreement to remove his belongings and replace everything he had moved if the owner objected to his presence when he returned. This so infuriated the man that he became abusive, saying that the "yaller nigger" was trying to be smart. The mistress, now becoming suspicious herself, said, "Maybe you had better not camp here at all."

This had a sobering effect. He became all smiles again, and expressed his willingness to sign an agreement. He said he would write one out at once.

"Just let Aytch write it at the house, and you come by this evening and sign it."

He reluctantly agreed.

The boy was somewhat upset over the treatment he had received, and being aware of his responsibility to his employer, he resolved to couch the document in as many legal terms as he knew. Since he knew very few, he tried to remember phrases from his father's deeds, contracts, and notes, and used them wherever they were applicable. He concluded by specifying that the whole arrangement was contingent upon the approval.
of the owner when he should return.

The man, whose name was Arlaze, Alonza Arlaze, read the contract and objected to parts of it. The mistress told him to sign or leave—and just at sundown, he signed. As Aytch and the men came up from the field, he was moving parts of the fence again, and his pig was squealing for food.

After some days Ellington returned from Ringold. His wife and the boy related all that had happened since his departure. He smiled, and approved his wife's action in accommodating the family.

"I was sure you would have helped them," she said. "Aytch worried the man by making him sign a paper, and I think he got mad at first, but he got over it."

"Well, I believe you both meant well," said Tom as all three rose to retire. "I'll go down to see them tomorrow morning."

The following morning, while Aytch fed the stock and Tom's wife prepared breakfast, Tom went down to the tent, in front of which the man was building a fire. Hearing footsteps, he turned and faced Tom.

One glance, and the owner was in a rage.

"What in hell are you doing here on my place?"

Casting a look of defiance, the traveler replied, "At last, Tom Ellington, I hold the winning card. I have as good a chain of titles to this land as you have, and you know it. But you were in peaceable possession, and you had the advantage. I am now in possession, with permission—as witnessed by your wife, my wife, and the nigger. I didn't run over anybody to get here, so don't raise a rumpus because it will do no good. Just come on into court, and let the judge say whose land it is."

Tom's face was purple. Without another word, he turned and walked toward the house. He encountered Aytch at the barn, and blurted out, "You all have played the devil here."

He asked what kind of agreement the man had signed.

"Your wife has it," replied the boy, and they went to the house.

"That man you allowed to camp here is a lifelong enemy of mine, who is here to rob me of my land on a legal technicality. If that contract doesn't save me, I am ruined."

Tom's wife could not find the contract. Time passed, and the squatter stayed on.

A charge of trespassing was lodged against him, but his counter-suit for possession was to be heard first, and things looked dark indeed. Tom remarked, when trial day came, that it was unfortunate that he had not mortgaged the land to R. T. Jones, who would then have been a party to the suit, and who had plenty of money with which to fight it. At the mention of mortgage, Mrs. Ellington remembered the book, First Mortgage, from which Aytch had been reading in the first days of Tom's absence. She drew it from the bookcase—and the contract, which she had used as bookmark, fell out.

Arlaze lost his case and, with wife, wagon, and pig, disappeared from the community.

The United States Negro's Status

The nation's only citizen
With interest undivided,
His claim to even human rights
Is openly derided.

His picture is upon the can
And best foods bear his label,
Prepares for us the "Ham What Am"
But can't sit at our table.

His black hands work in cake and dough,
He's mastered healthful cooking,
To eat it with him we are slow
When other whites are looking.
And when he does attend a show
We drive him to the gallery,
And when to home he wants to go
We point him to the alley.

He cannot live upon our street
Without us all dissenting,
But can live in our house and eat
If our basement he’s renting.

We force him back on tramway cars
In some towns on the border.
In other states we change the bars,
He must reverse the order.

We know that schooling helps him see,
Provides him school or money.
We do not care to help the bee,
We merely take the honey.

Race purity, found in this clime,
By law will sure restrict him.
Else he would marry every time
Some girl who has not picked him.

In army, navy, church and state
We push him over yonder,
Yet of this nation, we relate,
He steadily grows fonder.

His loyal tracks have crossed the sand
Of hostile countries, double,
An honest U.S. handyman
When we are steeped in trouble.

Chapter Three

Ten years after Aytech entered the log schoolhouse in the county of Forsyth there were still no accommodations for him in his own county, or, for that matter, in the state of Georgia. The Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute of Alabama agreed to admit him to night classes, provided that he worked for the school during the day.

The autumn harvest season was over, and Aytech received ninety-six dollars for his year’s work. Not a princely sum, to be sure; but it represented from ten to fifteen hours of hard daily labor for a whole year, and it should have taught the boy something about the value of money, and the patient labor necessary to secure it.

However, he earned more than his wages. The old citizens of the community will tell you that Tom Ellington sings Aytech Yancey’s praises to every gathering or individual that will listen to him. Industrious, honest, good judgment, thoroughness, loyalty, and pleasing personality are some of the many terms that his former employer applied to him, and those words bore abundant fruit later in the fall, when Aytech was to witness some new sorrows, disappointments, and unanticipated abuses.

He was planning a return to Tuskegee at the beginning of the second semester. (Few farm boys are able to enter school at the beginning of the school year.) Therefore, he had a few days between the termination of his farm job and his departure for school.

It was during these days that Aytech had time to see, and really become conscious of, what his father was struggling through, the physical sacrifices he was making for the family, and his ambitions for their ultimate success.

On Saturday nights, when Mr. Yancey was on the night
shift, Aytech would go to the mine and accompany his father on the long walk home at midnight. Besides having the pleasure of his father's company, he could relieve him of some of the heavy family supplies his father brought home on Saturday night. The boy had recently become aware that his father loved, and yearned for, his presence, and that he was beginning to lean upon his children and take a retrospective view of life. Furthermore, the great, strong man was no longer so firm on step, so steady on hand or keen of eye.

"Assuredly," soliloquized the boy as he wended his way toward the mine, "these daily eight-mile walks, and the long hours under the earth, are telling on Papa's health and strength. As soon as I can finish learning a trade, I mean to take him away from the mine."

Aytech had gone some two miles. It was about 11 P.M. and dark as pitch, when, on entering a footpath through a grove, he heard the sound of someone following. Turning quickly, he saw a pair of eyes that were too near the ground to be human. He stood looking at them for a moment, and then a gentle whine came from the animal.

It was Trippy, his own little dog; eighteen years old now, and not permitted to follow the family to public places, for his hearing was not good, and, toothless, he was unable to defend himself.

Poor Trippy. He had been born the same day as his little master, but he had learned to walk first. Later, when Aytech's little legs were strong enough and he learned to stand, it was Trippy who withstood the pinching and hair-pulling of baby hands. When Aytech learned to walk, Trippy would support him or block his steps, if they were leading toward dangerous fires or precipices.

Of late, Aytech had sorely neglected Trippy. He would go away to school in Alabama for months, and drive the dog back if he attempted to follow. Throughout these absences, not a day was too hot, cold, rainy or dry, not a call was so urgent, as to prevent the faithful dog's watching. Every evening, between sundown and dark, he would go to the gate and spend his hour with an upraised forepaw, looking towards the direction in which Aytech was last seen.

Aytech had been thinking of those things just that morning, and had taken his shotgun and Trippy on a two-hours' squirrel hunt. The poor old fellow could hardly believe he was to go, and he spent half of the first hour running to the boy and placing his paw in his master's hand, to reassure himself of his welcome. He finally settled down to trail, and two squirrels were the result of the morning's hunt.

Apparently emboldened by the morning's adventure, Trippy tried to go along on the evening walk to the mine. Aytech's first impulse was to drive him home, but he had come more than halfway, and it seemed so heartless to send the dog home alone. Aytech thought of the day, some ten years back, when Trippy had not shown up for breakfast.

It later developed that a neighbor, who had hunted with Trippy a great deal, left Georgia to work in a coal mine in Kentucky, and he had taken the dog with him. A mine accident sent the man to the hospital, and Trippy took the occasion to escape. He was reported seen in Knoxville, Tennessee.

A few evenings later, after dark, a lanky, footsore pup came up on the porch where the Yanceys were sitting. Mr. Yancey reached for a cane with which to flail the stray, when, quivering with fright, it rushed over to Aytech and placed an upraised forepaw in his hand. It was too dark to see, but the action brought heart-breaking memories to the boy. He led the dog into the light—and screamed, "This is Trippy!"

Remembering this, Aytech decided to welcome Trippy and take him along to the mine. When Aytech voiced his welcome, Trippy who had followed stealthily for two miles, ran up to him, extending his paw in gratitude, and thereafter led the way that proved to be his last two miles.

There was an elevation around the mine shaft, Number 2, where the elevator stopped. The mouth of the shaft was level with the floor—a vast opening unprotected by barriers of any kind. Trippy ran up the path to the shaft, ahead of Aytech, and was lost to sight when Aytech emerged from the darkness into
the brightly lit area. The boy knew that between the two upright columns, guide rails for the cage, there yawned a shaft six feet wide by eight feet long, but Trippy did not know this. With the cage at the bottom, waiting to pick up the men, there was an unbroken drop of 217 feet. Forgetting the dog for the moment, the boy threaded his way around the shaft and went to the engine room, where the engineer, pleased to have company for even the few remaining moments of the shift, greeted him cordially. They began a brisk conversation, which was soon interrupted by the bell signalling, “Hoist at once!”

Such a signal was unusual at that hour. The engineer seized the throttle and “felt” its load.

“Good God!” he said, his face white as death. “There can’t be more than half a man on that cage.”

Aytch felt sick at heart. Who could it be? Oh, the fear, the waiting! Suppose it was Papa?

The cage was rising swift and steady, but it seemed like ages. The boy was at the shaft, waiting. As the cage hove into view, he saw that the upper crossbeam was covered with blood. On the floor of the cage, a shapeless mass of flesh—one confiding, friendly, faithful forepaw upraised—said all too plainly that Trippy was no more.

Many times had Trippy thrown his body between Aytch and danger. He had defied the authorities’ attempt to force his descent on that memorable first day at school, and he had won, by his devotion and courage, the respect and admiration of many a bullying crowd at mills and crossroads stores. But Aytch, almost a man, had failed to protect his faithful dog in return. His remorse and self-condemnation were pitiful.

For weeks afterwards the boy’s spirit was sorrowful. It seemed as if some member of his family had passed away, and, ever after, something seemed out of place whenever he visited the home of his childhood days.

Aytch’s maternal step-grandfather had an accident in which his leg was broken, and at his age, it would be months before the leg healed. Aytch had to finish gathering the corn, and sell the cotton, and he was thus unable to return to school. The duties kept him so busy that, before he realized it, Christmas was at hand. The holiday was to bring an event that changed his whole life and philosophy.

The winter had taught a bitter lesson. Aytch had learned that Southern society does not exist for the pleasure or benefit of his kind. This may seem to be an unreasonable assertion. Let us analyze the facts.

The law which is the product of society does not offer protection to Negroes. Occasionally, it refers to the Negro specifically. The few statutes that are favorable to him are continuously under fire, while the repressive ones are enforced. He has a few friends who help him when it can be done privately, but they turn against him if their kindness becomes public.

In industry, he is the last hired and the first fired. He loses his job to the first white man who wants it.

He is discriminated against in the goods he purchases, and in those he offers for sale. Even religion does not grant him equal rights to the hope of salvation at the end of life’s day. A conscienceless clergy and hypocritical laity console themselves by pushing the subject to the dim and distant future, or by speaking of some supernatural transformation of the soul to take place after death. But fellowship within the Church Protestant, now, would be Hell.

What Southern white lady believes (or hopes) that a Negro woman servant will enjoy Heaven and its immortal glory in company with herself?

What man is willing to cease his daily insults to Negro laborers under him and live forever afterwards in the bonds of brotherhood and equality?

How will the soul seething in prejudice, race hatred, and personal bigotry find happiness in Heaven, where no repressive methods can be used? His dog-like desire to protect his womenfolk from the Negro, even in honorable marriage, harmonizes beautifully with his desire for racial purity—until you look at the thousands of his mulatto children begotten of black and often ignorant servant girls or women over whom his social or political standing, superior intelligence, or greater wealth gives
him dominion. History proves that the practice is general. The cloak of legal protection thrown about white womanhood is actuated by the same principle that motivates lower animals, such as man's best friend, the dog.

It was late in December, 1900. Aytch Yancey, his brother Homer, and two young girls (one a relative) might have been seen walking across the wooded hills, during the afternoon, on their way to a Christmas tree in Frogtown, a little hamlet across the county line. The trees were nearly bare of leaves, the air was cool and crisp, and it was certain to frost before morning. Each member of the party chewed his coat more snugly around himself and quickened his pace, anticipating the decorations, lighted candles, gifts, and happy faces soon to be seen at the Christmas tree. Fate ruled, however, that they would never see those sights, and that deepest gloom would settle over all of them before the rising of another sun.

Emerging from a wooded bypath, the quartet came to the highway. Aytch led the way with his relative at his side, and Homer followed closely with the visiting girl on his arm.

A group of men were standing in the road some distance in front of them, and as they approached, the men drew together in the middle of the road. They saw that one of the men had a shotgun. The Yancey boys recognized all the men.

They attempted to walk past.

The man with the gun was Bart Edwards, and his brother Fed was with him. The other two men were Ed Cox and his brother Homer.

Any Negro would have known at a glance that trouble was brewing, and that the party was destined to suffer a series of insults, if nothing more. Steeding themselves against replying to the obscene remarks that were surely coming, the young people tried to hurry past.

Bart Edwards stepped quickly in front of Aytch. Holding his gun crosswise, as an obstruction, he asked, "Where in hell ye gwine?"

Aytch began to answer the question, suppressing any indignation he felt, but he soon saw that no answer was expected, or even wanted. Fed Edwards walked around the end of his brother's gun, and put his hand under the girl's coat. As his hand grasped her young, partially developed figure, she slapped him full in the face, screamed, spun around, and ran past.

The four men turned their attention to the other girl.

Her mind worked quickly. Crying out as if in pity for the younger girl, she said, "You nasty evi-hearted rascal! You have broken her arm."

This assertion put them off guard for an instant. She took advantage of the moment and ran to the younger girl. Then both of them took off up the road as fast as they could go, leaving the Yancey boys in the hands of the four ruffians, one of whom was armed.

The Cox brothers had seized Homer, and a desperate struggle was taking place. Aytch hardly knew what to do. To attack the Edwards brothers would have been suicide, and to go directly to his brother's assistance would have been dangerous with the gun behind him.

Suddenly, they stopped striving with Homer, and someone suggested that they drive the boys back home and catch the girls later. Homer wrenched himself free and ran toward his brother, who was held at bay by Bart's gun. Fed, discerning Homer's intention of getting the gun, tried to get Bart to raise it. Misunderstanding Fed's movement, Bart shifted the gun to his left hand, out of Fed's way, and in so doing he tripped Aytch, who fell heavily to the ground. Bart stepped backwards and stumbled over Aytch's feet. He did a backward somersault as he fell, and the gun struck Fed's face, unbreached, and harmlessly ejected the loaded shell. The gun was then useless for the moment.

Homer and Aytch ran in the direction in which the girls had gone. They were followed by the bellowing, brutal bunch.

The boys easily outdistanced the oversized Edwards brothers, but the Coxes were not so easy. When the Edwards' had been left behind, the Yanceys suddenly turned. It was clearly their intention to engage the Coxes before the Edwards' could come up.
At first the Yanceys ran, but now the Coxes almost flew in their effort to escape. As they ran, they threatened to kill the entire party on its return from the Christmas tree. This threat created their feeling that they would not be followed. The boys hurried along and overtook the girls. They proceeded to the home of a friend, where they decided to spend the night.

To say that Aytch was angry is an understatement. He borrowed a Winchester rifle from a friend of his father's, and returned alone over the same road to report the incident to Mr. Yancey. His father decided to return with the boy, pick up the others, and bring them all home.

It was nearly 11 P.M. when they left the house, and within thirty minutes they were passing over the same ground on which the party had been attacked earlier.

Later, a crossroads grocer reported that, at a few minutes before midnight, the same quartet had demanded that he get up and open his store. When he refused, they asked for change for two twenty-dollar bills. He offered to exchange one of the bills for silver, and they left, cursing him. A few minutes after they had left, the grocer smelled something burning. Investigating, he found more than a dozen bales of cotton on fire. He fought the blaze the remainder of the night and was still at it when Mr. Yancey arrived that morning to report the happenings of the night before.

Back to the night before! At about 1:30 A.M. the Yancey party was nearing home. To their surprise, they found that the light that always burned in the window was not there. Coming nearer, they saw that the front door was open, but no one was in sight.

Mr. Yancey entered the house. The lamp, still lighted, was lying on the floor. Raising the light, he saw that two trunks had been opened and emptied. The drawers of the bureau and sideboard were pulled out, and their contents were on the floor; the mattresses were on top of the other bedding; and the whole house was topsy-turvy.

Aytch ran into the children’s room, and found them sleeping peacefully as if nothing had happened. But where was his mother?

As they turned to go back through the house, Mr. Yancey, bearing the only light, groaned, and a shudder shook his large, square frame as he said, “My God, children, where is your mother?”

With a piercing scream, the younger girl swooned in the middle of the doorway as the little light revealed something huddled in the corner of the room in a kneeling position, one rheumatically crippled foot extending backward. She was incoherently talking to the wall.

“Julia! Julia! Julia!” shouted Mr. Yancey as he dropped the lamp and clasped the loosely clad figure in his arms.

The light flickered for a second and went out, leaving the room in total darkness.

While others sought matches, Mr. Yancey sat upon the floor, drew the figure onto his lap, and used every endearing method in an effort to get a response. When a light was eventually secured, the sight would have touched the heart of—whom? Certainly not his superiors, who had committed the crime.

The light, and an ammoniated handkerchief, were having their effect upon the woman. Her low, incoherent mumblings increased in speed and rose in pitch until they ended in a scream of terror. “Fedl Fedl! Oh, Sart, you won’t kill me, will you?”

The round, motherly face of Julia Yancey bore a contusion, the size of a half a lemon, below the left eye, and she was bleeding from a cut above it. Blood, drawn by the fist of one of the Edwards’, flowed from her mouth and nose, and covered her dress.

In the darkness Mr. Yancey did not know that his wife was bleeding, and his acts of endearment left him a gory sight. I wince with mental pain when I think of how easily the crime could have been fastened upon him by a Southern jury had just one white person seen him in that condition.

Thoroughly alarmed at her condition, he held Julia in his
arms until the bed had been made, and then placed her upon it, giving strict orders that she not be disturbed. He sent for Dr. Price, who came at once, but his professional services failed to prevent a miscarriage that took place as the morning sun peeped over the hump of Sawnee Mountain.

A few days later, when Julia was out of danger, she told the following story:

As Aytech and his father walked out of the house, that night [she related], my heart sank within me. My own danger never crossed my mind. I knew something dreadful was going to happen, but I believed that it would be to my husband, or to the children. I closed the door, fastened the windows, and sat down to wait for I knew not what. After listening carefully for more than a half hour, I heard steps on the acorns in the yard, and a heavy boot struck the porch steps.

"Hello," a gruff voice called. "Open the door, Julia."

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Oh, it is just a friend of yours, come to tell you about Aytech."

Everything went blank. What could there be to tell me about my child? My trembling hands unfastened the door, and four men stood before me, their faces covered with an old sock and dirty handkerchiefs. A black rag that looked like the lining of a coat was over the face of the spokesman.

"All right, Julia. We want money. We know your old man got it, so hand it over."

I was listening intently to the man's voice. It was too familiar for me not to recognize it. I knew the voice, but I could not place it until the second husky walked up and ordered me to hurry. His walk and a hiccup-like hitch in his voice revealed that he was Fred Edwards. The other was Bart. The two smaller ones were standing back.

"There is no money to speak of in this house," I began to tell them.

"You are a liar," the spokesman hissed.

"Just a little Christmas money belonging to the children."

"You are a liar," said the other.

"Fed, I swear..."

The sentence was unfinished.

"Oh, I see. You are too God-dammed smart," the second one said as he sprang toward me. "Think you know somebody."

I had known the hitches in his voice since his childhood.

He came through the door, and I walked rapidly backwards, fearing to turn my face. Springing forward, he struck me full in the face. As I fell, I tried to ask if he meant to kill me, but if I ever asked the question, or if I got an answer, I do not remember. This is all I know.

No one knows which of the four found the money, but a careful check showed that it could not have been more than forty-two dollars.

News of the robbery and murderous assault spread rapidly, and indignation was very high, especially among the friends made by the Yanceys during their twenty years of life by the side of the road; but I venture to say that not one of the indignant ones would have raised his hand to punish a known white criminal for an offense against an unknown colored person.

Someone presented the case to the grand jury. Two of the four attempted to run away, but they were apprehended and tried for their road offense in the county of Forsyth. The judge fined them, and warned them that if they came before him again, the punishment would be more serious than a fine. This statement was used against Judge Gober during the trial for assault and robbery that took place later in Cherokee County, Canton, Georgia.

The second trial was short and to the point. The older brothers were sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary, the younger ones to eight years.

This would seem to prove that Southern society was willing to punish white criminals, even though their crimes were against Negroes. It must be remembered, however, that the Yanceys were personally, and most favorably, known to every person at the trial, from the judge down. Some of the character witnesses
for the quartet actually wept when the attorneys for the defense asked them to assail the character of the Yanceys. "I can't say anything against Julia, and I will not," they testified.

Homer and Aytech were at Tuskegee during the second trial, for their presence was not required. Mr. Yancey went back to the mine, and Julia went home. Things seemed normal again as the year grew older; but were they? Will they ever be normal again?

Late in August, that year, Aytech was working at his carpentry bench in school when Professor Charles Evans came into the shop and called, "Yancey, telegram!"

Laying down his plane, he ripped open the envelope and read: PAPA IS DYING. COME HOME AT ONCE.

These words, this moment, ended his educational opportunity. He had never doubted that he would have five or six years in which to complete his training. Now, at a level of education equivalent to that of an eighth-grade student, he had the responsibility of a family.

It seemed that a mountain of stone had fallen upon him. He glanced at his teachers and fellow students; no one said a word. He hurriedly checked in his tools, and hurried from the building into the open air, to face the world. He never returned to school.

When he reached home the next day, his father was dead, disheartened by his surroundings, disappointed in the efficacy of upright living among his superiors. The farm was falling down. The fences and outhouses were in need of repair, and the land was overgrown by thorns, thistles, and briars. On his deathbed he audibly expressed disappointment for leaving this condition and also his wife in her delicate state.

At the insistence of his mother and the other children, Aytech took over. He repaired the main building, and put the farm into operation. Things seemed tranquil on the surface, but a Negro would not have to be very smart to notice an undercurrent of dissatisfaction among the white neighbors. They all recognized the justice of the situation, but white families did not believe that a Negro should receive the same justice they claimed for themselves. From time to time, Aytech heard rumors that attempts were being made to secure the release of the robber quartet.

One day Colonel Patterson appeared at the Yancey home. Colonel Patterson was a man of his word, and most often that word portended no good for a Negro, but on this day the Colonel had come to offer Julia security, in return for some assistance that he could have gotten elsewhere if she had turned him down.

"Julia," he said, "I am circulating a petition for the release of the Edwards and Cox boys, and I want you to sign it. In exchange, I promise you that those boys will respect you more than ever before. Two of them say that they will never forget the nights you sat alone with them when they were sick. I am going to run for judge against George F. Gober, and I'll win. I will personally see to it that you are never molested or held in disrespect by them or their relatives."

Julia signed the petition, and the men were released. Colonel Patterson ran for judge on a platform that consisted principally of his promise never to send a white man to the chain gang for a crime against a Negro. Many Negroes condemned Julia for signing the petition. However, let it be here recorded that neither the quartet nor any of their relatives ever again gave her disrespect or trouble. One outstanding white woman or man can indeed influence the behavior of others if they wish to act.

Judge George F. Gober returned to the general practice of law following his defeat by Patterson, suffering the stigma of a Negro-lover, branded, reduced in economic status because of the Yancey-Cox-Edwards affair. Though an able lawyer, fine jurist and Christian gentleman of the highest order, he wound up his active public career as dean of the Law School of the University of Georgia.
The world has decided that none are supreme
Just simply because they are white,
So people and nations to fit in the scheme
Must prove that they mean to do right.
No longer the man or a race can we tax
And waste it on clubhouse or golf,
Then play there ourselves, on the links in great packs,
While driving all other folks off.

It's no longer popular "Nigger" to shout.
Oh! days of "Red Gallas" and Gene!
That day is now over, we ruled it right out
With radios, televised screen.
They try to besmirch him by calling him names
And posting bad pictures to see.
They use untrue stories his person to shame
While dreading N.A.A.C.P.

How can they prove loyal to our Uncle Sam
Yet violate laws that they make,
Shout their independence, yet his money cram
When rain, wind or leaves should break?
How hold our young citizens, white and the black,
Against Communist onslaught
And yet stab the courts of our land in the back
When ordered to do what they ought?

They cannot be happy and also be just,
They simply are not made that way.
Cessation of Jim Crow on railway and bus
Disturb them by night and by day.
They long for a word, yes, a story or speech
To prove that a right is a wrong,
But cling to the Government cash like a leech,
Evading the law all along.

The Southern Dilemma
and
Its Solution

The South's politicians as of today
Agree on the need of the state,
They know that the teacher should have better pay
And farmers a parity rate.
Rainfallings and riverrseams all should be dammed
With government money that's free.
The roads should be widened wherever they're jammed
And signs placed where drivers can see.
The milk should be plenty for kiddies to drink
At prices the people can pay.
Those comics and records that make a boy think
Of girls should be taken away
And law be enacted preventing the strap
Once used by the teachers in schools.
But cling to the Government cash like a leech,
Who coddle their delinquent fools.

Those seeking to govern their county and state
Are fully agreed in the strife;
But claim above subjects are not up-to-date,
A greater one struggles for life.
The Negro that's seeking his justice by law,
The law for protection we made,
His High Court advancement they recently saw.
Oh! How can this progress be stayed?
They long for a word, yes, a line or a phrase,
A word that means can and means can't,
A word that is free from a technical haze,
That means both a sinner and saint.
They need it for use in the campaign now on
To say that they will and they won't.
That word would restore to them powers long gone
To prove that they do and they don't.

That word would support them and keep their face straight,
Would reconcile truth with a lie,
Explain to the voter, his children and mate,
That law is not made to go by.
Oh! Rush, lexicographer, it will be late,
They need such a word as a tool.
Oh! Hasten to give them the word that will state
A person is wise—and a fool.

They swear to keep public the schools of the state,
And close them out in the same breath.
They love God, our father, just Negroes they hate,
But govern him justly—in death.
They can't be successful unless they deceive
The world on both sides of the fence;
They pray for a word that the courts will receive
And fall in plain justice and sense.

The die has been cast and the issue is clear.
In sin, the South sends up her wall.
Still Christians and neighbors, trust God without fear,
This nation don't wag by its tail.
We all are united. Together let's stand,
Forgiving each one for his wrong;
And work for the glory of God and this land,
Be free and be equal, be strong!

---A. H. Yancey

Chapter Four

July 1, 1902. Aytch had reached his majority two months earlier. The crop was cultivated, and the family would have only to gather it in. He had left no debts, and he decided it was time for the family to shift for themselves.

Aytch had met a girl, and he was no longer heart-whole and fancy free. This is the verse he penned for her—with three subsequent additions.

Listen! I will a tale unfold,
   And think it interesting.
It is not new; in fact, it's old,
   Devoid of idle jesting.

Concerns a boy, concerns a girl.
   Can subjects be more clever?
That they should meet, each other greet...
   The story runneth ever.

Athrolayama was the name
   This tale he wrote concerning,
For in his mind, as well as heart,
   There was a vision burning.

This vision was Miss Daisy S.,
   A very pretty girl's life.
Her cheeks were pink, her eyes were brown,
   Her teeth were white and pearly.

They were on a church campground street,
   The mountain ridge at Cumming,
Where Baptists meet, pray, preach and eat,
   And keep their socials humming
How was acquaintance to begin?
How could he ever reach her?
Oh, joy! Right here kind fate steps in,
This time, in form of preacher.

He knew the boy, he knew the girl,
That is, her face and feature.
"Hold on," he says, "I'll introduce
This boy to 'sister teacher.'"

They stood there mum, a little glum,
His voice was somewhat muffled.
Her dress was blue, waist peek-a-boo,
With skirt: a deep-laid ruffle.

The moments flew, the trumpet blew,
As always, at camp meeting.
Respect for place, more than His Grace,
Prevented tête-à-têteing.

They talked of things, of queens and kings,
And life among the lowly.
Of home and school, of book and tool,
Until she rose up slowly.

"I go," said she. "My friends call me.
The time passed has been pleasing."
"Your friend," said he, "I wish to be."
Her bow and smile seemed teasing.

Now things were fine. He wrote a line
To ask if he might date her.
"Yes, you may come out to my home."
He did, a few days later.

A sweet retreat on Maple Street
Was where the young man found her.
Her aunt was in—her only kin
That dwelt with, or around, her.

'Twas joy and bliss, her lips to kiss,
The days that he could tarry.
It came around at Buford town
He asked if she would marry.

He wanted her to be his, sir,
That he might always love her;
To be his wife, his joy and life
(Perhaps some children's mother).

She hung her head, grew somewhat red,
With trembling lips, I fancy,
Said, "Yes, my dear, within a year
I will be Mrs. Yancey."

They were engaged, his passion raged,
He pinched her dimpled chin,
Her head at rest upon his breast
Just like a violin.

Now, let us hope, some sunny slope
Will find their both together
Until they're called, with one and all,
To answer to the Father.

Lines added on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary:

We've toiled together many years
E'er since this story started;
There has been joy, also some tears.
Our interest has not parted.

We have a shelter all our own,
Good health, and we enjoy it.
The seed of friendship has been sown.
Oh, may no one destroy it!

We cherish you who visit us;
Your presence makes us joyful.
So we won't think about the fuss
If "carrying on" is awful.
(Lines added on their fiftieth wedding anniversary:)

One half a hundred years have passed;
   It seems just days or hours.
If storms arose, they did not last,
   There were sunshine and flowers.

Decisions made back five decades
   That now have been completed
Do make me know the road I go,
   By choice, would be repeated.

We have not suffered poverty,
   Nor have we lived in clover;
But everything I've done in life—
   I'd love to do it over!

(Now, ten years later:)

More time has passed and still we last
   And try to serve our station.
With minds alive we still survive,
   A swiftly changing nation.

Grandchildren come if we are glum
   To brighten up our visions,
Provoking thought of things that ought
   To help them make decisions.

We think of time back when this rhyme
   Amused us in this column,
But now we feel that life is real
   And reference becomes solemn.

This young lady had visited the Yancey home with her aunt that summer, and it was during that visit that Aytc had dramatically left home, without funds, to seek his fortune. His purpose was to prove to himself that he could start with nothing and succeed in making friends and earning a living.

He arose early one morning and awoke the young lady and her aunt in order to bid them a temporary good-bye. His mother followed him to the gate and begged him to remain at home, promising to give him more money from his father's savings than he could possibly clear for himself during the year that he planned to be gone.

He refused this offer for two reasons. With so many young children, the family would need every cent that his father had left, and more. Furthermore, his staying at home would provide no test of his ability to meet the world's requirements, and to provide a home for a wife.

With fifty-three cents in his pocket, he began to walk westward. His first objective was the iron-manufacturing town of Anniston, Alabama.

By the following morning, he had walked sixty miles. Footsore and weary, he began to think of Colonel Patterson's advice: *Think for yourself*.  

When he came to the next house along the road, he decided to ask for some food. He had learned that white people would much rather give food to a Negro than sell it to him—for obvious reasons.

A young housewife sat on the porch, stringing beans. An eighteen-month-old baby, playing with a large black wool hat, came forward to greet Aytc. He ignored the child, and asked the woman for a small lunch...and was refused. His own hat in his hand, he was about to turn away.

The porch was a high one, and, as Aytc stood before it, his head was within the baby's reach. With a quick motion, and much hilarity, the child placed the black hat on Aytc's head, and ran away. Surveying the effect of its action, the child was amused. He ran back, took the hat off, and put it on again, laughing merrily. Indulging the baby's play a moment, Aytc looked toward the woman, and found that she was gone. He did not dare to leave the young child alone on the high porch, and after he had waited for a few minutes, the mother returned—not with a sandwich, but with enough nicely prepared food to last the whole day.
The lesson was learned. If the parents deny you, make friends with their children. This is always successful with genteel Southern white people.

Aytech noticed the speeding freight trains carrying their tons of raw materials, and he wondered why, if he traveled as scrap-iron or clay, he could not purchase transportation at a few cents per hundred pounds. He approached a train crew at Douglasville, Georgia, on the subject. They all laughed heartily, but they refused to consider the proposition. One of the crew asked Aytech if he could buy them a round of Old Glory cheroots. They cost three for five cents. Aytech put out a dime for the cheroots, and was told to jump into a gondola and lie low. He traveled eighty-five miles in four hours, without taking a step. Another lesson.

In the little mining town of Trenton, Alabama, where he spent the night, Aytech earned $1.25 for a day's labor in an ore bank. There has never been a single day since that he did not have the dollar. The following morning he walked through the Choclookee Valley, and he was on top of the high land east of Anniston, Alabama, when the chimes on St. Michael and All Angels Church pealed for the Doxology.

Aytech tried to get a job as a carpenter, but he was soon informed that Negroes were not used in that capacity. He went to work as a laborer for the Woodstock Iron Company, where his knowledge of the building trades and his ability to read blueprints soon made him popular with the supervisors, who trusted him implicitly.

Though his immediate bosses drank shamefully and gambled, Aytech's sobriety and integrity made him their confidant, even though they did not trust each other. As a result of this, he was able to prevent a great deal of friction that would have been expensive to the company.

Preparing to move, with the company, from Anniston to Birmingham, Aytech withdrew his savings from the local bank. As he made his weekly deposits, through which he had accumulated $175, he often met his general superintendent.

It happened, on the day he closed the account, the superintendent, Mr. Crackenberger, was behind him in the line at the teller's cage.

The teller took Aytech's withdrawal slip and passbook, destroyed the book, and counted the money and gave it to him. As he left the cage, Aytech counted the money again, and found that the teller had given him too much. At first Aytech thought to keep the overage, but his conscience condemned that course immediately. He returned to the cage, and said, "There has been a little mistake."

"Too late to correct it now!" was the rejoinder.

"If you'll allow me to explain, I think you'll correct it."

"We don't correct mistakes after you leave this slab, and I have no time or patience to talk about it. You have your money, your account is closed. Get out, nigger!"

Aytech got out. A few hours later, back on the job, Superintendent Crackenberger called him over.

"Oh, Yancey! The banker says that he gave you too much money by mistake, and he expects its return."

"I offered to correct it, and I was driven from the bank," he replied.

"Well, but if you don't return it, the teller will have to make it good out of his own money."

"And I would have to do the same if the mistake had been against me. I think ten dollars is little enough to pay for a lesson in courtesy, don't you?"

"Candidly, I agree with you," said Boss Crackenberger. "Let him learn a lesson."

Aytech worked for various companies throughout the Midwest, saving whatever he could. In April of 1903, he returned to his old home. He retired to the fence corner to ponder over his fast-approaching marriage, and on June 1 he left the old home forever, so far as a residence was concerned.

While Aytech was traveling to Atlanta, a disastrous cyclone passed through Gainesville, Georgia, killing many people and destroying much property. The next day, many colored men and women were transported to Gainesville to help nurse the injured and clear the wreckage. Every Negro was given free transporta-
tion to Gainesville, but members of other racial groups had either to establish their reliability or to transport themselves. It is a significant fact that Negro service is relied upon with confidence during times of disaster, but maligned and discredited during times of peace and tranquility.

Aytch continued on to Atlanta aboard a train bearing injured and dead. A few days later he was married.

Let Aytch continue his tale:

After our wedding we left for Hartwell, Georgia. It was a twenty-two-hour trip, and, since Pullman accommodations were not available to Negroes, my wife was tired when we arrived, and she retired immediately. The next day she introduced me to her cousin, who invited us to stay with him. We moved our baggage to his house, and there took up temporary residence.

On Sunday morning we awoke early, and my wife was in high spirits. She introduced me to a number of other cousins, and we were all having a pleasant time when the question of church attendance was raised. Without my knowledge, my wife had made arrangements to accompany a cousin to a country church some five or ten miles away. I thought I was included in the party, but, to my dismay, I discovered there was no room. I would have to spend my first married Sunday with strangers.

I was sick with disappointment, but I did not let on. Trying to make conversation with strangers, I was worn out by ten o'clock. We had nothing in common, and finally I wandered off to the cornfield. I expected the party to return from church at about two o'clock, and I was watching the road. It was much later that I finally saw the buggy bringing her back, and ending, for me, a most miserable day. I composed a verse, that day, that asked the question:

Pray, which is best,
   Along the way:
To be flatly rejected,
   Or feel as I
Do feel today——
   Unmindfully neglected?

I had given my wife liberally of my meager savings, but, to my surprise, she had not spent a penny. She had been teaching school, and had some savings of her own. I soon found out how much she had, but I never disclosed the amount of my savings to her. I merely paid all expenses, and gave her the change. As time passed, her holdings increased, and I learned that she could be trusted with any amount of money. This was contrary to my previous experiences with married women, many of whom had willingly spent their husbands' money on me.

By the time two months had passed, I knew I did not have to be concerned about my wife's handling of money. When we returned to Atlanta, we bought furniture, and I turned the remainder of my money over to her. From that day she received every penny that I made. During our years together, she never earned a cent. In return for my support, she gave me security for my earnings, and loyal, industrious motherhood.

As a boy, I had won the friendship of girls by doing mechanical and artistic work for them, and when I went to school, I found that Negro girls responded to kindness in the same way (and were just as shy of intimacy). The difference was that school girls were not afraid to be seen displaying affection. My childhood playmates had grown more and more reserved when neighborhood boys or men were near, and finally their friendship ended altogether—outwardly.

My wife was never affected by the work I did. She always maintained the same dignity and reserved aloofness that had characterized her during our courtship. At first I appreciated it, dreaming of the time when, in private, she would let her hair down and bubble over with amorous ecstasy. That day never came, and my dream of being met at the door, having my tie fussed over, or having my wife sit on the arm of my chair, running her fingers through my hair, was never realized. She has never come forward with an uninvited kiss or embrace. Strangely, no one, to my knowledge, has ever seen her kiss or embrace anyone, and by now my bald head has despaired of getting a smack.

But think of the things that could have happened! She has
never applied the rolling pin to my head, nor slapped my face. She has never drawn a gun on me, or punctured me with an icepick. She has never locked me out of the house or run away from home, nor has she incurred a debt at a department store, bought a mink coat, advertised my faults, or sued me for divorce. I guess I have broken even so far.

My first job in Atlanta was building a pair of steps. The job took ten hours and netted me two and one half dollars, which was twice as much as my father had ever earned for a day's work. It proved to my satisfaction that my training had been worthwhile.

My second job began when, on a walk down Peachtree Street, I saw a sign that said CARPENTER WANTED. I entered the store and asked the owner about the nature of the work to be done.

"Are you a carpenter?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You look more like a Pullman car porter."

I reminded him that I had not come in to discuss my personal appearance, but rather to secure work. He explained the job, and I made out a list of the materials I would need. He took the list, in order to telephone the order in, and, when he saw it filled with the symbols of the lumber business, he handed it back.

"This looks like Greek to me," he remarked.

I volunteered to place the call for him, and he ushered me into his private office. There I met his wife. She was a beautiful woman, and she weighed somewhat less than her husband, who was well over two hundred pounds.

The lumber was delivered, and the following day I reported for work. Gavan came to me and attempted to tell me what to do first.

"Captain Gavan," I said, "you told me yesterday what you wanted done. You cannot tell me how to do it, because I do not believe you could do it yourself if you had to. Let me go ahead, and if it doesn't please you, you owe me nothing."

He agreed, and, as the work proceeded, I could tell from his wife's facial expression that everything was going well. On Friday morning, I said, "Please let me have any objections or complaints today and let me know if you want anything changed, because I expect to be finished tomorrow."

He answered, "The only other thing I want is your address and phone number, so I can get you any time I want you."

This association, and the friendship that grew from it, lasted for more than forty years, and was broken only by Gavan's death.

One day, when I was working for Gavan, a colored girl of about fourteen years of age came in to exchange a book that she had bought somewhere else. It was a new book, but the school she was entering required the use of a later edition. Gavan did not have the book in stock, and he remarked that the Negro school should be forced to use that book, because the white schools were using it, and four dollars was not he sneezed at. On hearing this, the girl offered to sell her book to him, since he traded in used books. He offered her twenty-five cents for her brand-new copy, and she refused. She walked toward the door, and Gavan turned to other customers. Just then, a young white man entered and asked for the same book. He was told that the stock was temporarily depleted. Child-like, the girl offered to sell him her copy. Gavan turned red in the face, and screamed at the child as if she were a dog: "Get out of here! Get out! Get out before I kick you out! You black wench!"

The girl was frightened and ran. Long after she was gone, Gavan continued to vilify her.

With favorable recommendations from white men, without which I never could have succeeded, my acquaintance broadened and my remuneration increased. One contractor hired me to complete a house that a sub-contractor had fallen down on, and he was so pleased with my work that he decided to sub-contract a new house to me at the same rates that more-experienced men were getting. I took the job, and by working hard and schooling my help, I finished days ahead of schedule. From then on, I was a general contractor. I made some money, but soon I was caught in a pinch, and I learned just where a Negro contractor stood with the courts.

I had signed a contract with a quiet-mannered gentleman who had a talkative, affable, and very friendly wife. She would
hang around the job most of the time, asking questions as the work progressed. When the job was complete, I presented a bill for $650. The man asked about building servants' quarters, and I estimated the cost at an additional $125.

"Oh, no," he said. "I am not going to pay any more. You have enough money already to do it."

I refused, and the case went to court.

When court convened, the judge seemed to know all about the case. His first words were, "Yancey, why don't you go on and build that servants' room?"

"Because it is not in the contract," I answered, and I began to unfold the contract.

"I don't need the contract," the judge said. "The lady says that you promised her, in the presence of her husband, that you would build it, and you will just have to do it."

I consulted the best lawyer I knew. His fee was $150.

I built the servants' quarters—and I saw where I stood as a Negro contractor.

Later, under a carefully worded contract, I built a home for a policeman, E. O. Eddleman. I finished the house to his satisfaction and called for a settlement. I had learned to figure closely, and to have as little coming to me as possible. I told him that he owed me $883. He said, "Yes, but I must be sure that all the labor and materials are paid for. I know where everything came from, so I will meet you there and pay everybody off."

The following morning we met in the office of the West Lumber Company. The policeman greeted the owner, J. J. West, and stated that he was there to check on, and pay for, all the material used in his house.

"I don't know you, or what Yancey used on your house," said Mr. West, "but I depend upon him for my money."

"Yes, but my property is responsible," the officer said.

"That is true, but since Yancey's bill is small, why don't you just pay it? I'll give clear receipts to both of you, and that will settle the matter."

"O.K."

The bookkeeper reported my bill as $81. As he wrote out the check, the officer muttered, "That nigger still has $800 of my money."

The owner heard him and said, "Yancey is a good boy, and he pays all his bills."

After writing the $81 check for the company and getting his receipt, the officer started to leave. I called him and asked for my check, saying that I wanted the company to cash it for me. He drew the check, muttering again about $800 of his money.

As soon as he was out the door, Mr. J. J. West said, "Beat that man to the bank, Yancey!"

I jumped over the back fence of the West Lumber Company and ran all the way past the D. R. Wilder Candy Company's plant and to the Atlanta National Bank.

A few days later, the bank cashier told me that the policeman had arrived at the bank five minutes after I had left. He had tried to stop the check, but it was too late.

It was becoming increasingly clear that, while my work was approved and my attitude acceptable, I was not to be permitted to profit by them. My financial standing, like my social and political status, was to remain unchanged, and at the sunset of life, I would have no assets and no security.

A trip to the poorhouse at the age of sixty was not pleasant to contemplate, so I began looking for a change of career.

Although I still clung to State's Rights as a principle, I was becoming convinced that a strong central government was the Negro's best hope. I decided to seek federal employment. My first choice was the foreign service of the State Department, but when I discovered that I was, for lack of education, unfit for this, I took a Civil Service examination.

On February 2, 1909, I sold an unfinished contract on the St. John's Church, which I was building in Hart County, Georgia, and went to work for the United States Post Office. The salary of $800 per year seemed like starvation wages, but I was encouraged when, several months after I started, it was raised to $800. And there was this advantage: no one knew the size of my check. I could take it all home without fear of garnishment or legal suit.
At first all the postmasters were Republicans. Some were pleasant officials, others offensive. Most of them came originally from the North, and they took pains to let me know that I had no special claims on their friendship because of this. One such postmaster never spoke to me during the entire term of his office, until the day Wilson was elected President. My desk-mate later told me that I was so astonished, I just swore!

The Democrats were hungry. A Fifth District Representative, making a speech, said, "We are now again in the house of our fathers, and within a few days some nigger gentlemen at the post office will be looking for jobs."

They began firing Negroes right and left. Burleson of Texas was Postmaster General, and he instructed the South to make the changes, and said he would uphold them. Bolling H. Jones was made postmaster of Atlanta, and he called the Negro carriers, clerks, and custodians in for a separate pep-talk.

"I hold your jobs in my hand!" he said. "You who work slow are going to work fast, and you who fast are going to work faster. I have always hired your kind. I am hard, but I’m fair. All you snowballs here know that."

The subterfuge to which they resorted was awful. I saw as many as four men per day dismissed under charges. Letters with false names and addresses were put into the Negro carriers' distributing cases, and if they were delivered in error, this was cause for immediate dismissal. If they were not delivered, but delivery was attempted, this was also cause for dismissal.

I overheard two officials talking. Sam said to Archie: "I can answer any question that a Negro may ask in such a way that he won't know a damned bit more than he did before asking me."

The Letter Carriers National Association brought pressure to bear and called a halt to most of this, and I survived. I saw a fine Southern gentleman of the old school installed as postmaster, and my last years there were pleasant.

Once, after Postmaster Livingston had been installed, a question of looting from a letter arose on my route, and the plaintiff suggested that the carrier be accused. Unknown to either of them, I overheard the conversation, and I felt highly honored when the postmaster said, "If you suspect Yancey, my friend, you are barking up the wrong tree. I would trust him with anything I have."

To this day, he does not know that I overheard him. I would die to uphold his confidence.

Years passed, and salaries rose. My wife and family were conservative, and I was able to buy a twenty-three-acre farm in Lick Skillet (now Adamsville). I operated it at a loss for twenty-five years.

After a while the neighborhood began to grow. White people began buying, and the Negroes began selling—or losing. I needed to know the exact boundaries of my land, and I was the first one in the area to employ a surveyor for this purpose. Mr. Mack adjoined my farm on the west, and the surveyor gave me two rows of corn—about six feet—of what we had thought was his land. The old man came out screaming and trembling. "The line has been there, and it will stay there."

"I will not break friendship over two rows of corn," I said. "You may keep it and tend it. Neither you nor I will be here to claim it in a few short years, but the land and the survey will remain."

He did not claim the two rows the following year.

Mrs. Moon, another neighbor, asked permission to cross my land in order to travel between her home and another house. Later she used the same surveyor that I had employed, and he moved her stakes onto my property, so that the driveway she had been using was now on her property. I asked the surveyor to explain why he was contradicting his own survey, and his answer was, "Go to court."

I consulted three of the best law firms in Atlanta, and decided to follow the advice of the attorney who told me, "Yancey, you are a Negro; you need not expect to win over a white woman. Her being a widow won't help you, and your being a Government employee won't help you before a poor white jury, either. You'll just throw good money away. Sell the land for whatever you can get, or give her the right-of-way."
I sold the land at a loss to a man who would, I thought, fight her for his rights; both parties soon died.

By now the automobile was becoming popular. All physicians and businessmen had them, and now that Ford’s Model T was on the market, every workingman with a family was beginning to think in terms of driving.

Dr. W. F. Penn bought a Buick, and being a Negro, he was not supposed to own such a car. He might own a less-expensive car—but not a Buick! So the local distributor refused to service the doctor’s car, and he had to order parts from the factory, and let inexperienced workmen service it.

I decided to have an automobile. I went down to the Ford agency with $400 in cash, and I bought a car, filled the tank with gasoline at 14 cents per gallon, and still had $2.00 left.

I thought of a poem I had written when I was a boy on the farm.

Even now I can hear the explosions, And scent gasoline and burnt oil.
This smell is now bringing up notions Of things that pay better than soil.

The teachings of John Rockefeller
And “Boozer” concerning the field
Will not be “above par,” stock seller
Because of the automobile.

It’s costing us thousands of dollars,
And makes our economy squeal.
Our creditor actually hollers,
But we want an automobile.

Don’t tell me the wanting is foolish,
When, for one, the honest will steal.
Some swindle, some rob, and some are ghoulish
To purchase an automobile.

Some owners are without a driveway,
And, parking their car on the street,
They’re looking with scorn on the subway,
And bragging to all whom they meet.

My family is naked and starving;
No shelter my children to shield;
But under the house I am carving
A place for an automobile.

Though thousands of people it’s killing,
Congestion made by it is real,
I don’t give a damn. I am willing
To buy me an automobile.

Ambition

With country boys owning bicycles
And lots of the girls owning wheels,
Ambition among us down trickles
And through our community steals.

Bobo has a bicycle racer.
What can I obtain to outstrip?
I long for a gas auto-pacer
That gives the whole family a trip.

Too well I remember the first car
That chug-chugged along by my field.
Its honk-honk was sweeter than nectar.
Oh, gracious! That automobile!

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CHAPTER FIVE

As a substitute letter carrier, I covered the entire city at one time or another, and I met all types of people. Having been raised among whites, and having lived with them until I was eighteen years old, I did not really know the colored people, and I was often astonished at their backwardness in the presence of white people. They seemed deliberately to degrade themselves, especially in the presence of women. I think my first clash in the service was with a woman who always referred to her married daughter as "Miss Clemmie." I always asked for Mrs. Watson when I had to deliver a letter to her personally.

"Why don't you ask for Miss Clemmie?" the woman asked.

"Because she is married, and no longer a Miss," I replied.

"Well, they all call her 'Miss,' and you are no better than they."

"Who-all do you mean, Madam? I'm sure your visitors and neighbors don't address her in that manner any more."

"Well, all Negroes do, and you are a nigger, ain't you?"

"Not if it means calling married women 'Miss,'" was my reply.

Another time a woman called to me across the street to get a letter she wanted to mail. I was in conversation with another patron at the time, and later I found that I had no reason to cross the street. She threw the letter on the sidewalk and reentered the house. I did not cross the street to get the letter.

A few days later, I was shown a letter that her husband had written to the department, and ordered to reply to it. I had already reported the incident to my superiors.

The letter read substantially as follows:

DEAR SIR:

I want to call your attention to the discourteous and almost insulting manner in which a certain nigger letter-carrier of your office treated my wife. I feel it is only necessary to report it to you in order to make him behave properly.

Respectfully yours,

X. Y. ALLAN

In reply I wrote:

DEAR SIR:

This charge does not state the infraction. It merely states, as a fact, that it was a certain nigger letter-carrier. Perhaps it is there wherein lies the near-insult. If so, the gentleman does not expect an apology from me.

Respectfully yours, etc.

My reply was returned by the postmaster with a request that I mention the letter incident and explain why I was not apologizing. I answered that an apology implied sorrow for the act in question and a promise not to repeat it. I was not sorry, I said, for being a Negro in the past, and I certainly meant to repeat it in the future.

Another time, I was chatting with a man and his wife, who was in her early fifties and had been without her teeth for a year or more. He razzed her about biting a sewing thread, and she countered by saying he was preventing her from getting teeth. Smilingly, I said to him, "You should not do that. She is a pretty woman even now, and you will appreciate the improvement."

She sprang lightly to my side, nestled close, looked dramatically into my face, and murmured, "Thank you."

He reddened, told her to go home, and walked off down the street. I walked along with him, and tried to continue our conversation on other matters, but I met with little success. Years later he would still meet me with a scowl, in spite of my affability.

Many men whose families I served appreciated my honorable and straightforward manner, and they often made gifts, such as wallets, watches, pocket knives, cuff-links, etc., to prove
it. Others would give me cigars, cigarettes, pornographic pictures and poems, and alcoholic beverages, all of which I refused in early years. Later I learned to accept them, and to destroy them or give them away. Not being perfect, I found that some of them appealed to me, and these I kept. Despite all of this, all of them reacted the same way if a female of their race exhibited the least degree of friendship toward me. They would become surly toward me, or brutal toward the female.

Once, while making house to house deliveries, I saw four young women sitting on the steps further down the street. They were wearing short shorts and halters, smoking cigarettes, and talking with a thin-faced young man who was standing on the sidewalk. As I drew near, I heard him ask, and then demand, that the girls go into the house. I don't know what they answered, but they burst out laughing at him and began dancing around the yard. He met me next door, and asked for their mail. I knew he didn't live there, so I smiled and walked past him. As I turned into the gate, he asked, "What are you looking at?"

The women laughed, and so did I. As I came out through the gate, he was glaring at me with clenched fists. I dared not turn my back with him in this attitude, and, as all Negroes know that this type is a coward and does not act alone, I walked up close to him and whispered, "If you raise a finger, I will beat hell out of you right here."

He didn't move or say a word, and I went my way.

There was a theater in my district, owned and operated by A. A. Fowler, who was a State Senator. One day he was standing in the doorway waiting for me, and talking to two little Negro boys. As I approached, I heard one of the boys ask him, "Can us go in yo' show fo' dis?" They held up two nickels, which was less than half the price of one ticket.

The boys were about nine years old. Dressed in shirts and blue denim overalls, they were black, ashly, unbathe, and bony. Standing over them, you could look down their overalls, along their emaciated bodies, and see their bare feet on the ground. A. A. Fowler's reply was as follows:

"You take your money, go into my restaurant, buy yourselves two hot dogs, eat them, wash your hands, and you may go into the show for nothing."

I made my delivery and left. My heart was so full that I could not have spoken to anyone. This was true Christian benevolence—but why must a Negro be so needy to qualify for friendship?

Early one morning two Negro boys, ages four and six, were picking up blocks in front of a house which their father was building. A passing policeman jumped off his horse, slapped his hands on his knees, and yelled, "What are you doing here, you brats?"

The children just looked up, astonished.

At that moment their father came around from the back of the house and asked the officer what he wanted.

"I saw these boys picking up blocks at a new building, and I thought to run them off by slapping my hands. Children [he meant Negro children] always run from a policeman."

"Those are my boys," said their father, "and they will not run from an officer. They are taught that you are their friend, and that you will protect them—so don't frighten them."

The officer complimented the father upon his teaching, but he stated that, in the main, Negro children were wrongdoers and would run from a white man.

Once I was making some deliveries in an apartment building. A young and pretty woman whose marital status I did not know was standing behind me, looking on. She opened conversation by stating that she was going to move, and I handed her a change-of-address form. She said that she was eight dollars short for her rent money, and that she was afraid she might not be able to get it. I expressed hope for her success, and she expressed doubt.

"Oh, I feel sure you will get the money some way."

"Do you think so?" she asked in a soft, kittenish voice, as she rested her chin on my shoulder, as if watching me work.

"Sure, sure," I said, and I turned to leave the building.

Looking up, we both saw the house manager's wife, Mrs. Arthur French, on the stairway landing.

Instantly, the young woman remarked to me in a loud voice
for Mrs. French to hear, "You are a white man, aren't you?"

I was so angry, I screamed, "No! I am a Negro, and you know it! Furthermore, I don't have to be white to be a gentleman!"

"That's so. I know it," she said in panic as she fled up the stairs past the manager's wife.

Later Mrs. French told me that she had seen and heard everything, and that no misconduct could possibly be charged to me.

It proved again that white people do not fear Negroes as much as they fear each other.

Then there was the woman who was sixty-odd when I was thirty-nine. She was so solicitous of my welfare when the weather was bad, inviting me in for coffee, tea, or lemonade. At such times she would discuss her loneliness, and her young relatives and friends' want of understanding of her desires or needs. She once noticed the coldness of my hands, and a few weeks later she gave me a pair of wool wristbands that she had knitted herself. As I expressed my appreciation, she insisted on putting them on me herself.

I learned from her that, at sixty, a woman is not necessarily atrophied spiritually, physically, or in practical human endeavor. After forty years I still have the wristbands, and a high regard for the noble character, a Southern white lady.

Becky Elliott was recognized by everyone as a white woman, but she was in disrepute for being the mother of two Negro children. Unlike others in her position, she refused to give the girls up, and because of this, she led a very lonely life.

The older girl was beautiful. At sixteen, she was queenly in bearing, fully developed, and better educated, through private tutoring, than the average child her age, white or Negro. Even those who were most critical admitted that she was "pretty as a pink."

Her sister was slightly darker, and of much coarser features. When she was fourteen, the colored boys dated her regularly, and ten years later one of them married her, and they left the state.

It was the older girl, Martha, and her life, love, and sacrifice, that exposes the administration of our civil, moral, and religious laws.

There was a prominent physician in our area whose family consisted of his wife and two sons. The older boy, Beauregard, was a tall, slender, sparsely-made youth of eighteen, a boy of noble character and high, quiet, unassuming intelligence. He was considered a credit to the community—that is, until it became known that he was secretly dating "Becky Elliott's gal, Martha."

His father and brother were known to oppose his behavior violently. His father wanted to rush him off to medical school. For several days his parents quarreled bitterly, and one evening, when they were at home alone, a neighbor was called and the alarm spread that the mother was violently ill. The doctor had placed her on the bed, and he refused any help as he apparently worked to revive her.

She was dead.

So distraught and tender was he that he insisted on lifting her head and shoulders himself as she was placed in her coffin.

It was whispered later by a little Negro servant girl who had been present that the doctor had struck his wife on the back of the neck with a mush paddle.

Beauregard said that his mother had planned to send him and Martha to Kansas, where she had relatives and Indian connections. Soon Beauregard departed, but Martha remained with her mother. It is doubtful that she had been intended to go anyway.

Within a few months, word came that Beauregard was married. Some two years later, Beauregard suffered a permanent injury in service, and returned home with his wife. Martha took the job of waiting on his wife in confinement, and nursed the baby for nearly two years.

Once when the child was about 18 months old, its father bought a little hood for the baby and as usual, presented it to Martha. She laughingly told him that his son had passed the stage of wearing that style of headwear. Furthermore, if he let his wife see his choice, he would be laughed at, so they both
agreed to hide it in the bottom of Baby’s clothes chest, whence it turned up later, tragically.

The child was so devoted to Martha, his nurse, that the mother became violently jealous, and drove her away.

Beauregard was so angry that home life became unbearable after a few months. The baby would not leave his father, and the mother began to threaten divorce. Beauregard remained out of sight for a week. Finally his wife called to say that the baby was sick. Rushing to them, he found that the boy was delirious, and calling, every few minutes, for Martha.

The wife, full of sincere and pitiful apologies, went to get Martha. Martha took the now frail mother into her arms, and said, "Yes, I will come back. I have been sick at heart to nurse him ever since I left."

When they reached the bedside, the mother said, "Baby, here is Martha." The incoherent mumbling continued unabated for a short time, then suddenly stopped. The child’s face was averted. He half whispered, half spoke the name, "Martha!"

"Yes, Martha," the mother repeated.

With a quick turn of his head, he saw her. "Martha!" he screamed, lifting his body to a sitting position. He fell back exhausted. Martha reached for the frail little body, and kissing his fevered cheeks, hands, and forehead, she enveloped the child completely, to the exclusion of everything in the world but air.

In five minutes the child laughed. Mother and father left the room, arm in arm, for their first night’s rest and tranquility in months.

It would please me to say that the story ends here; but as Martha held the child night and day, the doctors, one by one, gave up hope. They said that Martha’s love was all that kept the child alive, and that it was merely a matter of time. The father’s sorrow was pitiful to see.

His wife disliked the confidence and high respect he gave Martha. He did not treat her according to the servant code, and often he referred to the child as "our baby," with as much tenderness as if Martha had been its mother.

It would be wrong to think that the mother did not love her child and wish him well. She was genuinely alarmed over the boy’s condition.

One morning, when Martha had been with the child, apparently without sleep, for four long days and nights, the mother was awake and in the sickroom before daylight. As she came into the room, Martha was holding the little body in her arms. Sensing the mother’s usual objections, she put it on the bed, whereupon the child began to cry. She tried to soothe it by shaking the mattress gently and humming a little tune, but it continued to squirm and cry. The mother petulantly said, "Why don’t you take him up and hold him?"

Poor Martha! She had gone four days and nights with no encouragement from any source, except for the few times when Beauregard had noiselessly slipped in while his wife slept, gazed speechlessly at his dying son for a few moments, gently patted her shoulder, and left.

Her tired arms reached again for the baby. It refused to lie in her lap and look at its mother, but, with its knees in her lap, it lay with its head against Martha’s shoulder.

The doctor came in and made a quick examination, and, while the mother stood by weeping, shook his head sorrowfully. Beauregard, never a strong-looking man, sat in the corner with his head between his hands, elbows resting on knees.

"It can’t be many hours longer," said the doctor.

Even while he spoke, a spasm seized the child. Its body became rigid for a moment, and froth appeared on its lips. A neighbor woman, who had come in, heard the doctor say, "He is going now." She went over and reached for the child, just as a volume of frothy mucous came from its mouth, covering Martha’s lap and running down her shoulder. The woman quickly withdrew, but in the face of Martha’s stoicism (or was it love?), she must have felt ashamed, and again she offered to take the child.

Martha held on tight, and cried out, "For the sake of Almighty God—leave us alone!"

The pitch of her voice startled everyone.

The child was dead.

She held him close to her breast: for a fleeting moment, then
looked at his face, put him on the bed, kissed his forehead, and was gone.

Since the family was white and she was Negro, Martha was not included in the funeral arrangements, but when the hour of burial arrived, she dressed and, against the advice of her mother, walked down to the cemetery. She had been boldly determined to see the child buried, but her determination began to fail when she saw the great crowd of white people. She looked for someone Negroic, as we all do at large gatherings, but there was no one. As she stood there, torn between the love in her heart and the shame of her social position, Beauregard noticed her. He touched his wife's elbow, and nodded in Martha's direction.

"Come here, Martha," the woman called. "You loved him too."

It was a touching sight to see those two women, one colored, one white, weeping unashamed in each other's arms. Beauregard stood with his back turned, looking into the distant past. What were his thoughts?

At last the women composed themselves, and the clods of Georgia clay ceased to rattle on the wooden coffin that held the only part of Beauregard that Martha could ever admit loving. As they turned from the grave, the child's mother said, "Martha, I thank you for all you have done. You tried hard."

"Yes," added Beauregard, "if only our baby had had you all the time."

What he meant is left to the reader.

Time elapsed. Becky Elliott was dead—and so was Martha! Old Beck, as everyone called her, had been bedridden for some time. Martha supported her and took care of her. Martha's former employer gave her odd jobs of housework occasionally, and Beauregard urged his wife to employ the girl as much as possible. One day he asked, "Why don't you let Martha wash and iron our baby's clothing? You could give them away. The sight of them still hurts you, and it always will."

She gathered up the baby's things and sent them to Martha.

The next morning—no one knows how it happened—Martha Elliott was found in her mother's old rocking chair, clutching a baby bonnet in her hands. She was dead.

Becky collapsed, and died a few hours later.

Although Old Beck had been thought disreputable in life, her white neighbors declined to abandon her to the Negroes in death. The Negroes, on their part, didn't want to neglect paying their last respects to the young Negro girl. It happened, therefore, that a number of women, both white and black, met at the Elliott home to prepare the bodies for burial. There were a few moments of embarrassment and confusion as to who should do what for whom, and then Beauregard's wife marched in and took charge. From that moment, everyone cooperated.

Two graves were prepared, and the wagon bearing the bodies was driven between them. One coffin was removed by white men, and the other by Negroes. A white minister officiated at one grave, and a Negro at the other. Finally, it was over, and Becky Elliott and her beautiful Negro daughter, Martha, were no more.

This should have ended the story, but later it was reported that the coffins had accidentally been exchanged, and that the white woman had been committed to eternal rest by Uncle Peter.

"If this be true," Beauregard remarked fervently, "then God be praised! For through mistake he has honored one who richly deserves it."

As the years passed, Beauregard and his wife remained childless. Everyone grew to love his wife, who was said to resemble Martha. She seemed to enjoy the comparison, and she was indeed a pretty woman. She often talked of her baby and his nurse.

In the lives of individuals there may come a time when one is afraid, that is, ashamed, of his racial identity. Under varying circumstances, this has happened to members of every race.

Homer Yancey was married at an early age to the daughter of the President Elder of a Negro church. They were soon separated. Homer was sued for alimony, did not pay, and was
thrown into jail. Later he was arrested again several times. Finally, his wife was told to “stop bothering the court, let that nigger alone, and get a job of work yourself.”

She died not too long afterward, and he was a widower.

Homer’s single bliss did not last long, however. He was showing signs of racial restlessness, and family relations were becoming strained. He met and married a girl whom he called Puerto Rican, but who was believed by his family to be as much a Negro as he. They tried invading white social strata without success, and the marriage culminated in an agreeable divorce.

Homer was a steam engineer and refrigeration specialist of no mean ability. He was, at one time, night engineer in the biggest ice plant in Atlanta, Georgia, and but for the fact that he was known to be a Negro, he might have been engineer-in-charge at the Atlantic Ice and Coal Company’s big plant.

He decided to resign from the Negro race, and was virtually banished by his family. In 1920 he went to Chicago, and he was soon married to a white woman there. Two children were born of this marriage, a boy on March 10, 1922, named Homer Gilbert, and a girl later, unnamed at the time of the report.

Homer Yancey became as spiteful a man as Chicago knew. No one hated Negroes more, or worked harder against them, politically, socially, and economically, than did he.

Some years later he died of a throat ailment.

April 13, 1920, found me, my wife, and our seventeen-month-old baby in New York City at the start of a cruise to South America. My oldest son, who was then fifteen, had been left in charge of our home, automobile, and cows. He was given authority to attend to all necessary business, and to see that he and his three brothers and sister (not counting the youngest boy) went to school. We planned to be away for about three months.

As we sailed past the Statue of Liberty, I was somewhat astonished to hear a good white American say, “Good-bye, old gal, damn your old soul. I hope I may never see you again!”

I marked him well, and later I learned that he was a native of St. Louis. He had been in the retail liquor business there, and Prohibition had ruined him. He was on his way to Rio de Janeiro, where he hoped to regain his fortune.

By the morning of April 15, I was as sick as a horse, and so was nearly everyone else. Before a week was over, we had become so accustomed to walking over people lying on the deck that it caused no comment whatever. I saw an old man lying on deck near a stairway, looking at a young girl who was hesitating about climbing the stairs over him. I was amused to hear him urge her on.

“Go ahead, young lady. If I see anything, I won’t live to tell about it anyway!”

Of the nearly one thousand souls aboard, there were but five Negroes. In addition to my family of three, there was a New York girl on her way to marry a Brazilian sailor, and a Texan, a farmer who claimed that he wanted to spend some Texas money while he was abroad.

Our first few meals aboard were taken at any seats we found vacant. Later the chief steward announced that, to enhance the pleasure of the two-week trip, the management had taken the liberty of assigning everyone to various groups that were thought compatible. My family, the New York girl, and the Texan were assigned to table number three. It was a six-place table, splendidly located as to view, lighting, and traffic, but one place was empty. To this place, a seventy-year-old German was assigned. He spoke no English, and his age precluded his trying to learn. I have no doubt that this assignment was intended as a double-edged discourtesy: to him, in punishment for the recently ended war, and to us, because we were Negroes. Sensing this, we were especially solicitous of his welfare, and his “Danke schon,” when we parted, was reflected deep in his discouraged, conquered eyes as he clasped our hands for the first and last time.

After fourteen and one-half days at sea, we drew into Rio Bay, past the famous Sugar Loaf Mountain. The city looked like a huge crown, with tiers of jeweled lights beginning at sea level and climbing, higher and higher, up the mountain. Above,
there were isolated lights that topped the crown with star-like points. As we waited for daybreak, the cocks began to crow, and we heard a bark, and a howl. The animals seemed to speak the same language here as in North America, and I felt that perhaps it would not be very different after all.

How wrong I was! After leaving the customs office, where all languages were spoken fluently, we walked through the streets to our hotel. I left my family there and went out to look for a bookstore, and within thirty minutes I had an English-Portuguese dictionary, and I began to fallar Portuguesse.

Hotels, like everything else in Brazil, were unsegregated. White, black, and all the intermediate shades shared the same facilities, and all respected the law and law-enforcement authorities. The police carried nightsticks, but they seldom used them. In Rio I observed for the first time the phenomenon of a public that would almost always go to the assistance of a policeman who was being resisted.

Having served for some ten or twelve years with the United States Civil Service, I was interested in the Brazilian Post Office, and I took the liberty of introducing myself to the Postmaster General. He spoke no English, but he had several clerks who did. The entire department seemed interested in me, and especially in some suggestions I made relative to the preparation of mail for delivery.

Through the postmaster, I met a man from Texas who was employed by the Leopoldina Railway Company. I made several trips over the line, which is, at some points, a cog railway.

As a tourist, I had to report, from time to time, to the United States Embassy. On one of my visits I took a clerk from the Brazilian Post Office with me, and introduced him as my new friend. The United States representative engaged him in serious conversation for perhaps half an hour, in Portuguese that was too rapidly spoken for me to catch anything but an occasional phrase. When they finished, the clerk excused himself, saying that he had to return to his office at once. His company was not made available to me again, and I was left to draw my own conclusions as to what my white fellow-countryman said to a foreigner about me in a foreign land.

As I traveled about the country, I became increasingly fond of the people and their language. My wife, on the contrary, did not enjoy the schools, churches, cafés, etc., for want of the ability to communicate. On those occasions when she was understood, however, she was delighted.

One beautiful morning, we revisited the botanical gardens. My wife always enjoyed these trips. She was gazing at Sugar Loaf Mountain, and she remarked upon its beauty. An aged gentleman overheard her. He rushed over, and, gallantly bowing low, he kissed her hand and gave the mountain to her! She laughed heartily as she remembered how, when we had first arrived, a young girl openly admired my watch. I took it off and gave it to the child, and she clasped it to her breast, exclaiming “Bonito! Bonito!” My wife was much relieved when the child returned the watch.

Trips to Santos, Sao Paulo, and the Platte River basin made me starry-eyed with the thought of a future in South America, but my wife treated it solely as a trip that would soon end.

We weighed anchor late in June, toured the Southern waters, and returned to New York.

In New York I bought Pullman tickets for the trip back to Atlanta. My wife objected to this. She knew that we could not enter a Pullman car in Atlanta, and she was afraid to be seen emerging from one.

We entered the Pullman car, and the porter asked us as we watched him open the beds. Then a fine-looking gentleman of Southern vintage stepped inside the car and remarked “Huh! Niggers in this car.”

My wife saw the man and heard the remark. Holding our baby in my arms, I faced him and returned his stare. He turned away, and chatted for a few minutes with another man. When he turned his glare back to me, he found that I had not taken my eyes off him or changed my disdainful expression. His countenance fell, and he left the car.

I listened for him all night, but I did not hear his voice again. In the morning, my wife insisted upon transferring to the Negro day coach, and I lost my opportunity to enter Atlanta in a Pullman car, like a Southern gentleman.
On arriving home, we found everything in perfect order. The cousins who had stayed with the children were ready to go. Our fifteen-year-old son had behaved like an adult, and the children had attended school regularly and earned good grades. My car had been maintained, the cows and pigs had been attended to, and the premises were in good shape.

My dream of emigration was shattered when my family expressed their unanimous desire not to learn a new language. I settled down to work, trying to appreciate my white friends, of whom I had many, and battling those who gloried in degrading me.

The news of our return spread quickly, and we had many visitors. I was invited by Reverend Oliver to speak on Brazil at the Warren Memorial Church. Many people became interested in Brazil, and a delegation of public school teachers and others made the same trip some years later. An article I wrote about Brazil was published in the Atlanta Independent and the Postal Record, and it was reprinted and publicized by the Catholic press.

At the age of sixteen, my oldest son was being graduated from high school. He came to me and said, “Papa, I am through with high school and ready for college, but if I go through college and stop with merely a liberal-arts degree, I am ready to stop right now.”

“You are too young to hire out as a laborer,” I replied. “What do you want after your college course?”

“A four-year course in medicine at the best university in the United States!”

I promised him the medical course, and he entered college. In order to be ready to fulfill my promise, I tightened my belt for four years.

One of the best medical schools anywhere was right here in Georgia, but it was not, and still is not, open to Negroes. When the time came, we began filing applications. Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, New York University, and many others—all to no avail. Filled up, was the reply. Or, too late. Or simply, sorry.

My son and I were both discouraged. The summer had passed, and our sixteen months of application correspondence had netted us nothing.

On Labor Day in 1925 I boarded a train for the University of Michigan. The dean of the medical school had replied to our application in a sympathetic manner, but he had suggested that my son matriculate at Meharry Medical School of Nashville, Tennessee.

Upon my arrival, someone in the outer office told me that the matter was closed. The next day, I insisted on seeing Dean Cabot. I was told that he would not be available for conference until the next day. Now three days had passed, and the people in the outer office showed no signs of relenting.

I waited for hours at a time. I conceded that the matter was closed, but I told them that I had promised my son I would see Dr. Cabot. I had come a thousand miles to do so, and I was determined to keep my promise if I had to stand in the office all day, every day that week. At this point, I was given an appointment for nine o’clock Friday morning.

It was now Thursday night. I knew no one in Ann Arbor, and my money was fast running out. I went to the Police Department, explained my plight, and asked for a cell for the night. They had none available, but an officer escorted me to the County Jail, where the sympathetic jailer put me up in a crude room. Later his wife suggested that I be given the better-furnished women’s room, since no women prisoners were expected.

I rested well, thanked them, and left early on Friday morning.

Promptly at nine o’clock I was ushered into the office of Dr. Hugh Cabot, who greeted me and sailed right into the subject. “What is wrong with Meharry, Mr. Yancey?”

“Please, Dr. Cabot. I don’t want to waste your valuable time. Let me talk to you about your school, and to the people in Tennessee about theirs.”

I spoke of how the school in Georgia was denying my boy a chance, while white Georgia boys, who would be welcome
at Emory or Georgia State, were at the University of Michigan. I told him how, in return for my taxes and my law-abiding citizenship, I received from the state of Georgia not one dime toward my boy's education—merely because I was a Negro.

Dr. Cabot heard me out. When I had finished, he took my hand, looked straight into my face, and said, "Believe me, I will do everything in my power to enroll your boy here."

I thanked him and left.

Twenty-four hours later, a telephone came, informing me that, since the college from which my son had graduated was not on the accredited list, he would have to enter the senior class at the University of Michigan in order to qualify for admission, the following year, to the medical school. I agreed to this, and five years later my son was a Doctor of Medicine.

The condition of which I had complained to Dr. Cabot was still in effect when, seven years later, I had another son who wanted to matriculate. There was still not a dime available to help my boys who were taking out-of-state medical courses, but sentiment was changing. The courts were beginning to rule in our favor, and many white people, especially women, were writing books and articles on the subject. My second son had already finished the medical course at Meharry, and he had a lucrative practice in Atlanta.

To prove the kindness of Southern white friends, I should like to cite a Georgia State Senator whom I approached for a recommendation to the university for my third son. The Senator told me that if I wrote what I wanted him to say, he would have his secretary copy it on official stationery and send it to the university, giving a carbon copy to me. I demurred, saying that I thought he might not approve of what I would say. His rejoinder was, "I know you will be business-like, not mushy. I will vouch for your facts."

I wrote the letter and submitted it to the Senator, who copied it verbatim and sent it in, adding two of the most convincing paragraphs I have ever read. My son was admitted to the university, and graduate four years later. My wife and I revere the memory of Senator A. A. Fowler for his action.

There are hundreds, yes, thousands, of white men and women in Georgia who are sympathetic, liberal, Christian, humane, and just in their thinking about the Negro. They would act accordingly, but they fear the critical actions of each other. They do not have the moral strength to support them against the cry of "Nigger-lover"—and so all are placed in the same category by the nation and the world.

Prospects of universal peace create apprehension among Negroes. Experience and observation have taught me to abhor war, but to dread peace.

In my childhood, I saw my father struggle against economic sanctions, personal indignities, and social snubs. There were job differentials and tax and school injustices that made my boyish heart sick.

Then came the Spanish-American War. What a change in press comments and neighbors' attitudes and disposition! They talked with, instead of to, my father, about "our country," "our country's call," and "our common brotherhood and patriotic duty."

At one time during the war, I saw my father and three white men take the Honorable Thomas E. Watson from a fringe-topped survey and carry him to a speakers' stand. What a change! I read of Captain Grant of Atlanta, a Negro, along with Teddy Roosevelt and Admiral Dewey, and discussed them in so friendly a fashion with white neighbors that I felt at last that I was a citizen of a democratic country, surrounded by friends and well-wishing neighbors who were patriotic in spirit and law-abiding in purpose.

I was mistaken. When peace came again, it was a white man's country again. The Battle of San Juan Hill was supplanted by the Battles of Hogansville and Palmetto, Georgia, and the Negro war was resumed for another twenty years.

Then came 1917. Dark war clouds again brought pledges of friendship from neighbors and government. Our boys rushed out of school to fight side by side with white boys. They marched against Verdun, when they knew that the Armistice was almost
upon them. The useless march cost the life of Mallieu Rush, the son of my bosom friend.

As the war clouds waned, so did the brotherhood. At first, equal social status of American troops abroad was objected to by the white American soldiers. The Negro men were kept from dances and social gatherings by their fellow troops, and ridiculed in public. The most damnable practice of which I heard took place in France.

There were two American military camps in France, about four miles apart. Each day, when mess call was sounded, the Negro troops from each camp were marched to the mess hall at the other camp. It took them an hour or more to make the trip. This had the double effect of keeping the mess hall segregated, since the white troops finished eating before the Negroes arrived, and of insuring that the white troops had the first choice of food. After eating the leftovers, the Negroes were required to clean up the mess hall. An inspiring assignment!

The easy conversation that had taken place between Negro and white troops during the war evaporated, and was replaced first by an occasional hello, later by a nod of the head, and finally by a shake of the head. All notice ceased when the troopships passed the Statue of Liberty. Peace had returned—and with it the Negro war for existence, which was to last another twenty years.

World War I opened the eyes of many Negroes. They learned that there were other places than Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina in the world, and they began to travel. Those who had not been in the army listened to the veterans speak of liberty, and they mistook liberty for license. Having wallowed in the slough of filth, ignorance, and personal indecency since birth, they were objectionable to respectable people, both Negro and white. But the responsibility for them lies with the society that created them. The white man prefers ignorance and low morals in the Negro to decency and respectability.

The Federal Government provided opportunities for education, and many Negroes took advantage of training available outside the South and learned of some of the rights to which they were entitled. They began going into the courts and securing favorable decisions.

Then came Pearl Harbor. I had never dreamed that the Japanese would dare mount such an attack, but I understood their feelings.

Years before, Japan had whipped Russia to her knees. The peace negotiations were concluded in the United States. Like all colored races, the Japanese wanted to be considered equal with the white. Under pressure from the United States, coupled with an implied promise of integration for their people, they gave up everything they had won in the war.

Almost before their envoys reached home, the Japanese Exclusion Act had been passed.

As I said, I understood how they felt.

A few weeks after Pearl Harbor, I was on board a train that had come down from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. The train was segregated, but it was filled with hundreds of Negro draftees and volunteers who were in the charge of white enlisted men. One fine-looking brown-skinned youth sat forlornly alone on a side seat, thumbing through a small booklet. I took a seat by his side and asked to see it. It was issued by the War Department "To Negroes Only," and this is approximately what it said:

"You are going South for basic training. The local customs will be different, and you may not like them. You are not setting race problems; you are here to win a war. Whatever you are ordered to do, wherever you are ordered to go or not to go, you are commanded to obey if the order is given by a white person who is in authority, civilian or military, regardless of rank or age."

He was going to fight—perhaps to die—for his country, and that is how he was treated! What type of morale would instruction of this type instill in a soldier? No wonder they were generally used merely as laborers.

The military establishment tried to offset some of these practices by promotions and merit awards. The high command pressed for Negro promotions while the army was still segre-
gated. As a result, white officers would recommend only the inefficient and militarily inept for promotion, in the hope that they would fail and thus discredit Negro officers as a group.

At home, the Negro prospered during the war, as usual. His wages were better, and he was freer from insult—a citizen of the country, with rights that were to be respected. His wife resigned from domestic service and remained at home with her children. Juvenile delinquency among Negroes declined, as it rose among whites. The husband became able to support his family and send his children to school.

White women publicly complained of their inability to hire Negro servants, who now demanded better wages, and there were many threats of reprisal to come when the war would end.

The Negro began appealing to the courts for rights that had previously been denied him, and he spent his extra earnings for litigation in state courts, with an eye towards appeals to federal courts. This proved profitable during the next decade, because the anti-Negro forces were disorganized, and, believing that more war might be imminent, they behaved almost as decently as they had during actual combat.

During this period the Negro won some twenty-one decisions in United States courts, but as soon as peace returned, the Negro war began again. Flocks of anti-Negro legislation began pouring through the pent-up dams of Southern state legislatures. Much of this tripe remains on the statute books. It will be contested through sweat and blood until it reaches the highest tribunal, where it will be reluctantly set aside, and the whites will be left with the privilege of returning to their several states to pass more and worse legislation, which will again be fought at the Negro's expense.

Judging by past experience, this will continue for some twenty years, until some new catastrophe again provides temporary relief.

During the Korean conflict, the Democratic Party was in power. The President and his majority supported a strong central government. This was in the Negro's favor, since he is dependent upon Washington for whatever relief he gets. Therefore the Democratic Party will continue to be supported by thousands of Negroes who live economically decent lives today because of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, Hugo Black, and others like them who had the courage to back their convictions.

I note that Eisenhower Republicans lay strong claims to Korean peace and civil rights gains. I note also that they made some rather weak gestures in that direction—Little Rock, for example, and the inactive Civil Rights Commission, and soft-worded declarations of principle.

Some Later Items of Interest

Race Sentiment
to
Mrs. J. F. Kennedy

This social trash fresh from the lash
Of servdom has not spoken,
Yet we have hearts and feel the darts
That pierced your heart, now broken.

Your husband was to us a hope,
His voice a music tone,
A Lincoln, murdered by a dope—
Leaves us again alone.

The sun is shining through the tree,
Doves in the meadows groan,
And people passing look at me;
I sit here all alone.
The others seem to laugh or sigh,
A few, like me, disowned,
Men of both races passing by,
But me, I am alone.

I suffer pangs of deep remorse
For things this land has done
To Indians, Negroes, Jews by force.
In this, I am alone.

Death-dealing bomb came out of the sky,
Killed hundreds, maiming some.
The maimed that live now pray to die,
Like me, they pray alone.

Then came to our horizon bright
A young man, scarcely grown,
Gave to the world a ray of light.
Oh, God! he was alone?

Peace was his message to the world,
Begged that none throw a stone.
A prince in state or social swirl,
He seemed to stand alone.

The dastard that deigned to destroy
This gem! Time will intone
His soul was pure, without alloy,
Outstandingly alone.

Today I pray this nation cease
Its honor-making drone
Of installations (war). For peace
Was what he craved, alone.

He wished his nation to unite,
Drew Texan from his home.
He felt, with LBJ, they'd fight,
He would not be alone.

Watch Congress of these fifty states!
Will they the wrongs condone?
Or will they wipe out vice and hates,
Vote civil rights alone?

There will be some in passing by
To place a wreath, full blown.
But on my pillow I must lie,
In tears, I weep alone.

John John, his son, we have in mind,
He needs his father home.
This need the boy will never find,
Forever he's alone.

Caroline, the apple of his eye,
That met him coming home,
His lovely daughter! One have I,
But his is left alone.

The President from office passed,
Replaced by one, our own.
He faces now the stormy blast,
Don't let him stand alone.

We know this nation, proud and great,
On written word has grown.
But deeds must now support the state
Or we go down alone.

God grant this Congress moral strength
(Year '63 is gone).
Support the Kennedys at length,
Don't let them feel alone.

And may we live to bless the clan,
Their faith, their church that's grown
By universal help to man,
It leaves no one alone.
Tuesday, June 4, 1963

TODAY, SIXTY YEARS AGO, I WAS MARRIED. TODAY I AM STILL MARRIED, AND TO THE SAME WOMAN, PROVING BEYOND A DOUBT THAT I AM NOT THE HOLLYWOOD TYPE. MY WIFE HAS PROVEN HER LOYALTY AND WORTH AS WIFE, HOME MANAGER, AND MOTHER.

WE WERE ABLE TO RAISE SEVEN CHILDREN TO MATURITY, ALL OF WHOM WERE GRADUATED FROM COLLEGE, THREE IN MEDICINE AND ONE WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE FROM COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY. A SHORT HISTORY OF EACH FOLLOWS: BERNISE A. YANCEY, A.B., A.U., M.D. FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN; PRACTICED IN SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI, FOR A VERY SHORT TIME IN A SEGREGATED CITY HOSPITAL. HE WAS KILLED BY A DEFECTIVE X-RAY MACHINE THAT WAS FOUND TO BE DANGEROUS IN THE WHITE HOSPITAL AND, AFTER AN ATTEMPT AT OVERHAULING, PLACED IN THE SEGREGATED HOSPITAL TO BE USED BY YOUNG NEGRO DOCTORS WHO CAME IN UNAWARES. THE PRESS AND PEOPLE RAISED SUCH A HOWL THAT A NEW HOSPITAL, NAMED AFTER AN HONORED NEGRO CITIZEN (HOMER PHILIPS), WAS BUILT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HIS DEATH.

PRENTISS Q. YANCEY, A.B., A.U., M.D. FROM MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE; INTERRED AT THE HOMER PHILIPS HOSPITAL IN SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI; RETURNED TO PRACTICE IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA, WHERE HE WAS BORN. HE USED THIS OFFICE BUILDING FOR 30 YEARS. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE FULTON COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND MARRIED TO MISS O. C. (JONNIE) LABOT OF NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA. TO THEIR UNION WERE BORN FOUR SONS: P. Q., JR., ATTENDING VILLANOVA COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA; LABOT RODRIGUE, ATTENDING ST. JOHN'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL, DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS; MICHAEL VICTOR AND GERALD VINCENT, BOTH ATTENDING MARIST COLLEGE (A SEMI-MILITARY, INTEGRATED HIGH SCHOOL) OF ATLANTA, GEORGIA.

FORREST CECIL YANCEY, A.B., CLARK UNIVERSITY, WAS IN THE MERCANTILE BUSINESS FOR EIGHT YEARS, UNTIL FORCED TO SELL OUT BY THE U.S. LOCAL DRAFT BOARD, AND MARRIED MISS MYRNA LOUDELL MARSHALL. HE ACCEPTED EMPLOYMENT WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT CIVIL SERVICE (POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT), WHERE HE HAS BEEN MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS. THEY ARE PARENTS OF THREE CHILDREN: ALFREDA HENRI YANCEY, ATTENDING DREXEL HIGH SCHOOL; FORREST CECIL YANCEY, JR., ALSO ATTENDING DREXEL HIGH; AND ANGELA LYNETTE YANCEY, AT ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS SCHOOL. THEIR MOTHER IS STILL A TEACHER IN THE ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS.


SHE TAUGHT A SHORT TIME IN WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA, HER HUSBAND'S HOME TOWN. THEY SOON REMOVED TO RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, WHERE SHE BECAME A FACULTY MEMBER AND HEAD OF THE HOME ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT OF SHAW UNIVERSITY FOR SIXTEEN YEARS. SHE RETIRED FOR HEALTH REASONS. SHE IS THE MOTHER OF MISS PRENTICE CAROLYN JERVEY, B.S., OF XAVIER UNIVERSITY, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA, AND DOCTOR OF PHARMACY FROM THE SAME SCHOOL. HER YOUNG SON, PAUL R. JERVEY, JR., GRADUATE OF ST. MONICA'S AND CURRENTLY ATTENDING LIGON HIGH, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, IS ATTRACTION SOME LOCAL NOTE AS A PENCIL SKETCH ARTIST.

ASA GREENWOOD YANCEY, B.S., WICHEESE COLLEGE, ATLANTA, GEORGIA, M.D., UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, INTERRED AT CLEVELAND, OHIO, WAS DRAFTED FOR SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II AND HONORABLY
discharged in twenty-nine days at the government’s request that he should serve as a resident and aid the war effort by assisting in the accelerated training of doctors so much needed by the War Department. One year he served in that capacity, and one year at the Marine Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts. From there he went to Meharry Medical College and was soon dispatched to Mound Bayou, Mississippi, to effect its restaffing in accordance with that state’s regulations. This satisfactorily done, he was appointed Chief Surgeon at the United States Veterans Hospital, Tuskegee, Alabama, serving there almost ten years. Pressured by family and friends and intrigued by the challenge offered, he secured a leave of absence (for two years) and accepted the post of Chief Surgeon at the Hughes Spalding Pavilion of Grady Memorial Hospital, a segregated adjunct of the largest hospital in the South, where he now has been for six years. He is now a staff member of the Grady Hospital proper as well as Chief Surgeon of the Pavilion, a member of the Fulton County Medical Association, and Visiting Surgeon at Emory University.

He is married to Miss Carolyn Elizabeth (Margie) Dunbar of Detroit, Michigan. They reside at 2845 Engle Road and have four children: a son, Arthur Henry Yancey, a student at B.T.W. High; twin daughters, Carolyn and Caren, formerly students at B.T.W. High and now attending integrated Southwest High, Atlanta, Georgia. Their youngest son, Asa Greenwood, Jr., is at Frank L. Stanton Public School.

Rodrique Louiz Yancey, our youngest son, is a product of Hampton, Virginia, and though he has the Institute’s diploma and is a qualified printer, he has never plied the trade, preferring to work as a U.S. Civil Service employee with the Post Office Department, where he has been for considerably more than twenty years.

He is married to Miss Clemmie Omogene (Geanie) Williams of Gary, Indiana, A.B., Clarke University, and A.M., Atlanta University; she is currently a teacher in Atlanta public schools. She and her husband reside at 188 Chicamunga Ave. S.W., with their three children: Rose and Patricia Yancey, a student at

B.T.W. High, and Rodrique Louiz and Rheatha Grace Yancey, attending the Ogletorpe Public School.

Interpositionnullificationzation must have been especially thorough to produce the spectacle yesterday (June 9, 1960) over television. The President of our great and powerful nation, Dwight D. Eisenhower, to many people, disappointing as he shifted on his feet, toyed with his fingers and floundered for words to express a weak, vacillating support of a National Civil Rights Law. It was a very poor attempt on his part to justify, as well as to continue, the same approach to the subject that has utterly failed for nearly one hundred years.

He suffered horribly in contrast with the eloquent and convincing flow of words on the same subject by Senator Russell. His appeal was pitiful when compared with the oratory and dynamic gesture of the young and highly intellectual junior Senator, Herman Talmadge, who knows what he wants and knows how to say it and has the ability, education and determination to go after it. I myself am forced to admire Senator Talmadge, even though I heard him say over television, “God never made a mule or a mulatto.” This assertion denies me any right to Heaven as a creature of God.

The junior Senator from Georgia is a man of culture and refinement—I believe, a standard Christian gentleman, an able lawyer and a very successful politician. Therefore, one as low in the scale of human accomplishment and social order as myself will be wasting time eulogizing or criticizing him, and yet, his remark over TV, “God never made a mule or a mulatto,” should not be permitted to go unchallenged.

I have listened long and carefully to hear a Christian minister or even a biologist refute the assertion coming from such an exalted source, but no one comes forward to defend the lowly mule or despised mulatto, to date.

The fact that a jackass may have been the father of both, neither disproves God’s handiwork nor establishes innocence for the Senator. Where does God begin or end? His process of creation?
United States Blues

(Written after World War II)

Seeking work I go away
Just before the break of day,
I was born here in
This free and happy land.
I am now beginning life,
Someday I will take a wife.
Lord! I ask that You
Now lead me by my hand.
As I walk the wind does blow.
Oh! I wonder where to go
To begin the use
Of all my strength and will.
I went to the city hall.
It was built for one and all.
There, I'm sure, they take
Employees who have skill.

When I got in on the floor,
Saw a sign upon the door
"For white only," el---
evator, drinking spout.
Clerk and marshal turned me back,
"What you wanting in here, Jack?"
Sick at heart I blind---
ly turned and stumbled out.
Out in air I felt more brave.
I will be a little suave
And will try a large
Producer who has cash.
Auto builder made it clear,
"Don't have Negroes working here.
Maybe you can go
To rear and rake up trash."

I am trying to make good.
Booker Washington said I could
When he taught me ham---
mer, plow, saw, bench and loom.
Won't the world give me a chance?
I can make your coat and pants.
Do not limit me
To mud or mop and broom.
To a carpenter I went,
For I did not have a cent,
Told him I could fit
For him a door or sash.
But he said his men would strike
If I drove a single spike,
Then he let me dig
A muddy ditch for hash.

Thanking him, I went away,
Had not earned a cent that day
To give to my dear
Old mother or my dad.
As I passed a hotel bar
Crowds of men, a movie star,
Spending, drinking, God!
It drove me nearly mad,
Lay that night in bed and wept,
Not a single wink I slept,
Tried to weave some Chris---
tian faith within my pían.
Father said that men were free,
And there was F.E.P.C.,
But democracy
For me is under ban.
Night is gone, no storm, no rain.
   Birds can sing, I won't complain.
I will prove that I
   Can take it on the chin.
Yes, I mean to have a job,
   Though I cannot be a gob,
For the Navy will
   Not take a Negro in.
I'll be drafted, like as not,
   For this war is getting hot.
They may have to let
   Me travel overseas.
I would like to learn to shoot
   And prove courage there, to boot,
As I sail before the mast
   Through balmy breeze.

Well I'm drafted as a cook,
   Told that I should fill my nook
In the Navy of
   My dear old Uncle Sam.
Tote up 'taters by the ton,
   Not allowed to touch a gun,
Guess my courage is
   Not worth a tinker's damn.
We were in the danger zone,
   North and South just flesh and bone,
And we learned to love
   As buddies, he and I.
They came to me very kind.
   Man to man in duty's line,
They confide their hopes
   And fears beneath the sky.

Shells were falling thick and fast,
   I stood silly as an ass
While those white boys brave—
   Ly manned those guns on deck.
But they fought a losing fight,
   Frightful enemy had might,
Was reducing our strong
   Vessel to a wreck.
Saw two boys who lay and bled,
   Their blue eyes towards me pled
As they groaned upon
   That deck in scorching sun.
Their respect had made me care—
   Drag the dozen out of there
And go back to fire
   That anti-aircraft gun.

When I felt the guns recall,
   God! It made my red stuff boil,
Seems my hands just threw
   The shell into the fray.
Mess boy worked that firing pin,
   Charge fired out and charge put in.
Raiders ceased the air
   Attack and limped away.
V.E. day came in Rome,
   We were headed now for home,
White and black undy—
   ing friendship pledged that day.
Lord! I don't know who's to blame,
   But the whites forgot my name
When we reached New York
   And went to hit the hay.
Aboard the train, Atlanta and Jack,
But I feel I'm slipping back
Every service of—
Fered me insults the mind.
Grow despondent day by day,
I can hardly kneel and pray,
Almost wish that war
Continued for all time.
God, our Father! make me brave.
You have promised You will save.
Intercede for us in Congress, I implore.
Laws by Congress must be passed,
Filibustery outcast,
Nothing less will serve,
We ask for nothing more.
Without law by Uncle Sam,
Promise is not worth a d—-n.
Nothing less will serve,
We ask for nothing more.

**Epilogue**

EIGHTY-FOUR YEARS have passed over my head. In that time, some improvement in race relations has occurred. For example, there was a time when no Negro dared refer to another Negro as "Mister" in the presence of a white person, for fear of upbraiding or reprisal. Today, whites embarrass one by their use of the prefix in conversation.

Here is a list of some other gains:

Separate elevator service in office buildings: discarded.
Separate Armed Forces service: discarded.

Exclusively white election primaries: outlawed.
Segregated restaurants: outlawed.
Segregated streets and areas: outlawed.
Pullman car service: established.
Dining car segregation: outlawed.
Segregated schools supported by general taxation: outlawed.

The last, of course, is still being practiced through hypocritical subterfuge or open violation of the law.

As opposed to these gains, there is still being produced in the South state legislation that is iniricial or insulting to the Negro. Many in office who pose as statesmen boast of their ability to hoodwink the courts.

It is significant, however, that prominent men and women, with potentially bright political futures, almost weekly risk those futures on the altar of simple Christian justice for all races. I know mayors, judges, lawyers, business executives, and ordinary citizens whose outspoken advocacy of Negro rights has cost them popularity and resulted in economic privation.

In summing up my experiences and observations during the past eighty-four years, I should like to speak of the liberal-hearted teachers from the North and East with whom I have been associated, especially those men and women from New England who have been dedicated to the improvement of the Negro's lot. We honor and revere them for the sound doctoring and discipline that the Negro needs so much today. But I would be telling only half the truth if I omitted some further pertinent facts.

I have sat at the table in school dormitories and in Negro homes with white teachers with whom conversation was easy, unstilted, and congenial. I have met those same teachers on the streets, sometimes only thirty minutes later, and they have refused to look at or speak to me. They did not seem resentful or bigoted; they seemed miserable, and mortally afraid of the public eye.

There is only one word that can describe the Southern way of life with respect to Negroes, and it is not in the dictionary.
I have sent this word to more than one hundred leading colleges, asking their department of semantics to consider it. Lexicographers will hear of it from me, from time to time, during the remainder of my life.

It is the one word that expresses a white man's justice toward a Negro.

It is the one word that expresses a white man's want of respect for a Negro, as compared with his respect for another white.

It is the one word that expresses his Christian attitude towards a Negro, as compared with his attitude towards a white.

It is the one word that expresses his opinion of the proper economic relationship between Negro and white.

It describes a method of destroying the dignity of the native-born American Negro that is practiced against no other race.

I have lived under the system for eighty-four years, and I do not expect to benefit very much from further improvement. I only hope to establish the word that describes it.

Interpositionnullification is easier done than said. August 24, 1964. It is plain that both political parties are today forced to accept dictation from the majority, who interpose prejudice and work to nullify the law.

Therefore interpositionnullification is what the Negro may expect!