CHAPTER VI.

BLIND!

Ah! there are moments for us here when seeing
Life's inequalities and woes and care,
The burdens laid upon our mortal being
Seem greater than the human heart can bear.

PHOEBECARY,

On the Atchafalya Bayou, which forms the outlet of Red River, and is the connecting link between that stream and the Father of Waters, there is a bay of considerable extent formed by the abrupt widening and subsequent narrowing of the Atchafalya. It is known in that section as Berwick's Bay; but whether it is called by that name on the maps—or, indeed, is on the maps at all—the present writer does not know. A small town is situated on the bay, called Morgan City; though it is also, and perhaps more generally, known as Berwick's Bay; and this name is applied to either the village or the bay, or both.

It was towards this place that I now made my way, traveling, in the manner already described, over the extensive prairie lands in that region, which bear no small resemblance to many parts of Texas, and which reach for a great number of miles in every direction. Since my late experiences in the wilder-
ness, I had determined to avoid such places in the future, as far as possible; for I had no desire to repeat in the dark depths of some unknown forest, the adventures of that night in the jungle.

One afternoon I learned by inquiry along the road that a wild and untraveled forest, which doubtless gave retreat to many dangerous quadrupeds, was not far ahead of me, and that I should probably have some difficulty in getting through its mazes safely. Moreover, this forest was no less than fifteen miles in width, and was, therefore, more extensive than any I had yet passed through. When this information was communicated to me, by a horseman whom I met in the road, the afternoon was so far spent that sunset was only an hour away. I therefore immediately determined that I would go no further than the nearest farmhouse, if I could induce its inmates to give me lodging, and I inquired of my good-natured informant as to the probable number of houses I should pass between that hour and sunset.

He replied: "Only one."

"Is this country, then," I asked "a desert—an uninhabited waste?"

"Well, no," he answered, smiling; "not that, exactly; but in this region hereabouts settlements are few and far between. The house I speak of you will find about a mile or so away, right on down this road. It belongs to a rich planter named Johnson. You will not have to go far out of your way to get there, as this road will take you past the gate."

I thanked him, and he added as he rode away:
"You had best be careful as to how you let Johnson turn you away, unless you want to make your bed with the wolves."

From this friendly warning I gathered that the wealthy planter had an unpleasant habit of shutting his door in the face of such humble travelers as myself, and the thought gave me some uneasiness as I hurried on my way.

In about half an hour I came in sight of a large white mansion, just off the highway, standing in the midst of handsome and commodious grounds. From the entrance gate a broad graveled walk, or drive, as it must have been in former days, led up to the door, and the grounds were filled with flowers, shrubbery, and hoary shade trees. A thick growth of bright green Bermuda grass carpeted the earth from the whitewashed fence to the house, affording a delightful playground for several children who were romping near the mansion. The house itself was large, old fashioned and roomy—in many respects a typical old Southern homestead of the bygone règime and which had probably been in the family for many years.

I entered boldly. A wide and roomy piazza ran the whole length of the house in front; and as I drew near I perceived a dozen or more handsomely dressed young people seated about it in various positions, engaged in animated conversation, their gay young voices ringing out in merriest laughter from time to time. Some pretty young misses were reclining with practiced grace in parti-colored ham-
mocks, attended closely by gay cavaliers. As I approached this merry group I could not help contrasting my own mean, coarse, and almost ragged attire with their own; my large, rough, and ill-fitting shoes with their polished boots; my unshorn and sun-blackened face with their delicate ones; and to feel that my external appearance, in the eyes of such as they, was very much against me.

Yet, hoping to receive just treatment at least, I did not turn back. I ascended the broad steps and walked across the piazza. It was only when I was almost upon them that the animated group became aware of me. Some of the party honored me with supercilious glances, while the majority, especially the young maidens, seemed to feel that in me they beheld the representative of an unknown species of the genus homo, or a queer nondescript.

A servant at this moment passed me, and I asked to see Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson was not at home. I then demanded to see the lady of the house, and the servant stepped briskly away. Mrs. Johnson came presently; and standing in a distant door (which obliged me to speak in such a bawl that I quite lifted the roof, and drew upon myself the indignant glances of the young ladies) she curtly inquired what I wanted. Some of the young gentleman looked up in contemptuous amusement as I replied that I was in search of a place at which to stop for the night.

The lady informed me, in the fewest and curtest terms, that she had as much company as she had room for, hence I must look elsewhere for lodging.
Having thus spoken, she turned about and coolly walked away. I felt at the moment that had I arrived in a coach and four, and were my clothes of the latest French diagonal, my hat silk, and my shirt fine linen, I should have been courteously received and treated with elegant hospitality. But the fact remained, however, that the door had been shut, as it were, in my face; and for a moment I was so angry that I gave free expression to my feelings—rather more free, I fear, than the occasion demanded. I said, among other things, that I considered it a shame and an outrage to thus turn a fellow-being away from a door, under such circumstances, in a Christian country, and that it seemed to me scarcely less than a slander on civilization and the Christian religion.

When I had spoken in this manner, one of the young gentlemen present rose from his chair, and approached me, demanded in a tone of half-languid amusement:

"Are you a preacher, my friend?"
"No, sir," I returned, "I am not."

He seemed disappointed, and mused a moment with head bent down. Then a bright idea seemed to cross his mind, and he spoke with some eagerness.

"My friend," he said, "I will make you a proposition. If you will agree to hold prayer for us this evening, and will pray for us all, I will undertake to see that you get accommodated for the night. What do you say?"

This proposition seemed to amuse the other young people very much, and to meet with their full approval.
"Say yes, old gentleman," several of the young ladies called out, laughing heartily, and becoming more noisy than ever.

My first impulse was to give the first speaker a token of my physical prowess, and go upon my way. Then I reflected that by remaining and accepting the insolent proposition of the young pagan, perhaps I might be enabled to treat them to an entertainment very different from the monkey-show they seemed to expect. This resolution formed, I said to him that I would do as he wished. He expressed his satisfaction, the company applauded, and the young man went in search of his "aunt" as he called the lady of the house; coming back after a while to say that his aunt had consented for me to remain.

Thereupon I walked down the piazza to its lowest end in order to be away from the gay and obstreperous crowd and sat down. I remained here in undisturbed quiet, gazing about at the wide landscape presented to my view—over which the early shades of night were now descending—and reflecting upon the incidents of my journey until supper was announced. The other occupants of the piazza paid no further attention to me, and seemed to forget my existence. When the evening meal was ready I was shown into the dining-room and given a seat along with the crowd of noisy young people. The meal was splendid and delightful, the service elegant and faultless. I was left entirely to my own devices, and no notice whatever was taken of me. This enabled me to satisfy in peace the keen appetite that a day's travel had put an edge upon.
As we were rising from the table half an hour later the master of the house came in; and his attention being directed to the meanly-dressed stranger, he honored me with a broad stare. I repaired to my seat upon the piazza and remained there for some hours. The night was pleasantly warm and a half-moon shed her dim rays over the world. Presently I heard the twang, thump, and other preliminary sounds, as the strings of some musical instruments were struck, which seemed to announce the beginning of a concert. Then the clear sweet notes of some old melody rose upon the air, and the brooding stillness of night was broken by the sound of merry voices, light laughter, and the measured tread of dancing feet. This was soon changed to polkas, waltzes, and so on through the whole gamut of fashionable dances. After midnight the music ceased; the musicians departed, twanging their instruments noisily as they went; the dancers left the ball-room, and something like silence fell upon the house.

Some of the couples came out upon the piazza in the moonlight, while others wandered about the grounds in the falling dew, and many lingered about the parlors. One couple promenading in the moonlight passed near me, and I heard the lady crying out to her escort:

“Oh, Tom, just think! We haven’t heard that old gentleman pray for us yet!”

“No, by thunder!” answered a masculine voice. “But we shall; by all the gods, big and little. Come on, Kitty; I will leave you in the parlor, and go hunt him up.”
They turned and came on up the steps, her costly robes rustling over the polished floor, talking gayly but in subdued tones. They did not see me, sitting in the shadow near enough to touch them as they passed, conversing in confidential whispers, and so passing on out of sight. A moment after I heard the gay young pagan's voice as he went about bidding the guests assemble for prayer—which word he pronounced in anything but a reverent tone; and then I heard him asking for me. He stepped out upon the piazza calling for me as he came, and I rose from my seat and answered. He hastened forward at once, seizing me by the arm, and we entered the parlor together.

The family and guests were all assembled, the latter making very merry in a corner by themselves. The master of the house looked at me curiously as I entered, but he said nothing. My companion, still retaining his grasp upon my arm, paused in the center of the room (I detected him winking comically at the gay crowd in the corner, which almost convulsed them with suppressed mirth) and, with a low bow, spoke to the following purpose in a canting and sniffling tone:

"My dearly beloved brethren and sisters, and the congregation generally, we will now have divine service, conducted by the good brother here, during which you will please be silent, observing proper decorum, and—and—" here he paused, as if seeking to find a fitting climax to an impressive sentence, and finally added in his natural voice: "and—and—behave yourselves."
This sally, which depended upon the manner of the speaker, rather than upon any words he might say for its humorous effect, was greeted with shouts of laughter, and my companion released his hold upon my arm, and took his seat among the younger portion of the company. Every eye was then turned expectantly upon me, and my first act was to call for a Bible. Those present seemed surprised at this; but a Bible was promptly brought, and I opened it, seated myself in such a manner as to face them all, and read a few extracts that made the cheeks of the young sinners tingle with shame. Seeing the effect I had produced, I closed the Bible, knelt down, and humbly offered a prayer to the Most High. It is not necessary to repeat that petition here, nor any part of it; it suffices to say that I had fully determined to touch the hearts of my hearers, and appeal to their better natures; and my task was so far accomplished that when I rose from my knees there was hardly a pair of dry eyes in the room.

The thoughtless young people—whose levity, like that of many others, was entirely on the surface—immediately crowded round me to grasp my hand and ask my pardon, which, you may be sure, was very willingly granted. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson were very much affected, and it seemed as though they could not do me honor enough. During the time I remained with them they treated me with distinguished courtesy, and pressed me to stop indefinitely with them. My victory was complete; and the young ladies and young gentlemen learned, perhaps for the
first time in their lives, that a human heart, with a human capacity for love, kindness, and shrinking from humiliation, might be found under the coarsest homespun coat.

When I resumed my journey next day, Mrs. Johnson prepared for me a lunch that would have delighted an epicure, and which was sufficient for half a dozen men. I took leave of them with much regret, nor do I ever think of them save with the greatest good-will and esteem.

It was shortly after this that certain symptoms, which had been troubling me for some time, became more pronounced. I suffered from excessive and continual thirst, and my appetite came and went in the most extraordinary and capricious manner. I suffered at times from a feeling of great weakness, and from soreness and pain in the limbs. My weight became very much reduced, and at intervals a feeling of the most terrible depression and melancholy came over me. Yet these symptoms would sometimes abate or almost wholly disappear for days at a time. Again they would increase in violence, and there were other symptoms far more alarming than those that have been mentioned.

I traveled as rapidly as possible, and there were days in which I walked long distances, while in others my physical weakness, which seemed to gradually increase, was so urgent that traveling was only accomplished at the expense of intense suffering. I did not then know what was the matter with me. It was only when I placed myself under the treatment
of a distinguished physician that I learned the awful truth that I was afflicted with Diabetes Mellitus* in its worst and most malignant form. I was warned at the time that the disease was incurable.

My eyesight became affected and grew steadily worse. I found at times that I could scarcely see at all, and for a few days before reaching Berwick's Bay I experienced the terrible and helpless feeling of seeing the ground on which I walked suddenly rising in great wave-like rolls before me, and sinking as suddenly into deep pits and depressions. It rose in ridges and hollows very much like waves at sea; and often, in raising my foot to step upon a ridge half as high as my head, which would suddenly appear in the smooth road before me, I would find it descending into a pit-like depression. As a consequence I found myself at times staggering like a drunken man; and I do not doubt that anyone who chanced to see me walking in this uncertain manner over roads that must have appeared perfectly smooth to him, considered me as a drunkard. This distressing symptom continued with varying intensity until I reached Berwick's Bay, and hence my traveling was necessarily much slower than it had been.

It was several weeks—I do not remember how

* "In Diabetes Mellitus the mind is often greatly altered; depression of spirits, decline in firmness of character and moral tone, with irritability and defects of vision are present."

"The Blood and various secretions contain sugar."

"The majority of cases prove fatal. The prognosis is most unfavorable * * * it being fairly questionable if complete recovery has ever taken place."—From Dr. Hughes' "Practice,"
many—from the time of my escape from the asylum that I arrived at Berwick's Bay. On reaching this place, which is also called Morgan City, I made search for a quiet boarding-place, finally selecting that kept by a Mrs. Smith. This lady was a widow, and was so kind to me during my stay that I shall always think of her with the deepest gratitude and esteem.

And now my eyesight, instead of improving, as I had fondly hoped it would, became steadily worse, and I became very much alarmed. But as nothing could be done under the circumstances, I merely waited, trusting that the disease would in time get better or entirely leave me.

One morning, however, a few days after my arrival, when I woke, as I usually did about sunrise, everything about me was wrapped in Stygian darkness. Supposing that for some reason I had awakened at an earlier hour than usual, I turned over and went to sleep. In the course of an hour or two, or perhaps more, I woke again; yet still all was dark. Wondering in a vague way what the trouble was, I left my bed, and after some trouble, succeeded in dressing myself. I then felt about in search of a match, and I soon found one and struck it. It made a loud noise, as parlor matches do, and I heard the tiny blaze flare up. *Heard*, but did not see. The match was burning brightly—there could be no doubt of that, for I could plainly hear the spluttering of the flame as it ran up the bit of wood. *Yet the same rayless blackness reigned around me.*
Then the truth came home to me—came with such force and terrible intensity that I staggered and would have fallen had I not touched the wall. *I was blind!* Without an instant’s warning or a moment’s notice hopeless darkness had come upon me.

I fell upon my knees in the darkness, and mumbled out some incoherent words—tried to pray. The maddening rush of feeling—the anguish—the despair—the utter hopelessness, and the horror of the moment, can never be described. I tried to pray, but could not. Words would not come—only a senseless muttering; and so, overwhelmed with despair and speechless anguish, I lay prone upon the floor. In this state I lay for some time; but there finally came a knock at my door—though I heard it not; and in the unaccountable silence which followed, Mrs. Smith became alarmed and opened the door.

“Mr. Nall! Mr. Nall!” she cried, in frightened accents, seeing the position in which I lay upon the floor.

Her cry broke the spell. I knew her voice, and knew by the rush of air that my door stood open, yet all was Egyptian blackness.

“Mr. Nall,” she faltered, “what is the matter?”

Turning my sightless eyes upon her, and raising my hands on high, I groaned in accents of hopeless despair:

“Mrs. Smith, I—I—I am blind!”

“Blind!” she cried, in horror. “Blind! Oh Mr. Nall!”

“Blind—yes blind! I cannot see—I hear, but
cannot see you. "All is dark—blacker than night!"

"Great God!" she exclaimed, stepping back. "How horrible!" and she began to weep.

Almost stupefied with despair, I was hardly conscious that she was weeping. Disease had so sapped my physical energies and taken my strength that I did not have the fortitude, the manly resolution, that I would have had otherwise, to bear my affliction calmly. At this moment, from bodily weakness or other causes I became unconscious, and when I came to my senses I heard male and female voices near me, and could feel that I no longer lay upon the floor. I attempted to rise, but a hand pressed me back, and a masculine voice exclaimed, kindly but firmly:

"No, no, Mr. Nall; do not attempt to rise, as you would only fall. We have moved you down here in the sitting room, and seated you in a large rocking-chair."

They then—the gentleman being a physician whom they had sent for in great haste when I fell swooning to the floor—talked to me kindly and encouragingly, with the evident intention of drawing my mind away from gloomy or despairing reflections. But such was the feeling of cold despair tugging at my heart-strings that I scarce minded what they said.

Presently the physician spoke:

"Now, Mr. Nall, do try to rouse yourself from this lethargy of despair. No good can come of it, my word for it. I realize that the misfortune seems much more terrible to you than it would if you were in better health or among your relatives; but you
owe it to your God to try and rouse yourself. Your blindness may only be—and probably is—temporary, and your sight may possibly return as suddenly as it went. Try to rouse yourself."

These words were heartily spoken and kindly meant; but as is usual in such cases, they had little effect. Indeed, what he asked was impossible. My misfortune had come upon me with such terrible and fatal swiftness, and meant so much to me, that I earnestly prayed for death. My sufferings had been so dreadful, I had borne so much, and been afflicted so long, that now, when the mists had lifted, and the shadows were rolling from me, it seemed very hard to have the full goblet snatched from my eager lips and dashed to the earth. While these thoughts were passing through my mind the physician was preparing to take his leave I heard his footsteps and those of Mrs. Smith as they turned to leave the room. To be left entirely alone with my darkness and my despair was a thought I could not bear.

"Don't leave me!" I cried to them. "For the love of heaven don't leave me alone in this terrible darkness I should die! I cannot bear the thought."

In my agitation I sprang up and advanced a few steps towards them, but so great was the feeling of helplessness which possessed me that I fell to the floor.

They ran to me hastily and lifted me back to my chair.

"His blindness has come upon him so suddenly at a time of great weakness and prostration from disease,
and it is such an unaccustomed experience to him that he has a horror of being left alone,” said the doctor, in a low voice; “and really,” he continued, “just now he is more helpless than an infant. Of course he will gradually become more accustomed to it, and will to a great extent lose that feeling of utter helplessness which is so distressing to him now.”

“I will not leave you, Mr. Nall,” said Mrs. Smith, her kind heart touched by my need. “The doctor will have to go, but I will sit with you until I am compelled to go about my duties, and I will then get some one to stay with you.”

She then sat down in a chair near at hand.

I thanked her; and touched by her disinterested kindness, and are vulsion of feeling now coming over me, I could not restrain my tears. Growing calmer after a moment, and soothed by the knowledge that I had the sympathy of one good heart, my misfortune took on a newer and less hopeless aspect, and for some hours I felt more cheerful and resigned.

In the afternoon I sent for one of the officials of the local Masonic lodge—of which Society I had been a life-long member—and giving him a partial account of my history and condition—as much as was proper and necessary for him to know—that noble Order now came to my relief. The necessary funds were subscribed, my lodging paid, and a boy employed to remain with me night and day. It will thus be seen that had I not been a member of that ancient and beneficent Order I should have perished.

After a few days, as the physician had predicted,
I could submit to being led about without feeling every instant that I should fall. Leaning upon the arm of my attendant I walked about the house, and for the exercise so badly needed, promenaded the yard.

While all these things made my lot much easier to bear, my depression and melancholy were very great, and I sincerely longed for death. The gloom that haunted me was profound, and had I possessed the means I should unhesitatingly have taken my own life. Doubtless, however, my kind friends entertained some suspicion as to how matters stood, and my attendant never left me for a moment.

As a means of diverting my mind from these gloomy reflections, as well as with the design of passing my time more agreeably, I expressed a wish to write some articles if anyone would undertake the office of amanuensis. For this difficult task the kind-hearted Mrs. Smith volunteered her services; and the result of our collaboration was a series of articles entitled “A Way-Worn-Traveler.” They were published in the New Orleans Times-Democrat; and Mrs. Smith was so affected by them that she gave me a little purse containing two dollars and fifty cents in silver and urged me to accept it. After some hesitation I did so, having a special use for it, as the reader shall see.

Supplied now by the kindness of Mrs. Smith with the sum mentioned, I thought I saw a way to escape my misery. Relapsing again into gloom and despondency terrible in their intensity, and feeling that joy and love and “mortal faith” had gone from me for-
ever, does it seem strange that I now sought death? The means were not far to seek. The bayou, silent and swift, hastened on toward the sea a short distance away; and I knew that under its dark waters, as under the tide of ancient Lethe, unbroken rest and forgetfulness awaited me. Death and the grave, thoughts which are harrowing and gruesome in health and spirits, no longer had any terrors for me; and I knew that once beneath the changing tide of the bayou, all would be ended.

I realized, however, the impossibility of getting away from my attendant. Even had I been able to do so I could never make my way to the bayou unaided, and no stranger I might meet would assist me, for to the simple question: "What can a blind man want on the banks of a deep swift river?" what could I say?

Obviously, some other course was necessary. I must persuade or bribe my attendant to accompany me to the stream if I ever meant to reach it. But this, as I soon ascertained, was not easy to do. Neither money nor entreaties would induce him to violate his orders. He had, he said, the most positive instructions not to allow me to go beyond the yard gate; and though I begged him most earnestly and offered him all the money I had about me, he remained unmoved.

"No, Mr. Nall," the faithful boy would say, "I would like to do what you ask, but," here he would shake his head, "I can't because I promised them I wouldn't."
“But Charley,” I would urge, with great earnestness, “you might take me, if you only would, for a moment—just for a moment.”

“No, sir,” was the firm reply, “I cannot.”

“Only for a moment,” was my constant entreaty, “I want to go down to the river side just for a moment to—to see—to find whether I can see the boats come in.”

“As a matter of fact, I well knew that I could not see the boats come in, or go out, or come or go at all. My blindness was so absolute that I could not, as many blind persons can do, distinguish between day and night. I could not see the least gleam of light when I held my face toward the sun at midday, and even when a brightly burning torch was held within a foot of my eyes I could see nothing but the most absolute darkness.

But I know now, as I might have realized then, that my pretense of wanting to “see the boats come in” was too shallow to deceive even a child. It did not possess even the doubtful merit of plausibility, and the boy understood my purpose as certainly as though I had told him in so many words that I meant to drown myself, and he was even more careful than before that I did not leave the yard.

I was under the necessity, therefore, of foregoing my design; and I finally ceased to urge my attendant to become unfaithful to his trust. As soon as I understood that there was no chance for the execution of my purpose, almost as by magic I became less despondent and melancholy, and I resolved to make the
best of matters as they stood. From this time forward my burden did not press so heavily upon me.

Yet whenever I thought of the weary years stretching out before me, I knew not how many nor how long, where I had fondly looked forward to a participation in many of the joys of life; and when mortal disease had fastened its fangs upon me, I felt indeed that the doom of blindness had brought upon me an "Iliad of woes."

I remained in a state of total blindness for more than five-and-forty days. There would have been some comfort—though ever so little—in the thought that I could distinguish night from day; but this was denied me, and night and day were as one.

One morning towards the middle of the second month I woke as usual, a while before the breakfast hour. The morning sun was shining brightly in through the uncurtained window, filling the room with light. For a moment I failed to realize what such an ordinary sight meant to me. Then I struggled hastily to a sitting posture and gazed at the sunlight like a man demented. Wonder, joy, incredulity, and heart-felt thankfulness were each contending for the mastery; and throwing back the cover I started to spring from the bed, but fell back, for a moment, upon the sheets. As suddenly as blindness had come upon me—without warning and without notice, my eyesight had returned. Not wholly. Yet all—nay, more than I could ask for. I sprang up in the wildness of joy which now rushed over me, and seizing
my garments with trembling hands, attempted to dress, but threw them aside the next instant and ran to the window. My eyes were blurred with tears, yet I could see the fair green earth smiling before me. Rushing back I threw myself face downward upon the bed and prayed aloud.

The restoration of my eyesight was not complete, and even to this day—in the soft winds and fragrant breezes of the spring of 1893—it is imperfect, and I do not see well; but the terrible experiences of my two months' blindness remain yet fresh in my memory—vivid as though the obscuring mists of time had rolled away, and I stood once more upon the banks of Berwick's Bay, blind and helpless.

In the meantime physical weakness had grown upon me to so alarming an extent that I could not have traveled on foot a dozen miles in a day. A perpetual feeling of coldness haunted me, and in the air of night, which was only pleasant to others, my teeth chattered with cold. A local physician advised me to go to a distinguished surgeon at San Antonio, Texas. The climate at that point was genial, and would in itself no doubt greatly benefit me. He impressed upon my mind the fact that this was my only hope. But how could I get to San Antonio? I had no means, and was no longer able to walk, and how then could I get to the eminent practitioner who could probably save my life?

After a few days of cogitation I formulated a plan—desperate, indeed, and wicked, but still a plan—
by which I could supply myself with the funds necessary for my trip. As a preliminary step I left Berwick's Bay and went half a score of miles further into the interior of the country. This brought me into a section inhabited chiefly by negroes, and these were ignorant, credulous, and reeking with superstition and filth. I sought out one of their most popular preachers, a pompous old black, swelled with dignity and self-importance.

I then told him, after some complimentary and flattering remarks, which made him swell all the more, that I was representing a great Chicago publishing firm (whose name I did not give) who wished to present a handsome Bible to every worthy negro; that the Bible was given free; but that for the sum of twenty-five cents we would print the owner's name in large gold characters on the back. I told him further that I wanted his assistance and his advice as to the best method of giving every worthy darkey a chance to secure a magnificent Bible.

The sable minister fell in with the scheme readily; gave me twenty-five cents upon the spot; and said that he wanted his full name in large letters on his Bible—George Washington Abraham Lincoln Esau Johnson Jacob Jones. This lengthy name he insisted on having set down in full, and he impressed upon me the fact that the letters were to be large.

He watched me with much satisfaction as I wrote down this unique name; and when I had done, he told me that as the next day was Sunday he would call his flock together, and no doubt I would find that everyone would want a Bible.
True to his promise he assembled his congregation on the following morning. When all had arrived he rose in his pulpit and explained to them the nature of my business, and advised them all to come forward with the money and make application for a Bible.

The preacher had hardly concluded his remarks when the dusky congregation began to crowd forward with more eagerness than politeness, by twos, threes, and by dozens, and finally all together—of all ages, sexes, sizes and conditions;—scrambling, pushing, the silly ones tittering loudly in many keys, the impatient ones muttering curses, and all combining to form a scene one would hardly care to see repeated. For the next hour or so I was kept busy writing down names (some of them the most absurd that ever were heard of) and receiving money. Many of the negroes had no cash with them, but with true African impulsiveness all such borrowed it from their more fortunate brothers upon the spot and paid it over to me. When the last silver-piece was handed in, I counted the names upon my list and found that it ran up to something more than a hundred.

I then secured a recommendation from the Rev. G. W. A. L. E. J. J. Jones, and went on further into the country. I sought out another preacher, explained the nature of my business to him, and gave him the recommendation I had secured from his brother expounder of moral law, whom he happened to know. In this manner I passed more than a week going about among the negroes from place to place until I had got together the sum of $57.00. During
this time I suffered very much from cold, though to others the weather was only pleasantly warm, and my chilled frame, weak and painful eyes, and puny strength gave me no little trouble. I adopted all manner of artifices to instill a little fugitive warmth into my shivering body, some of which were successful, while others were not. I could not conceal from myself the disagreeable truth that I had become a confirmed—nay, and well nigh a helpless, valetudinary.

My peregrinations led me at this time through a prairie country. Some of the streams I came to were wooded, while others ran through a bare and open district, destitute of forests or trees. The leading industry was sugar-making. One evening just after nightfall, after a day of unusual bodily suffering, I came, while attempting to walk a mile or two, which was an effort too great for my strength, upon a huge sugar-boiler near a small collection of country houses. The fires which had been left in the furnace earlier in the evening had now smouldered to ashes, and a warmth, at once life giving and pleasant to an exhausted frame like mine, was all that remained of the intense heat of a few hours before. A number of small huts were standing near, but no human being, so far as I could see, was in the vicinity. I thereupon climbed up and laid my chilled and shivering body at full length upon the top of the boiler, and in a few moments experienced such a grateful and drowsy glow of gentle heat steal over my tired frame that I felt myself sinking into a pleasant and soothing
state of half sleep. A bright half moon had been shedding her rays over the wide and level landscape, but now she went out of sight behind a huge drift of cloud which was banked against the southern sky. An increased drowsiness crept over me, and every conscious sensation of pleasure or of pain was lost in the deep calm of sleep. I slept quietly, as I knew afterwards, the whole night through, and might have remained unconscious upon the boiler until far up into the day, had I not been rudely interrupted just as the first glances of the sun were peeping over the eastern hills. I felt myself jerked, with more violence than gentleness from my comfortable position, and a rude voice exclaimed:

“You gits down from hier. You coomes mit me.”

I felt myself slipping, with more speed than grace, from the boiler to the ground. As soon as my feet reached terra firma I saw before me the squat, almost shapeless figure of a low-browed Dutchman, dressed in coarse, scanty, and ill-fitting clothes, and possessed of a broad red face that was dull, stupid and phlegmatic.

“Vat do you mean—” he began, as my feet touched the ground.

“What do you mean, you pragmatic Dutch villain,” I struck in, angrily, “pulling at me in such a manner?”

“Vat beezness had you on dot b’iler?” he demanded, in a blustering manner, but stepping back beyond my reach as he spoke.

“Business enough to teach you a lesson,” I retorted, “if you don’t keep a more civil tongue in your head.”
And then, without waiting for a reply, which I did not care to hear, I went on my way without more ado.

On the following day, while standing, near the noon hour, among a collection of miserable shanties where a number of sugar-workers were hurrying to and fro on their various duties, I saw a small newspaper lying on a table near at hand. I picked it up and glanced through its columns. I think the name of this paper was the Teche Pilot, a country journal issued that day or the day before. I turned over the pages indifferently and the reader may judge my surprise when I found my attention arrested by the following:

"HANG THE SCOUNDREL!"

"We have lately received information to the effect that a man named Nall is traveling through some parts of this parish victimizing the negroes by pretending to sell them Bibles for 25 cents. Of course the negro who is fool enough to part with his money never sees it or the man again. Nall seems to have made considerable money by his rascality. The good white people of this parish should catch the scoundrel and tar-and-feather or hang him. A man who goes among the negroes in this manner, cheating them out of their money, and who thus takes away from the parish so much of the money which should be spent in patronizing home institutions, should be killed."

I read this precious outburst—which I thought revealed the cloven foot in the last sentence—care-
fully through. I then put the paper back where I got it, and started, as I had determined the previous day to do, for the nearest railroad station. I had secured the money to pay for the treatment of a distinguished physician,* and had thus accomplished my object, and was satisfied. I did not return to Berwick's Bay, but purchased a railway ticket and started on my journey to San Antonio. This place was the home of the celebrated Dr. Herf, and if medical skill could save me—this with apologies to "those advertising doctors," who cure everything—I knew that I could rely upon Dr. Herf.

Who was it that said, and has the world justified the saying, that *neces*\textit{sitas non habet legem}!* 

* As this statement may not appear very clear to the reader, the following explanation is offered. As a matter of fact $50.00 would not pay for the treatment of an eminent physician in a difficult case, nor probably even the fifth part of it. The members of the medical profession are daily performing more acts of charity, more deeds of goodness, which are never known to the public at large, and for which they receive no credit, or perhaps even thanks, than any other class of men. When called upon to treat a difficult case, without the hope of pay for his services, the physician does not hesitate, but freely gives the patient the benefit of his whole skill and experience. And I may add that in many cases he gets only abuse: or ingratitude at the least, for his pains. For these reasons I knew that the San Antonio physician would treat me—would promptly and cheerfully do his best for me when his time was more valuable than gold, even though he knew that I had no money at all, and would *never* have.