CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF MY WANDERINGS.

Through the shadowy past,
Like a tomb-searcher, Memory ran,
Lifting each shroud that Time had cast
O'er buried hopes.

Not a great distance from the asylum building, ran a small stream. Its banks on either side are pretty thickly wooded, and altogether it is a secluded spot. Turning my face east on leaving the hospital grounds in the early gray of that autumn morning, I directed my steps towards this stream, hoping to bewilder my pursuers in the mazes of the copse. After traveling in this direction for perhaps a quarter of a mile, I turned off north for a few hundred yards, then west, and finally east again, "doubling" on my tracks a good part of the way. After reaching the wood I purposely wound about in various directions, wading in the stream at times, and "doubling" on my tracks.

Then for the third time setting my face east, I emerged from the woodland, with the intention of getting to the railroad and following it for a time. By some strange freak of fortune I struck my foot against some object which lay in my pathway, and on picking it up found it to be a good riding-bridle
of black leather, and which was almost new. I felt this to be a God-send, as it did not seem to me likely that anyone would ever think of apprehending a man in search of a horse which had escaped from him while his owner was engaged in Bacchanalian revels. At least I meant to leave this impression on anyone whom I might chance to meet. While on the other hand, a man wandering about with no good excuse for his circumforanean proclivities (for my personal appearance might have caused me to be taken for a professional itinerant) might excite a suspicion that should be fatal to his hopes. And I may here say that one secret of my unusual success in evading detection was to be found in the fact that I was at all times able to give a satisfactory account of myself. Always beforehand I had a carefully prepared excuse to pass myself on without detention.

Striking out resolutely east, with the bridle upon my arm, I walked at an even but rapid pace. Day was now breaking, and I realized the necessity of haste. In my onward progress I encountered several individuals before the sun rose, but I always abated my speed as I neared them. The first one I met was an elderly gentleman coming slowly along near the railroad. I observed that he looked at me a little curiously, hence I did not give him time to become suspicious. I boldly approached him and inquired if he had seen "a riderless horse with a saddle on, but no bridle, anywhere that morning." He paused, bent his head in evident thought for a moment, and then told me that he had not.
Having thus answered my question very civilly, he asked, with some appearance of curiosity:

“What is the matter?”

“Nothing,” I replied, “except that I took a little too much ‘tea’ with the boys at Terrell last night, and my horse has escaped from me.”

I then proceeded to say to the stranger, in the hope of giving my story greater probability, that I would pay a reward of $25 for the return of my animal to Canton. He thereupon took out a note-book, and asked me to describe my horse. I answered without hesitation that he was a large, powerfully-built roan, with a bald face and two white feet. When my inquisitive friend had noted this description down, I bade him good-bye and hastened on my way. He called after me before I had gone a great distance to say that he would send a man out instantly to search for my runaway.

Further down the road I met a fat negress waddling along the highway to whom I put the same formula. Fixing her dull eyes shrewdly upon my face, as soon as I had spoken, and placing her pudgy arms akimbo, she answered in the glibest manner imaginable that she had seen such a horse not far away, only a few minutes since; that she had endeavored to catch him, but that he had shaken his heels in the air and run off into a neighboring wood. I would find him, she continued, up there about half a mile away. The reader will no doubt understand that I was very greatly surprised to learn that my horse was so near at hand. I knew, however, that
the fat wench was deliberately lying in the hope of getting a reward for her mendacity. But I had nothing to give her, or I should have given her a small piece of silver. I left her standing in the middle of the road gazing after me with an expression made up of the extremes of astonishment, anger and disappointed virtue.

The sun was now rising, hence I was under the necessity of exercising special care to avoid all human habitations; yet, whenever my eye fell upon the homelike vision of smoke rising from near-by chimneys, and I knew that some housewife was busily preparing the morning meal, I looked at it longingly, for I had had no breakfast and was growing hungry. But no time could now be spared for this or like purposes, my only object being to put as great a distance as was possible that day between the asylum and myself. Therefore I doubled my speed after losing sight of the negress, sometimes walking and again trotting over the lonely roads I was following. In this manner I continued all the morning, hardly giving myself a moment's rest, but keeping, nevertheless, all my senses upon the alert. The rapid walking became very fatiguing, but an iron-barred cell was behind me and freedom in front, and I did not spare myself. I did not know at the time—nor indeed until long afterwards—that for some reason I was not missed until nearly night, and that I therefore had a full day's start. But not knowing this I traveled all day at the top of my speed, and was afraid even to stop to get my breath.
In four hours after leaving the outskirts of Terrell I reached Will's Point, near twenty miles away, having walked that distance in a little less than three and a half hours. I made a wide détour around the town, without stopping, and held on my way. The bridle that I had found near Terrell I kept for some time and threw away. The threatening clouds that in the early morning had hung over the sky had passed away without fulfilling their prophecy of rain. The day that succeeded was one of those bright clear days for which the autumn season is so renowned in song and story; when a celestial peace—a brooding calm, sleeps over the wide face of nature, and the blue serene of heaven.

But little of this lay on my mind that memorable day. Exulting in the happy sense of freedom, yet pursued by haunting cares, and a comparative feeling of helplessness, I had thoughts only for the means by which escape might be best facilitated, and capture rendered uncertain or improbable. For I realized that my only safety lay in flight.

And now about this time a strange phenomenon began to manifest itself—one that I do not remember ever to have heard or read of. My memory for a time in some respects had been befogged and obscured to that extent that many incidents of the past had passed wholly from my recollection, and I could never recall them, even for a moment.

I had observed, however, that within a few hours after my escape the scenes and incidents so long forgotten began to crowd upon me,—and this not as
the mere mechanical recurrence of disconnected recollections, as one thing and another called them up, but in a vast procession of vivid and distinct pictures, beginning with early childhood and advancing step by step to the period when my mind first lost its equipoise. It was a solemn and mournful pageant, sweeping in continuous procession before my mind—an almost illimitable array of joy and pleasure, and sorrow and woe. Faces that the mists of time had long ago obscured or wholly blotted out; voices now stilled in death; incidents whose actors had been mouldering in the grave for five-and-twenty years; scenes that in a former day had been of passing interest; pictures of long forgotten acts and deeds; sad memories of home and of childhood, and of my mother;—all these came in a mighty succession before me. Nor did they come in one jumbled and confused mass, indistinct and chaotic; but picture by picture, scene by scene, like living reality. It was a vast and endless panorama, projected upon a measureless screen by some mighty invisible magic lantern, with all the pomp and brilliant show which awakened imagination could lend to it. Whole pages that I had read came before me, just as they had appeared in the printed book, but with a vivid and lurid brightness that was as startling as it was unaccountable. It seemed to me that some mighty and devouring light shone from within, its vivifying rays falling upon the hidden springs of memory and rousing them to phenomenal action. And there was the memory of one voice, which, though forgotten for
many years, now came rolling through the intervening mists of time and struck upon some hidden chord that vibrated beneath its touch. This voice I knew had long been stilled in death;—its very memory had ceased to be; but, as if hallowed and grown sacred by the swift rush of years, it came over me now, bringing with it the songs it had sung, the words it had uttered, chastened by time and sorrow and the purifying fires of affliction. The sweet airs that it had sung for me in the faraway past swept over me with a cadence exquisitely mournful and solemn, transporting me back to scenes whose memory yet remained, surviving the vicissitudes of life, the mutations of fortune, and of time and tide.

And stranger still, grand and harmonious strains of music and supernal symphonies, came now and then to my ears, soul-stirring and faint; now dying away into immeasurable distance and now swelling, sublime and mournful, into unknown airs and heavenly harmonies. And it seemed to me, as each mysterious strain came on the breeze, that sobs of unspeakable anguish, as from an eternity of woe, burst with heart-quaking intensity from the lips of the invisible musicians.

Pleasant although all this may have been at first, it soon became a source of continual annoyance to me, as well as uneasiness; nor did I feel wholly safe and free from alarm until this remarkable condition had passed away. After worrying and perplexing me for several days, it at length disappeared, leaving my mind brighter than it had been for three years,
and it was then that I began to realize for the first time that my mind had been affected. Yet I felt how vain it would be to hope to convince the asylum authorities or my friends that my mental equilibrium had been restored, or almost so. (For had I not maintained all along that it had never been disturbed?) Hence, remembering these things now, I renewed my determination to keep my fate a profound secret from all who had ever known me.

Between the hours of one and two o’clock P. M, I reached the village of Canton—a distance of thirty-one and a half miles from Terrell. All that afternoon I walked steadily and unceasingly, so that by sunset I found that I had traveled since leaving the asylum a distance of five-and-forty miles. This statement may appear like an endeavor to draw the long bow, as the proverb-maker puts it, and the more so when it is remembered that I had been for so long a time confined without any active exercise, but it is nevertheless true. Yet the mighty effort required to make this long distance, and the intense nervous excitement which urged me forward, came near prostrating me—so much so, indeed, that for some days thereafter I crept along at a snail’s pace, hardly averaging a score of miles per diem of ten hours.

Shortly after sunset I came to a home-like farmhouse on the side of the road, and stopped to inquire if they could give me lodging for the night. They told me that they could not; but that not a great distance away I would find the home of a gentleman whose family was visiting at a distance, and who
therefore had the house to himself. As a consequence, they went on to say, he would no doubt be glad of my company until the morrow. I thanked them for their kindness and hurried off down a dim "neighborhood road" which was pointed out to me, and in the gray dusk of early evening found myself standing before a large old-fashioned homestead with a great many trees in the yard. As I neared the gate, several large hounds ran barking to the fence, but at a command from their master, who now appeared in the doorway, they crept sullenly under the house. The master then came out to the gate and invited me to come in. I told him that I had been referred to him by some ladies, who had spoken of him in a very complimentary manner, and that I was in search of some place at which to spend the night, but that I did not have any money.

He replied to me very kindly, asked me to come in, and told me that I was welcome. I accepted this friendly invitation gratefully, and we entered the house together. Supper was then on the table, and we sat down to it. I had had nothing whatever in the way of food for four-and-twenty hours, and felt weak and faint. Yet my repast was a very light one, as I had appetite for very little. I partook of his good cheer so sparingly that my host, before whose assaults the various dishes were disappearing with marvelous celerity, inquired whether the supper suited me. I satisfied him by replying that I was ill, and this was the exact truth. We then rose from the table and returned to the sitting-room, where a number of fine
hounds lay stretched before the fire. Some fishing-tackle lay on one of the beds, and the walls were liberally furnished with pictures of a sporting character. Cartridge-belts and game-bags were distributed about in the most astonishing positions, while one corner was devoted to an assortment of guns. Obviously my worthy host was of a sporting turn, and our conversation ran largely upon such matters, in all of which I duly displayed the densest ignorance. My entertainer, delighted at finding some one who would patiently listen to his interminable harangues upon what to him was the topic of all topics, spent the next two hours in expatiating gleefully and at great length upon these questions, going into the minutest details, and fairly "talking me deaf," for I heard not a word he said. Finally I escaped by excusing myself on the score of fatigue, and was shown to my room.

One would naturally suppose that after having walked a distance of five-and-forty miles between sunrise and sunset, I should have sunk into a profound slumber on retiring to bed. Yet such was not the case. The absolute silence and stillness which reigned around me were oppressive. The wild shrieks and shrill howls which had sounded in my ears night after night for three long years had accomplished their work, and I found it impossible to sleep. The deep stillness which prevailed became ominous and awe-inspiring from its very profoundness, and disturbed me as no noise could have done. If some unearthly voice had shrieked and howled in my ears for an hour
or two, I should have slept sweetly the whole night through; but as it was I felt far more exhausted and depressed when the long night ended than when it begun.

My host called me a full hour before day, and I rose and went out to breakfast with him. He remarked upon my pallid face and heavy eyes, and I told him I had not rested well. Breakfast being ended, I thanked him in appropriate terms for his courtesy, and bidding him farewell I went on my way.

The day before, on leaving Canton, I had traveled south until evening; but on this morning I turned east again. Physical weakness troubled me to-day. I traveled along at a steady swinging walk, but was tormented by a sense of weakness and exhaustion that made me uneasy, as I feared my strength might fail. Again, the visions brought forward by my awakened memory worried and annoyed me. But towards evening this state of my mind began to pass away, and remarkable as it may seem, my strength began to return, and the tormenting sense of weakness to leave me.

I did not stop anywhere or dinner, but went without it, preferring to do this rather than lose the time, and for other reasons. I passed the night at a farmhouse some twenty miles from my first stop. Rousing me up at an early hour the next morning, the lady of the house gave me a lunch as soon as I had partaken of breakfast, and sent me on my way.

On this morning I felt somewhat better than the
day before, and found myself in better condition for travel. Yet I had slept but little, and had passed most of the night in tossing on my bed. Towards night I passed through the city of Tyler—a place famous all over the State for the beauty and grace of its women, and the wealth and enterprise of its citizens. Some hours later in the day the road I followed led me in a more desolate and uninhabited part of the country than any I had yet traveled. Near night indeed the face of the earth became wild, lonely and unbroken by human habitations, and I began to fear that I should have no place to pass the night except upon the greensward. This thought was far from being a comfortable one, as the route I was traversing led through a large and lonely forest, and I had no means of self-defense against prowling beasts, or even an overcoat to shelter me from the chill air of night.

I had passed the last farm-house some hours before, and had seen no person or indication of human presence since. The sun had already sunk; and in the deep solitudes and shadows of the forest, night was rapidly closing in. I may be pardoned for the slight feeling of uneasiness which possessed me. The prospect of a night spent in the forest, with no bed but the earth and no covering but the sky, was anything but inviting, and I hurried on, pausing now and then and listening, in the endeavor to catch any sounds which might indicate the proximity of human beings. But none could be heard, and I was upon the point of turning aside to seek a sheltered resting-
place for the night while there was yet some vestige of daylight remaining upon the rapidly darkening earth, when, in rounding a sudden curve in the road, I caught the welcome gleam of light. Apparently it came from a small building off to the right of the highway, darkly outlined upon the forest behind, and a dim bridle path appeared to lead up to it. Guided by the gleam and flicker of the light, I made my way to the door of the small structure. At my knock a high cracked voice called out, as if in much surprise:

"Whose dar?"

Then steps were heard; the door swung open on loudly-creaking hinges; and the dark form of an aged negro confronted me, his black shadow grotesquely marked upon the ground in front by the light which escaped from the open doorway. Without waiting for him to begin, for his shadow fell upon me and rendered the color of my skin a matter of doubt to his age-bedimmed eyes, I stated my dilemma in the fewest and plainest words. As soon as he was made to understand that a white man stood before him, he doffed his ragged hat, bowed low, and bade me enter. The interior of the cabin was fully in keeping with what I could see of the exterior. The unmistakable signs of the most abject poverty were everywhere apparent, and the walls were black and smoke-stained. The shanty itself was rickety and quivered beneath our tread; the walls were full of cracks through which the chill autumn air came in unimpeded currents. The light was supplied by a small dingy oil lamp, its blaze flickering and spluttering
under the currents of air which swept over it, as it rested upon a weather beaten pie box, and by a huge log fire which crackeled merrily on the hearth. The furniture was of the rudest and most meagre description, consisting, so far as I could see, of two pine-bottomed and crazy chairs, several empty soap boxes, a few cooking utensils, and a pair of black greasy blankets thrown carelessly into a corner. I concluded that the latter were made to serve as both bed and blankets, as neither mattress nor bedstead was visible. In another corner a quantity of fresh cotton seed, with an unnecessary amount of lint still adhering, had been thrown, probably also to serve as a bed in an emergency.

The old negro, whose wool was snowy white, and whose wrinkled hands trembled with the infirmity of age, invited me, with the old-fashioned politeness of the venerable family slave, to "take a chair and be seated." He then informed me, with much wordy circumlocution, and in the grotesque and inimitable dialect of his race, that I should probably have to remain with him over night, if I would kindly descend to do so, as the nearest farmhouse was not less than six miles away—an appalling distance to a tired and hungry man on a dark night. He did not think, he said, that I could ever reach it—even if I should be rash enough to try—in the Stygian darkness of a moonless night in the forest, more especially as I was a stranger in those parts; and that if I attempted to do so without a guide, I should most likely get lost in the forest for my pains. He apolo-
gized for the state of his miserable shanty and the wretched accommodations he had to offer me, but assured me that I was welcome to stay with the poor nigger if I would consent to do so. I told him that as no choice in the matter seemed to be left me, I should under the circumstances gladly avail myself of the opportunity to remain with him. Whereupon he thanked me and bustled about the room making his preparations for our frugal supper. He set a pot of coffee on some coals, and while this was boiling he made two huge ashcakes, and put them in the fire. Meat was scarce, he said, but he thought he might have a few pieces still. Searching about among some greasy boxes and fire-blackened pie-panes, he found one or two slices of old bacon, and some pieces of salty meat-skins. These were cooked on the coals; and while they broiled and hissed and curled in fantastic shapes, he took his cakes from the ashes and put them on a box that was to serve as a table.

At last all was done; and after serving me with the best, keeping the meat-skins and the other refuse for himself, he withdrew to a corner of the blazing hearth, with his supper upon his knees, and fell to with an appetite. I am aware that many of my readers will wonder how I could eat supper in such a place, after the description I have given of it. But I was too hungry to be critical, or over-sensitive, and I did eat it, and enjoyed it, too, perhaps with a zest that many a dainty reader has never experienced. The whitest bread never tasted sweeter than the homely (and not over-clean) ashcake, and the rarest
of Mocha never gave forth a more delicious aroma than the black coffee-pot steaming upon the coals.

Our repast ended, the old negro cleared the things away, and brought out an old clay pipe and some home-grown tobacco, part of which he offered me. We sat down and conversed a while before the ruddy glow of the fire, until, a sense of weariness coming over me, I expressed a desire to retire to rest. My white-haired host had no better place to offer me than the pile of cottonseed. He pointed to it and sadly said that he "didn't hab no udder place but dat ar ter offer his mahster." I threw myself upon it, and for the first time in many months, fell almost instantly into a sound and peaceful slumber.

During the night, however, I was several times awakened by the sound of a voice, and as the fire was still burning, I could see the bowed form of the hoary old negro kneeling before the hearth in prayer. His cracked and trembling voice rang out in an earnest and pathetic petition to the Most High to save him from destruction. He knew, he said, that the sun of his life had nearly set. The plough was nearing the end of the furrow, and at any hour the feeble spark of his life might be forever extinguished. With tears of bitter sorrow streaming down his wrinkled cheeks, he begged in the name of Christ that his spirit might find an eternal resting-place among the great and the good who had gone before.

This earnest and melancholy prayer, repeated over and over again, and of which I have only given the bare substance, profoundly affected me, and I was
glad when he at length brought it to a close.

When I awoke next morning the first faint rays of early daylight were stealing in through the openings in the wall. My hard and uncomfortable bed of cottonseed had given me sweeter and more refreshing rest than a pillow of down could have done once, and I experienced the buoyant feeling of renewed strength and vigor. The old negro was seated on a rickety chair before the blazing fire, and slices of bacon were hissing on the coals, while a fresh supply of cakes were roasting in the ashes. He greeted me with the same air of old-fashioned politeness that had attracted my notice the previous evening, and inquired if I had rested well. He then placed my breakfast upon the improvised table, and retired to a corner with his own.

In half an hour I took leave of the good old darkey and, having received some directions from him, I went on my way. Later in the morning I found I had missed my road the afternoon before, and I now hastened to put myself right. The road which I then pursued, and which I should have followed the previous day, was a leading thoroughfare, with a number of farm-houses at irregular intervals along its sides. As I met on this highway a number of wagons, carts, and other vehicles, I got a "lift" now and then from some driver, and thus contrived to ride a good part of the day.

It is needless to attempt to give, however, a detailed account of that day's journey. It was my fourth morning out, and I had begun to lose all fear
of pursuit as I had thus far seen no evidence that any had been attempted. This thought was very encouraging as well as flattering, as it seemed to argue that I had covered up my tracks so well that pursuit had been rendered so difficult or impossible that very little had been attempted. This was precisely the case, though I did not know it at the time, nor until long afterwards.

I reached Marshall some hours after noon, but passed on through the city without stopping. Later in the day I got a "ride" or two from the obliging drivers of farm-wagons, and by this means traveled a much greater distance than would have been possible a-foot. At sunset I came to a halt in front of a large house which had the appearance of being the abode of well-to do people. Someone further back on the road had advised me to stop at this place—which was known as "Shaw Farm"—as being a suitable house at which to ask for accommodation for the night. It was an extensive farm, and while its owner did not have the prestige that the possession of such a property, with its accompanying quota of slaves, would have given him under the old régime, he was well and favorably known among his neighbor-people. His patrimonial estate was located, if I remember rightly, some five miles from the hamlet of Elysian Fields.

A hallo at the gate brought a lady to the door, and with old-fashioned hospitality she invited me at once to "walk in," instead of impertinently demanding to know my "business" as the usual custom seems to be
nowadays. I did not wait to be asked a second time, but entered at once and was shown into a well-appointed sitting-room where other members of the family were present. As soon as I was seated I told them that I was in search of a place at which to stop for the night, and that I had been advised to come to them. At the same time I warned them, as I never failed to do when soliciting a favor of this kind, that I had no money and could not remunerate them for their trouble. As to the extent of humiliation I was thus obliged to undergo almost every day, we shall leave the reader to judge. Mrs. Shaw replied to me very graciously and told me that I might remain if her husband were willing. Mr. Shaw, she said, was at the moment absent, on his way to the nearest postoffice. In about an hour he returned, bringing a large batch of mail and, when made acquainted with what had happened in his absence, he told me that I was welcome to such as they had, and that his family had done right in permitting me to remain. His wife appeared to be pleased at this compliment, and like the great-hearted lady she was, she bustled about "on hospitable thoughts intent."

With the harmless and not unkindly curiosity which we always find, perhaps more than anywhere else, among the farming classes of this section of the Union, Mr. Shaw asked me a great many questions. Among these were: "Where might you be going?" "Where are you from?" "What is your business?" "Are you a married man?" etc., etc. The last
question always seems to possess great interest for the ladies present, and they wait for the answer with marked attention. In the case of most of these inquiries, as well as of many similar ones, although I could not as a matter of course return answers as strictly truthful as I might have wished, I nevertheless replied readily and freely. On all such occasions the poorest and least satisfactory direct response is looked upon with much more favor than the most elaborate evasion. Indeed, at such times suitable answers are expected to the general class of questions outlined above. Replies more or less evasive, or which are obviously equivocal, they regard as a just cause of suspicion, and the stranger is perhaps thereupon subjected to a fire of questions discharged at him from all sides, and which are not always remarkable for either delicacy or discrimination.

When supper was over we assembled in the sitting-room and passed an hour in social converse. Then Mr. Shaw read aloud some extracts from late newspapers, and we were enabled to discuss the latest occurrences. This was a new experience to me, as I had not for some years read any of the prominent daily or weekly journals, and thus was in profound ignorance of the leading news and events of the day. While I was thinking of this Mr. Shaw had taken up another newspaper and was glancing over it. He now desired us to listen, and in the silence which ensued, he read aloud the following paragraph:

"Terrell, Texas:—Yesterday morning Mr. E. B. Fleming of Hopkins County, who has been an inmate
of the asylum here for about three years, in some unknown manner made his escape. How he accomplished this is a profound mystery to all concerned. Search has been made for him in every direction, but without avail, as up to the present writing he has succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the officials. It would therefore appear that the chances for apprehending him are exceedingly precarious. His family, who reside in Sulphur Springs, were immediately notified."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Shaw, looking up with a scared face, "I wonder now if he will come through this way?"

"I guess not," laughed her husband. "But if he should, we could notify the sheriff and have him arrested. I don't believe," he continued, turning to me, "that lunatics ought to be allowed to wander at liberty over the earth in any such manner, and I think the asylum officers was very keerless in this here case. I hope they will git 'im back agin. What's asylums for, I'd like to know, if they're to let the lunatics git out, an' run about all over the face of creation?"

Then suddenly, and without the slightest warning, he looked over his glasses at me and asked me if I had ever been to Terrel. My heart, which was already beating painfully, flew into my mouth, and I glanced at him in alarm, to discern if possible his motive in putting such a question to me. Whether he had ulterior designs in asking such a question, I could not tell from his face; and hence I replied that I had.
“And did you,” he pursued, “did you pay a visit to the asylum there?”

Controlling my agitation by a strong effort, I replied truthfully, that I had never “paid a visit to the asylum.”

“Well, you ought,” said he. And he thereupon launched out into a minute description of the asylum and its grounds, narrating many anecdotes of incidents which had occurred there. The conversation then took another turn, and I once more breathed freely.

When I retired to rest that night I did not enjoy the sound repose that fatigue usually induces. The feeling of confidence and security which had buoyed me up had received a severe shock; and I could not but realize that as the news of my escape had been telegraphed and published all over the State, some one might recognize me at any moment. I shuddered to think of the inevitable result of such a contingency. Even should any timid individual become suspicious of me, he had only to speak to the nearest country official, and my further progress would be arrested forever. It will perhaps be remembered that at this time I was wearing a suit of clothes of which every garment was indelibly branded with my full name and the name of the North Texas Insane Asylum, and so far I had not found any means by which these tell-tale marks could be effaced.

The inevitable corollary from this was simply that in the future I must needs exercise the greatest apprehension. I could not fail to see that although the people whom I had met thus far on my journey
had been almost uniformly kind and obliging, yet let them by any chance learn that I had for a term of years been an inmate of an insane asylum, and every man's hand would be turned against me. No-were, I am persuaded, do we find such superstitious horror of the insane as among the uneducated classes; and the unaffected kindness, courtesy, and ready hospitality now uniformly extended to me all along my route would be, if my history were known, changed in an instant to terror, harshness and persecution. I knew that most if not all of the class mentioned possess the belief, once common among all people, whether high or low, that insanity is a blight sent down from heaven—an evil spirit, or devil, at work within us, or a curse of God. When people hold such a belief as this, I knew that I could expect no mercy from them, for it is a singular but indubitable fact that the kindest and most benevolent of men, where their affections are concerned can become, in matters appertaining to their religion, or their superstitious fears, stern, harsh, bigoted and intolerant.

These and other reflections drove sleep from my pillow for half the night; and before finally falling asleep I resolved to exercise greater care and vigilance always in my deportment towards those persons whom necessity compelled me to meet.

To the reader it may appear as somewhat singular that although I had stayed at quite a number of farm-houses since leaving the asylum, yet the names of none of the families are mentioned with the excep-
tion of Mr. Shaw's. The reason for this is simple. It was only at Shaw Farm that any incident out of the ordinary occurred to fix the name in my memory; while at each of the other country houses at which I stopped, no episode within my knowledge, nor circumstance of any kind, occurred to break the monotony of every-day events. Hence those names were no sooner heard than forgotten. But the name Shaw Farm and one other name, I believe, are the only ones which were impressed upon my mind at the time—the incident that has been detailed upon a former page having the effect of imprinting the name of the family indelibly upon my memory. This is why it has never been forgotten, while the other names did not stay in my recollection for a single day. This I regret, as it precludes the possibility of my ever being able to make just or adequate return—which of course was never demanded or expected, or even desired—to the good people who so generously, kindly and ungrudgingly gave me of their best. Without this whole-hearted hospitality on their part, —their prompt, willing and timely courtesy, my long journey had been ended before it had begun, and my hopeless eyes would still be gazing through the iron grates of my cell!

O generous friends, nameless but not forgotten, where shall I turn, in the cold and cruel world, to seek the unaffected kindness, the sincere hospitality, which ever marked your treatment of me? The culture, the polish, and the show of easy wealth are denied you; but higher than wealth, and purer than
the glitter and gloss of earthly pomp, your hearts went out in sweetest sympathy toward mine; and weary and heart-sore, gray with the dust of travel, and bowed under the weight of years and sorrow, you met me kindly—received me without question into the warmth and light of your firesides, and the warmer glow of your hearts!

After midnight I sank into a restless and uneasy slumber, broken by violent and disturbing dreams. Visions of far-away dear ones came over my mind; and I saw them sinking in treacherous quicksands, falling down frightful precipices, or wandering in the labyrinths of dark and trackless forests haunted by savage Minotaurs. Finally I woke bathed in a clammy perspiration, and saw that it was broad day. Some one was knocking at my door and calling out that breakfast was ready. I dressed myself hastily, and joined the family in the dining-room. A feeling of gloom and foreboding disaster oppressed me, and I was glad to get away to be alone with my thoughts. As I took leave of the family, Mrs. Shaw handed me a savory-smelling package wrapped in a newspaper and told me that it was “something for my lunch.”

* In a journey of this kind, which cannot be pursued but for the spontaneous kindness and generosity of the people, I question whether the genuine and freehearted hospitality which extended to me throughout, could be found by a ragged foot-traveler anywhere but among the farmers of Texas. This acknowledgement, it seems to me, is justly due to their brave, simple and generous spirit, and is made without any desire to disparage or detract from the good qualities of any other class, kind or condition of the people.