DEFECTIVE PAGE

THE AGENT AT MAGNOLIA

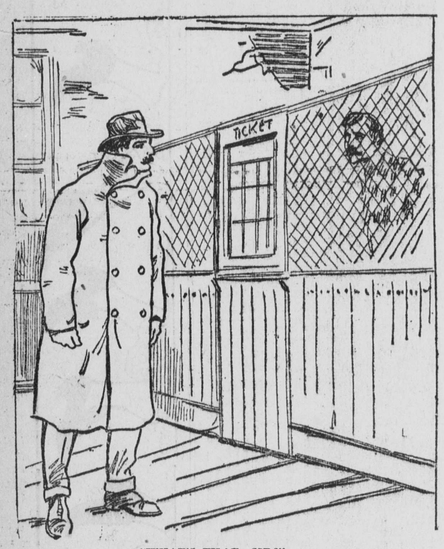
—BY KATE M. CLEARY.—

If it had happened to some other man instead of Dave Hardy his story would probably have been discredited. But a good many people out West know Hardy and they know that he doesn't lie. They know, too, that he is not superstitious, never drinks to excess, and is the most practical—the most unimaginative—of men. So these give credence—a bewildered credence it is true, but one strong with the fullness of faith notwithstanding—to his experience in the deserted depot of Magnolia on the evening of Dec. 20, 1880.

When Magnolia was a thriving little prairie village in northern Kansas Hardy, canvassing windmills in the surrounding territory, occasionally found the place in the direct line of his travel and stopped there for a few hours. Hardy had been a fighter across the seas, a crack marksman in a circus, a cowboy in Arizona, and a prospector in the Black Hills before he settled down to selling windmills for a great Western firm. The roving life was one of change, if not of excitement, and he found pleasure in it, his superb health and sound nerves insuring satisfaction under almost any conditions and circumstances.

As has been said, Magnolia was a village, but it had aspirations to be called a town. On the flat, high, level-stretching prairie were clustered half a dozen houses, a general store, a hardware shop, a forge, a restaurant—the hotel was to come later—a depot, and a church. The latter, to be sure, was an unimposing edifice, squat and slabsided, but its steeple, which was the pride of the village carpenter, was as aspiring as that of Trinity and pointed in precisely the same direction.

The depot, which had two living rooms over the ticket office, was the only spot of color in the place, it being painted the uniform red of Western railroad buildings. That the road was only a branch road connecting Magnolia with a place of greater pretensions to metropolitanism, from which one might take trains to either ocean, in no way detracted from



"WHAT'S THAT, SIR?"

their pride in its possession. That one train passed east and west only on alternate days was also a minor matter to the enthusiasts of Magnolia. There was the depot to look at and the track itself, convincing as two lines of steel could possibly be.

But there came a day when the high hopes of the residents of the hamlet were dashed—when the shadow of prophetic depression fell upon them. It had been rumored that the branch line was to be discontinued. The B. & M. was to run a direct line through a town ten miles north, as the small amount of traffic in and around Magnolia did not warrant the expense of maintaining a station there. Men gathered in the tinshop that evening to discuss the possible ill-luck about to descend upon them and incidentally to tap the keg of beer which had come in on the weekly freight that afternoon.

"If they put that deal through," declared the hardware man, "there won't be any call for me keepin' this place open. All tradin' that'll be done will be done over yonder." And he jerked his thumb in the direction of the town the possible triumph of which was so unhappily anticipated.

Kipperton—who hadn't reformed at that time—filled a new tin coffee pot taken out of stock, and sat down to dispose of the beer it contained before he voiced his opinion. This gave the restaurant man time to get in a word.

"I don't care much," he avowed, "whether they take away them there two strips of steel from Magnolia or not." The others, grouped around the nail kegs, stoves, rolls of wire, overturned washtubs, and the single counter, looked at him in resentful silence. "I kin make a livin' anywhere," he went on, "anywhere!"

No comment was forthcoming. They all knew how Mart Bennett made a living. He was a shambling fellow, with a red and sullen face. "I," he went on again, and this time boastfully glancing around, "I got a woman that ain't no slouch. She gits up in the mornin' an' fries, an' makes coffee. She bakes an' fries again fur dinner, an' fur nigh the hull finding it empty, paused, staring reproachfully into its depths in a state of dismayed abstraction.

"What kind of an agent does he make?" questioned Hardy. "That's what I want to know."

"Good enough," put in the carpenter, grudgingly. "He does his work, but he ain't got use fur no one outside that there depot."

"Well"—Hardy stood up and stretched himself—"blamed if I can see what difference that makes to you. They've not been married long, I dare say. We all make fools of ourselves once in our lives."

"Yes, an' we all git sense," avowed the cobbler. He looked down pensively on his wooden leg—the leg that had been several times locked up when he had tarried at the hardware shop on the day of the arrival of a freight train longer than his spouse thought necessary. "We git over thinkin' there ain't but one woman in the hull world fur us."

"Eh?" said the windmill man, absently. For a brief space he did not see the little tinshop nor the roughly-clad men lounging around, nor the beer keg set on the backless chair. A far-off look came into his eyes. Through clouds of smoke and the bleared light from the kerosene lamp he saw a grave over which the winds of twenty lonely years had sighed—a grave hidden away in the grim solitude of an Arizona canon. "Confound that tin reflector!" he said. He pulled his hat over his eyes and turned around. "It hurts a fellow's eyes."

"You're not going out of town tonight?" asked Mart Bennett.

Bennett had a room or two over his restaurant which he was glad to rent to the casual traveler.

"If it has stopped raining, I am." He opened the door. "Yes, the rain's over. I'll ride out to Hicksley's place. I've business with him. I'll stay there over night."

"When are you coming back this way?" the hardware man inquired.

"In about a month, I reckon."

"All right. Drop in an' see us. You'll find the boys here most any night."

"Thanks—I will. Good night, all. Hope you'll keep your railroad. Good night."

Then he was out of doors, in the saddle, and riding away towards Hicksley's farm.

As he passed the depot he noticed that there was a light in the upper window. Against its yellow tide two young heads were silhouetted—two handsome young heads—both bending over a book together. He reined up his horse. He sat looking up at them. And it was not the rush of the March wind he felt upon his cheek, but the silk-soft sweep of a woman's hair.

"Get up!" he cried, and gave the reins a jerk. "What's got into me, to set me remembering? Get up, Nan!"

But, although David Hardy had announced his intention of probably revisiting Magnolia in a month from the time he encountered the merchants of that town gathered together in convivial companionship, it was nine months before he reappeared in that particular part of Kansas. The week after his visit to Magnolia the head of the great firm of which he was an agent had died suddenly. There were business complications—much litigation. The commercial activity of the firm was temporarily suspended. When former conditions again prevailed Hardy had been sent up into the great wheat states of the Northwest, and it was not until December lay white over all the land that he found himself again in Southern Nebraska. He had driven from the county seat to a town on the state line, intending there to take the train. It was not until after he had paid and dismissed the man who drove him that he discovered the train was already gone.

"Time's changed," he was told. "Train goes out an hour earlier than it used to when you was here last, Mr. Hardy—a good while ago, by the way."

"Well, I dare say I can get a rig in town and drive over to catch the Rock Island train," he hazzarded.

"Not much show today. There's a big weddin' out in the country at 6 o'clock, an' every beast hereabouts that can crawl is hired to haul some one. The hull town's agoin'."

And this statement Dave Hardy found on investigation to be correct. He hesitated awhile. A three days' snow had been followed by a severe frost. Beyond the stretch of cornfields intervening, the bluffs leading into Kansas were capped with crystal. He knew when once he had passed these the land ahead lay high and level. He was a practiced pedestrian. He had sent his grip on before him. It was a stiff walk, but if he could catch the Rock Island train that evening he could conclude his business in time to spend Christmas "back East" with his only sister and her children. It was a dazzling day, with harborless white clouds floating in a vivid blue sky, and no suggestion of severity in the dry, rarefied air.

"I'll walk," he decided. And walk he did, across the track, up the cut road in the bluffs which towered at one side into a rocky wall, and sloped at the other into a deep, tree-tangled ravine. Once out on the upland he swung along at a rapid rate. All around him the plains billowed away like a white, foam-frozen ocean. He found the air bracing—the exercise invigorating. Indeed, it was not untill he had put a good four miles behind him that he pulled himself up with a sudden sharp exclamation:

"By George!" he said, "here is a go! I'm heading straight for Magnolia, and how in thunder do I know if they've got a railroad there now or not? I should have asked—I should have asked!" He stood stock still in deliberation. He glanced at the few roofs and strawstacks visible in the vast, silent world around him. The houses, all hidden far in the fields, were distant, and, one fancied, inaccessible. Suddenly he shook himself. "I'll risk it," he said. "I'd be a fool to turn back now when I may make the train all right."

The sun was nearly down when he came close to Magnolia—into Magnolia. Again he stopped, staring around in amazement.

"My God!" he cried, "where is the place? What's happened it?"

There was the main street, but there were no buildings on it. There was the bit of a church to the left, shuttered and isolated, keeping guard over the small graveyard near. One or two of the residences were left. These, with the depot—yes, there was the depot—were all that remained to attest the former existence of Magnolia. He made his way to the door of one of the houses—knocked. But all his knocking brought no response. At the only other dwelling he was scarcely more successful. He moved towards the stairway. They vanished in the gloom. He could hear her frightened sobbing as they stumbled up the stairs. Then a key clicked in a lock.

Hardy drew a long breath.

"Well!" he ejaculated. "Here's a go! A tragedy played by a trio. And so the handsome agent is going to try to escape his enemy. I'd like to see the outcome. Ten minutes, he said. I suppose I'd better flag the train myself. There!" A whistle pierced the silence. "There she is now!"

He looked around for the flag. It hung on the wall—a tattered red rag. A whirl of dust almost choked him as he dragged it down. He walked out on the platform. The Denver express was coming in sight around a curve.

"Confound your impudence!" he cried.

For a huge bulk had suddenly collided with him, sending him staggering. He looked up in time to catch a glimpse of hooked nose and a bright red beard. Then the newcomer had darted up the narrow stairway that led from the outside to the agent's quarters. Hardy, swinging around to look after him, almost forgot to flag the train.

"My God," he said, "I hope that poor devil up there can hold his own until help comes. Here she is!" The flaming eye of the engine came nearer—nearer, flinging a yellow splendor of light ahead. Hardy sprang forward—flagged the train. But even as he did so he heard the sound of heavy blows on a door, and a woman's smothered scream.

"Be quick!" screamed Hardy himself. At least they told him afterwards he had done so.

He was not conscious of uttering a sound. The engineer had seen the signal—was slackening speed. The train slowed up—stopped. The conductor dropped to the platform. A group of train men regarded Hardy with curiosity.

"What's up?" they questioned.

"Murder, unless you're in time!" said Hardy. He was breathing hard. "The agent has some kind of a private row on up there. There's a man trying to kill him and his wife. Go up, and stop him!"

"Agent!" echoed the conductor. "There's no agent here."

"I like that!" returned Hardy. "Haven't I been talking with him for the last fifteen minutes? A tall, dark chap, with black curls and black eyes. What are you waiting for? He was breaking in the door as you stopped. I heard her scream. What in h—l are you standing staring for? Do you think I'm drunk?"

But the men only looked at each other wildly and in silence.

"His wife called him Will. Was that his name? I never saw the man before."

"His wife!" repeated the brakeman. He set down the lantern suddenly. In truth, it fairly fell from his shaking hand. "His wife—good God!"

Hardy stamped. He was not given to wholesale condemnation or irreverence, but he was both vituperative and blasphemous just them.

"You be blasted for a lot of idiots!" he cried. "His wife—yes. I suppose she is his wife. A little thing, with a lot of pretty brown hair." He turned—looked up at the windows. They were dark. No sound came from above. "That red-bearded scoundrel may have killed her by this time," he stormed. "He may have killed the agent, too."

"But," stammered the fireman, "there's no agent at Magnolia depot."

"Not since the 10th of last August," thickly supplemented the conductor. "The company closed up this line last April," exclaimed the fireman from the cab window. "They keep the track, but only run through trains. None stop here. The town—what there was of it—has been pulled in bits and carted off to other places. They left the church. No one wanted that. And they left the dead people. The only folks here now are a family of Bohemians who have to stay and work their farm, and an old deaf couple."

Hardy jerked off his hat and swung it by his side. He remembered the two houses at which he had called.

"I know—I know!" he whispered, "Go on!"

The number of people on the platform before the dark and silent little depot were rapidly augmenting. Passengers, berugged and coated, were swinging down from the car steps to find out what the delay was about.

The conductor took up the narration where the fireman had left off.

"Wilder, the agent here, you know, asked to stay when the road quit. They let him. No one else wanted the place. But he staid right here in Magnolia until—"

"Until he was killed," put in the brakeman.

"Them you've been talking of, the deaf couple, had a son. He was taken to the Lincoln insane asylum last week. He was tracking rabbits one night a month ago and one got into the ticket office. He went after it—he and his dog. He came home raving. He said he saw ghosts. I was along when Sheriff Moss took him through to the asylum. You see he thought he saw the agent and—and—" several ladies were among his auditors by this, "and—the young woman who lived with him before her husband came along and murdered both of them. Hold on! Hasn't any one got a flask? Give that fellow a drink."

For Hardy had staggered back his hands flung upward.

"No—no!" He motioned them backward. "Was the name of the murderer Andrew Barry? Had he a hooked nose—a red beard?"

"That's the fellow. You've read the description of him."

"Before God—never! But I've seen him—here—tonight. He went up those stairs!" All at once he cried out in a frenzy, snatching up the lantern the brakeman had set down.

"I'm a sane man—and I'm sober; but I'll see what's up there as I live and breathe! Come on, boys; come on!"

He dashed up the stairs—the others, trainmen and passengers, crowding after. The light from the brakeman's lantern revealed two little bare, empty, silent rooms. It showed, too, the velvet dust thick upon the floor. And one stray gleam brought darkly out dull blotches on the whitewashed wall.

"All a-board!"

The engineer had gotten up steam. The engine itself was thrilling and quivering like a restless steed.

"All a-b-o-ard!"

Men scrambled down the steep and narrow stairs of the depot at Magnolia. Two of them took Dave Hardy by the arm and helped him on the train.

The steam shrieked. The couplers clanked. The cars moved.

"Al-l a-b-o-a-r-d—"

The Denver express rushed eastward.

In "BABEL'S COLONY."

the night. Clearer and nearer it grew, until distinguishable as human voices chanting monotonously. Then our guide, whom I had believed to be dumb, as he had so far uttered no sound, began swaying his lithe body back and forth, joining his soft, sweet voice in the chant of unintelligible words. Soon a strange perfume, sweet and faint, was perceptible, and the current gradually turning brought us directly upon a long moss curtain, straight from the boughs fifty feet above to the black water's edge. The prow of the boat parted the curtain and ushered us into a room whose walls were mossy tapestry, wrought and 'broidered all over with fragrant blossoms, scarlet, yellow and white, while the roof, a hundred feet above our heads, was of interlaced boughs through which the sun filtered palely. There were three of these rooms in succession, each larger and more brilliant with blossoms than the preceding one, across the last of which our boat glided noiselessly onto the bank of the mysterious island. At each succeeding room the perfume had grown more powerful, and instead of being perfume from the flowers, as I had supposed, proved to be the smoke from a dried vine, or plant, which a veritable priest of the Ancient Druids kept constantly burning in a swinging censer. He wore a long gray robe that looked as though woven from the moss which hung from all the branches, his fine white hair a wavy profusion, his venerable beard touching his knees as he swayed back and forth in time to the ceaseless chant.

Mr. Roseveldt left the boat the instant we landed, and in the confusion that followed I forgot him entirely. Father, complaining of nausea, induced by the heavy perfume, preferred not to leave the boat, while I, intensely excited by it all, followed our strange guide, passing so near the chanting priest I could have touched him with my hand, yet he neither turned or seemed in any way to notice us. Here the light was soft and gray like that of early morning, but farther on brightened into vivid yellow brilliancy, silhouetted with moving figures, while distinguishable above the monotonous chanting was the clatter of wooden machinery. I was determined to reach this spot, which seemed to be the center of restlessness, although the perfumed smoke pervaded every part of the way like the haze of autumn, and every moment was affecting me with increased powerlessness; a few steps farther and my senses began to fail. This the boy seemed in some way to realize, and grasping my arm hurried me to the waiting boat, and not an instant too soon either, for once there I lost consciousness altogether, and the moss curtains were far behind us before I recovered. As for father, Celest worked over him hours after reaching her cabin before he showed any signs of life, and although he lived seven years he never recovered, the effect upon him being that of a paralytic shock, and such every one but myself and you still believes it to have been. Several times during father's life I ran down here to see if anything had been heard of Mr. Roseveldt, whom I was obliged to abandon, as the boy refused to go with me and it would have been worse than madness to have attempted to reach the island alone, although I seriously contemplated it, and was only dissuaded by Celest's good sense.

Nearly thirty years ago I made my last visit down there, and as we are so near now, and with nothing to do, I think we will run down and see how Babel's is getting along. But mind, as I cautioned you, not a word of this to your mother, or to any one else while I am above the ground, my boy.'

THE CYCLONE.

We were detained longer than we realized by the hospitality of the still dilapidated plantation to which Celest's cabin was an annex. No one offered to guide us to the conjurer's, much to my uncle's satisfaction, and it was well past noon of a brilliant sunny day when we reached the little spot, looking to my young eyes very artistic and romantic, tho' "dread and awful in loneliness," as Uncle Dick had said.

Celest stood in her cabin door the picture of surprise, still young-looking and very handsome.

"How yo' do, massa?" she said, advancing hospitably to meet us. Then suddenly recognizing Uncle Dick her face beamed with pleasure, and she exclaimed: "Foh de good Lawd, massa, I hope y' scuse dese pore eyes, I didn't jest see who yo' was."

Uncle Dick responded with feeling to her greeting, and after inquiring about her child, whom she said sadly was "jes de same," he asked about the mysterious colony.

"Babel's, you mean massa?" she questioned in an awe stricken voice, "Hit all gone!" she exclaimed dramatically.

"How gone, Celest? What do you mean?" uncle asked.

"Wy, jes' gone, massa; swep' to yetunity by de breff of God. Oh, dat was an awful time, an awful time!" and she swayed back and forth as though its very memory was agony to her. After a moment's silence, pointing to the heavens she continued:

"De sun hit war turn' to blood; an' de trees war swep' low to de lan'. Look," and she directed our attention to the unmistakable path of a cyclone, which, judging from the new growth, had occurred many years previous.

"De worl' it rock, rock," she continued, suiting her motion to the words. "De day hit turn to night. De yallergates come in from de bayou, an' de sarpants from de brack pool, an' dey lay down tergedder an' die; de birds from de glades an' de birds from de water come flutrin' an' cryin' in, an' dey fall down an' die; den my chile' he scream an' he lay down an' die. Den I cry, 'Now Lawd, hit's my tu'n', but de Lawd He don' yar, case more trees come crashin' an' fallin' down an' de fire from heaven belch forth an' 'sume um up. Den I stan up an' cry, 'God, good Massa Lawd, You don't forgit dis pore nigger; hit's sure my tu'n' now.' but de Lawd He don' yar yet, and de debble he rise up in de brack pool an' splash de waters, white an' awful, to my berry do'. Den I fro myself on de yarth wher I kin yar Him brevin' so hit shake de solid grown', an' I say, 'O Massa God, I's a pore sinner, but I ain't sinned like I should be let' all alone in dis worl', where Yo' will, in heaben or hell, but take me away from yere.' Den de Lawd He do yar, fo' I fall dead too.

"I stay dead a long time, fo' hit mos' mawnin' when I open my eyes, but I shut um up quick when I think hit judgment day, massa, case I powerful scat. Bymby some one lays hands on me, an' I try to say, 'Hab mussy on a pore sinner, Lawd, but I's so scat I can't say it. Den some one shake me, an' say, 'I's hungry,' den I know hit my chile' an' I tell him not to speak so disrespec'ful case hit judgment day. I's powful disappointed when I see hit jes' de same ol' place, but I think may be de Lawd haint done yet, so I lay dere patient till de sun came up, an' de sun went down. Den I 'clude de Lawd judge me an' my chil' when we's asleep, an' I can't yolp cryin', massa, case I's shore w'en I die I'd be took away from yer an' hab one nigger or a pore white t' talk to, but all He done was to cut down dem trees, an' I was tryin' to be thankful for dis wen Br'er Mose come a lompin up dat berry paf. Den I know I hain't die at all, fo' Mose's a powerful pious nigger an' wen he dies he'll go to heaben an' won't hab no rumatiz.

"Wall, he say dat de wos sto'm we ever had, and hit God's mussy we warn't all killed. After he see we is all right he don gone back. My chil' he lookin' roun' an' he foun' one o' de Babel's folks right der in de brack water. We take her out, hit so col' in dar, an' befo' we gets her to de house anoder one comes, an den anoder, an' dey come so fas' we build a big fire an set up all night it seem so lonesome like to leave dem dar. It most sun-up when my chile' he say dey all here now, an' we ber'um bery spec'table like. I sent fo' Lige, he de brack preacher, but he say he can't come, so I pray de bes' I can, an' de Lawd He knows de res', Shall I show you our berr'n groun'?"

With a touch of dignified pride she led us to a fair green spot, half enclosed with blossoming magnolia and cypress trees, where roses and jassamine, rhododendron and azalias bloom and twine in tropical profusion all about, but not on the fourteen smooth, grassy mounds that are never browned by winter's chill, ranged side by side.

After satisfying her with our admiration of the truly beautiful spot, and giving her the praise she justly deserved for her good work, she explained that as soon as the waters quieted after the storm her child went over to the mysterious island and found it gone.

"Jes' swep' away, massa," she said with a sigh of satisfaction, "but I tell you dey's ben a 'powerful sight o' company to me, dese Babel's folks."

CELEST'S STORY.

"Why have you lived here alone all these years?" my uncle asked as we retraced our steps to the little cabin.

"Don' you know, massa?" she asked in suspicious tones, a dull red mounting to the roots of her hair; then, "O, 'cose yo' don', yo' live up nof," she added not waiting for his reply.

"Massa George he lie, dat's de reason," she continued excitedly; "he lie; he say I conjured when I'se up to Virgin'y, an' I sell myself an' my chil' to de debble. 'Cose nobody dare come to see me den, 'sept Mose, my br'er, he come when hit dark."

"But why did he tell such a story?" asked Uncle Dick.

"Why? I tell yo' why! Dis de reason. Mas' Harry, he Mas' George's cousin, an' he jest as good as Mas' George is bad. Mas' Harry he's rich and Mas' George he's pore, hain't got nuffin, jest dat ol' plantation dar. Dey bof falls in lub wi' de same young leddy, she love Mas' Harry, 'cose, but she don' love Mas' George.

"When Mas' Harry come to visit Mas'George, I have to tote an' fetch fo' um, an' one day I hyer Mas' Harry tell Mas' George I's a hansom girl, an' how much he take fo' me? He say he do' know he want to sell, but nex' time he call me in he say, 'Celest, yo' Mas' Harry's girl now, an' he goin' take yo' up to Virgin'y when he go home.' Dat such beau'ful place up dar where Mas' Harry live. Mas' Harry he grow wild after his maw she die, but he say he goin' to settle down when de young leddy come home from Europe to marry him.

"Wall, Mas' George he come to visit Mas' Harry an dey pray cawds an' pray cawds, an' Mas' Harry he always laugh an' Mas' George he always mad. One night when dey playin' cawds I heard Mas' Harry tell Mas' George he going to be married de nex' month. Den Mas' George he jump right up an' grab his knife an stick it right into Mas' Harry's heart. Mas' Harry he try to get his knife too, but he can't, he jes' drop back dead. Mas' George he look awful sca't like, den he grab Mas' Harry's knife an' stick it in his own arm so it all covered wif blood, an' he say to me, 'Girl, if you ever tell I'll kill you;' but I don' care, case Mas' Harry he dead, so I say, 'Kill den!'

"When I say dat he say, 'Yo' fo'get yo' chil';I'll make yo' both free, case yo' my gal now Mas' Harry dead, an' I give you a cabin down to de ol' plantation whar yo' Bre'r Mose ken look after yo,' if yo'll swar not to tell about dis yer; answer quick, gal!'

"But I stop an' close Mas' Harry's eyes, an' put a pillow under his hansome head case I ain't fraid o' Mas' George any mo'. Den I look him right in de eye an' I say, 'I ans' yo' Mas' George, I will.'

"'Swar it girl, swar it,' he say.

"An I say, 'I swar it, but if yo' don' do jest as yo' say I will tell every one.'

"Den he run an' call fo' help an' say dey qual'd about cawds, an Mas' Harry struck him firs', an' shows de broody knife, an' dat he kill Mas' Harry in self defense, an he tek on so hawd dey all bereive him; an' I done say noffin. He do like he say he would, he send me here, an' he mek me an' my chil' free, but w'at good dat do me when he tell I conjurer? Den he marry de beautiful leddy, an have all Mas' Harry's money, but he'll shore go to hell when he die, won't he massa?"

Here the poor creature dropped on a rude bench beside the cabin as though overcome by her own story.

In the silence that followed the tragic, pathetic tale, a boy, looking not older than ten, a picture of infantile loveliness, bounded from behind a fallen tree full in front of Uncle Dick, and began a sweet monotonous chant, clapping his hands as an accompaniment. Gradually the look of surprise on the latter's face deepened into pained recognition, and I knew he was for the second time listening to the song of the vanished island. Faster and sweeter it grew, the little body of the boy swaying and bending, as though to a rythmic wind, then suddenly ceased, his every muscle relaxed and he would have fallen only for the ready mother arms.

"He sleepy," she said apologetically.

Uncle Dick asked if there was nothing he could do to aid her, could he not help her to a home elsewhere? To my surprise the simple suggestion seemed to fill her with terror; she declined gratefully, but positively, and as the shadows were already grown long, we took our departure.

In the narrow path of sunlight that tenderly bathed the smooth green homes of Celest's only neighbors, the perfume from the wilderness of blossoms everywhere about her, she stood, her forty-year-old child with drooping golden head pressed close to her heart, a light of pathetic, patient desolation on her handsome face hard to forget, as we turned for a last look at her.

—Florence R. Bacon.

BESIEGED BY AN ELEPHANT