

MINA HILT,  
BY  
ELIZABETH HALL AKIN.



Class PZ3

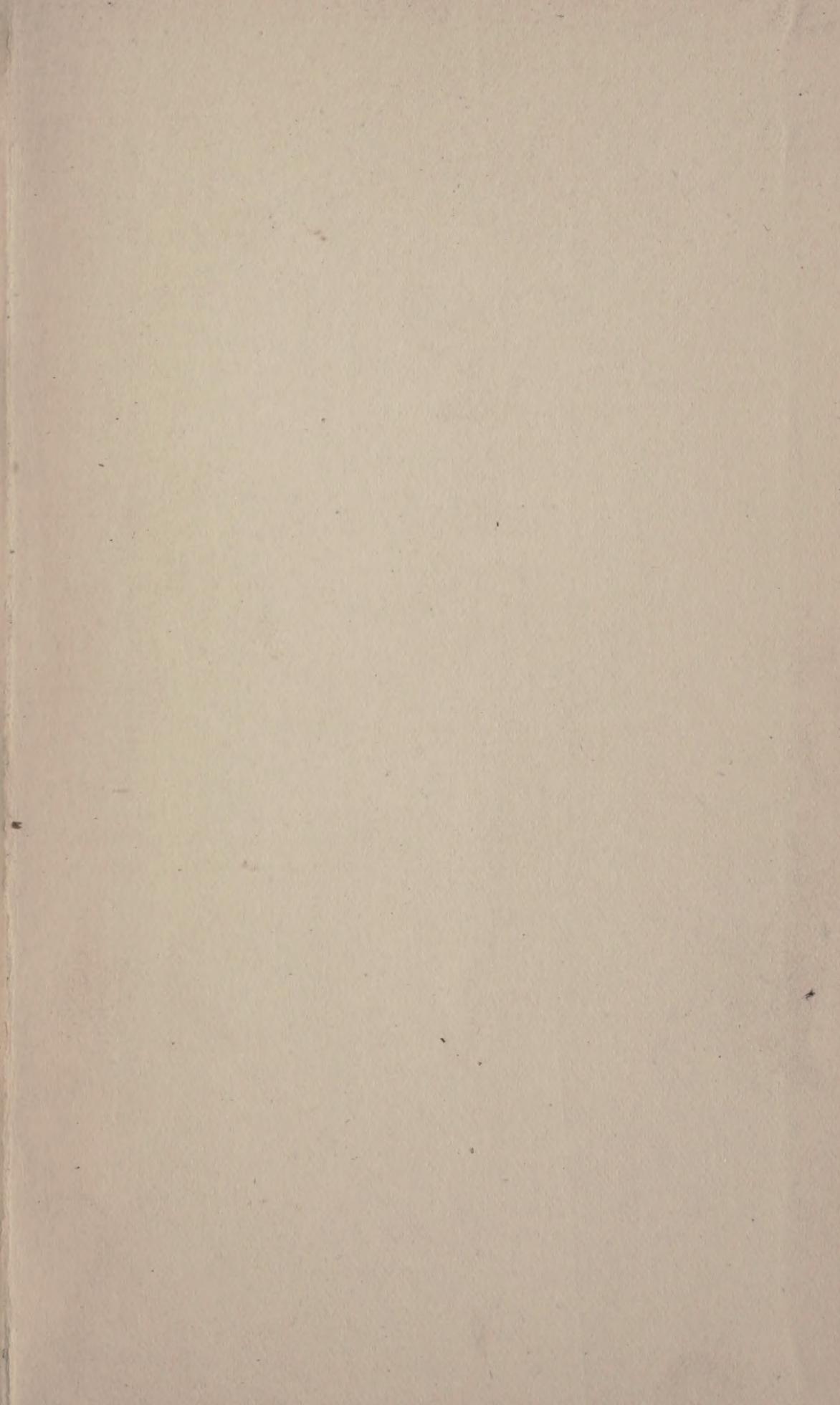
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WASHERS  
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**NINA HILT,**

BY

**ELIZABETH HALL AKIN.**

# NINA HILT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### NINA'S CHILDHOOD DAYS.

Mr. Hilt, with his wife and seven children, lived in a very beautiful home in Western Kentucky. The house was a large, two-story building and was confronted by a long lawn, which was covered with stately forest trees and evergreens, and also many beautiful plants and flowers bedecked the lawn.

This home was known as Hilt Home.

Mr. Hilt was a very hospitable gentleman, and his hospitality was known far and near. His wife was loved by all who knew her. And, in fact, this was a happy family until the sad angel of death came very unexpectedly to their home one morning and took away the devoted wife and mother.

Mr. Hilt felt that there was a great responsibility resting on him after the death of Mrs. Hilt, now that he had the sole care of seven motherless children. It is true that the two older ones, Johnson and Mary, were almost grown, but they were yet children in their ways; neither of them had ever known what trouble or care was before, as their mother had borne it all for them.

Henry and Sarah were the next oldest, and then Lee, Nina and Narlington, the baby, just ten months old.

Mr. Hilt's negroes had been freed three years before, and now he didn't have a servant that he could feel willing to risk his baby with. But

in a short time he procured a white woman to keep house for him. Her work was very unsatisfactory to Mr. Hilt. But with a great effort he managed to "put up" with her poor housework for one year, and then he decided that he could not live in this manner any longer. He determined to marry a lady whom he thought would be a mother to his children. So the housekeeper was dismissed and the new wife and mother came to Hilt House, and cared for the little children as though they were her own.

Baby Narlington was soon very fond of her. Nina also loved her new mother; but as she was just three years old when her mother died she learned to love her oldest sister, Mary, as a mother. Mary was also very fond of Nina.

Nina's hair was very dark, and curled in ringlets all over her head; her face was round, very fair, with rosy cheeks, and her eyes were a very dark blue. She was also the pet of her father, as he often said she was the image of her mother. And he humored her every want and wish. Nina was with Mary continually, whether she went walking, riding or driving. And she thought everything Mary did was perfect.

Mary is fourteen years old; although she is very young, she is in love with one of her cousins, John Lynn, whom her father or mother do not like for her to associate with, for they could not tolerate a marriage between them, as they do not approve of cousins marrying. Often Mary would go walking or to visit some of her friends, and John, in this way, was with her a great deal. He would frequently walk nearly home with her, but would not dare go in sight of Hilt Home. Nina, of

course, always accompanied her sister on these walks. But she never told father or mother that Cousin John walked with sister, as Mary would always say to her as John turned to leave them: "Nina, dear, you must not tell father or mother that Cousin John walked with us today." Nina loved Mary so dearly that she did everything Mary told her to do. I can imagine how little Nina looked bobbing her little curly head and jumping about as she said, "No, sister, I won't tell," and that was all Mary wanted, for she never knew Nina to tell a story.

Little did Nina know what these walks and talks would lead to, or she never would have promised Mary not to tell her father. But the sad news was broken to her father by a dear friend of his one day that John and Mary were preparing to run away and get married.

That evening Mary was called to her father's room, and Mr. Hilt said: "I heard some very sad news today, my daughter, and I want you to tell me if this be true, that you and John Lynn are arranging to run away and get married?"

Then Mary said, with tears streaming from her eyes: "No, father, I will never marry John Lynn."

Mr. Hilt said: "Now, Mary, if this isn't true it is all right, but if it is true, it will certainly grieve my heart. How well I remember how very much your dear mother—who has left us and gone to heaven—opposed cousins marrying. I have often heard her say that she had rather bury one of her children than to have them marry a cousin." This touched Mary's heart very forcibly, and she said again: "No, father, I promise you now that

I will never marry Cousin John."

Mr. Hilt believed that Mary meant just what she said.

But the next time Mary saw John Lynn she told him all her father had said. Then John said: "Never mind, my own, dear Mary, we will just show the old man whether this report be true or not. If you will only trust and love me," and then he stooped down and kissed her cheek.

Poor Mary, so young and child-like, after listening to his pleadings and great flow of loving words, forgot her promise to her father, and agreed to go with John.

Then they commenced to plan how they would get away from the old folks, and John thought of his niece, Willie Owen, who was a great schemer. He wrote her to come at once.

Willie lived in the city of M——, some twenty miles away. When she got John's letter to come at once, and help him steal Mary, she was delighted, as she always enjoyed such tricks very much. She hurried to pack her grip, and started on her journey immediately.

When she arrived at John Lynn's home, she found John at the gate, who met her with a glad welcome. She was tired from her long journey, as she had driven through, but she was still quite jolly and laughed and talked all at the same time.

John soon told her all and laid the case plain before her. And then he told her if she would steal Mary he would make her a handsome present.

Willie said: "I will sure do it."

So Willie went to Hilt Home and spent the next afternoon with Nina. And invited Mary to go and spend the night with her. But this plan

didn't work, as Mr. Hilt said he would rather Mary would stay at home.

Willie then said she would stay and spend the night with Mary.

About dusk the two girls and Nina were in the yard. And now they had to devise some plan to get rid of Nina.

Willie told Nina to run in Mary's room and get Cousin Willie's handkerchief for her.

Away went Nina as fast as her feet could carry her. Upstairs and downstairs and back to the lawn she went. But Mary and Willie were not in sight.

Nina called and cried for Mary, but no answer came, and she never saw Mary Hilt any more, for that night her name was changed to Mary Lynn.

That was a night of mourning at Hilt Home. Tears flowed from every eye. Nina refused to be comforted, for she felt like she had lost another mother. Sarah and Nina went to bed with sad hearts. But soon they fell asleep. And when they awoke the next morning their sister Mary was far away from them.

Mary's heart almost sank within her when she thought of her mother's baby girl and how she had torn away from her, and deceived her little, trusting heart. And then she thought of how happy she had been at home before John had begun to make love to her. She would almost give her life if she could return home just as she was the day she left. And oh, when she thinks of her father's pleading words to her, and remembers her solemn promise to him, she repents bitterly. But, alas, it is too late! She can never undo what has been

done. She has pledged herself to John Lynn for life.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sarah and Nina had quite different dispositions. Sarah is very quiet and refined, while Nina has a word for everybody.

Sarah was twelve and Nina seven years old when Mary left them. Both go to the village school one mile away. The road to the school was a long, straight lane with trees and flowers along the roadside—just a nice walk for them. And they were very happy, except when they would think of Mary, who ought to have remained at home and cared for her sisters. But, instead, she rarely ever sees them. Occasionally she saw them at church, but didn't get to talk to them, as father hasn't forgiven her yet. And she didn't go home for two years after she was married. Oh, how long these years seemed to Mary.

She lived almost in sight of Hilt Home, and passed there frequently, and looked so wistfully at her once dear old home, which now she was not permitted to enter.

Mary and John had given up all hopes of getting Mr. Hilt's forgiveness, and at last decided to move to Texas.

When Mr. Hilt heard that John and Mary were preparing to move away it was more than he could stand. So he sent for Mary to come home.

Oh, how Mary's heart rejoiced when she received the news that she was wanted *at home*, at her father's house, from whence she left two long years ago, so bitterly against his will. She hurried to go, and took with her a little girl baby, two months old, whom she called Lyda.

Mr. Hilt met Mary at the front lawn gate and kissed her. Then he went into the house, sat down and cried heartily, and then he fainted, but he was soon relieved by the use of camphor and hard rubbing.

After this all went on nicely at Hilt Home that day. Nina was never so happy before. She thought little Lyda was the dearest thing on earth. Sarah also loved Lyda, but didn't make a display of her love like Nina. Late in the afternoon Mary and Lyda returned to their little home on the hill.

John came out to meet her, but she could scarcely tell him how very happy she was, for tears of joy were streaming from her eyes.

At last she said: "Oh, John, I have had such a delightful time today. I wish you could have been with me. Father said you could come with me the next time. The little girls, and especially Nina, were so glad to see me. In fact, John, it seems strange to me how I ever made up my mind to go off and leave dear little Nina. Poor little thing! To think mother died and left her when she was so young, and then I just tore her from me and ran off and left her. You know, John, how very much she loved me. Well, I hope God will forgive me for it."

"Well, I suppose then, Mary, you love Nina more than you love me."

"O, I didn't say that, John, but you know how small she was when we married."

"Well, that is not answering my question, Mary. Which do you love the best, Nina or me?"

"John, don't be silly. You know I ought to love you the best."

"But you don't. I know you don't, for you

are always talking about your little sister, Nina. There are plenty at home to care for her, and I don't see why you should always be worrying about her! I get tired of a thing sometime."

"Let's drop this subject, John. I want to tell you some more about home."

"Isn't this your home?"

"O, John, you are so cross. Of course this is my home, but I meant father's home, and Nina's home."

"There it is—Nina again. I won't listen to you, Mary. Goodbye, Mrs. Lynn."

"I do believe John is jealous of Nina. I knew he was jealous of everybody else, but who would have thought he would be jealous of this poor little motherless child? I guess he thinks I will quit talking about her, but he is sadly mistaken." John has been standing near the door, but Mary didn't know he was there. He stepped out in front of the door and said:

"Mary, who are you talking to?"

"To myself, John. I believe you are about to run me crazy. I know it sounds real silly to hear anyone talk to themselves, but you wouldn't listen to me, and you know women *will talk*, and you or any other man need not attempt to stop them."

"Well, Mary, we won't quarrel any more, and I have some good news. Mr. Hilt wants us to come over in the morning a little while; he wants to see us on business. He sent this note by a boy. Here it is. Read it:"

"*Dear Mary:*

"I want you and John to drive over for a short while tomorrow morning. I have a little business to lay before you. So, don't pack any of your

goods tonight. Lovingly, your

“FATHER.”

Mary said: “O, John! I wonder what father wants with us. I am so happy! I do wish we were not going to Texas.”

“You do, Mary? I have heard you say a number of times you wished you were a thousand miles away from here.”

“Yes, but that was before father let me come home. Let’s go to bed, John, and perhaps we will dream about what father wants with us.”

John and Mary retired early. John soon was sound asleep, but for Mary there was no sleep that night. She tossed from one side of her bed to the other, she was so impatient to see one ray of light. To her it seemed the longest night she ever spent.

At the first break of day, Mary called John, and they arose. Mary prepared breakfast, while John fed the horses, cattle and hogs.

When all the morning work was done, they started to Hilt Home. All was in readiness for them when they arrived. Mr. Hilt was waiting for them. He was somewhat nervous this morning, as he himself had not slept well the night before. But he must proceed with his business.

He said: “Mary and John, I have studied this matter well—that is, of your moving to Texas, and I don’t think it is the proper thing for you to do.

“I will make you this offer, if you will not go. (Mary’s heart leaped with joy.) I will deed you a little farm and help you build a house. Now, you can decide for yourselves about this. But I would much prefer you would remain in Kentucky.”

At first John did not want to accept the propo-

sition, but Mary's pleading eyes won him over, and after some moments of hesitation, he said:

"I am inclined to think I could do better in another State, but perhaps I am mistaken, and if you think it best—and I know Mary wants to stay, for she said so last night—I will not go."

"Oh, thank you, John," said Mary. "I believe you do love me some."

Nina clapped her hands with delight. She was so glad Mary was not going so far away.

Very soon the deed was made, and a neat little cottage was built.

John and Mary felt like they were at home once more, and now the Texas fever was a thing of the past.

Nina was a frequent visitor at Mary's home, and she spent many hours playing with Lyda.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE RIVALS.

When Sarah completed her education, she determined to teach school. She applied for the village school and began teaching in September.

Nina felt quite lonely at home, but managed to entertain herself by helping her mother do the housework, sewing, tending the flowers, raising the fowls, etc.

She had quite a number of visitors, and also visited a great deal herself. She tried to get all out of life she could. She is now sixteen years old, and frequently some of her boy schoolmates call to see her. She thinks she is quite a child yet, and says she doesn't expect to wed until she is a grown-up lady, for she was thoroughly disgusted at Mary's marrying so young. And, of

course, she will wait until Sarah gets married, as Sarah is five years her senior. But the present prospects are that she won't have to wait on Sarah long, as Sarah has two very attentive beaux—Will Evans and Joe Smith.

Will is very tall and large, weighing two hundred pounds. He has very light hair and blue eyes.

Joe is just the opposite, being low, tolerably heavy, has dark hair and brown eyes. And his toilet is always perfect, while Will doesn't lose much time making his toilet.

Joe is Nina's favorite, and she is anxious for Sarah to marry him.

Sarah has been engaged to Joe for two years, and Joe didn't think she cared for anyone else but him. He lived near Hilt Home, and saw Sarah quite often. He has somewhat of a jealous disposition; he doesn't want Sarah to even talk to any other gentleman, and he did not think she even cared to.

Sarah had seen the fruits of jealousy since Mary and John married, and declared she would never marry a jealous man. She had suspicioned that Joe was jealous, so she thought she would just try him and see.

One day she met Will Evans. Will told her he would like very much to come by and take her to church that evening if agreeable with her. Sarah thought this a good time to find if Joe was jealous, so she accepted Will's company.

Will came at the appointed time, and soon after Joe came. Both came to go with Sarah. But Joe had not told Sarah that he was coming, for he considered that he was to escort her wherever she

went, and so he came this evening as usual. Sarah was very much confused, to say the least of it. What to do she hardly knew, and she wished herself far away from there at this critical time. She saw the fire flash from Joe's brown eyes, and he was in a quiver from head to foot. Sarah could not stand to look at him any longer; she knew something had to be done. Just then Will walked up, took her by the arm and went boldly out, and didn't stop until they reached the church. And to their utter astonishment Joe was close behind them. This was enough proof for Sarah that Joe was very jealous hearted, and she thought to herself she would never marry Joe Smith, for he would wreck her life forever.

Nina felt sorry for Joe, as she didn't think Sarah had treated him with the least bit of courtesy. Joe didn't remain for services that evening, but went to find Nina. He was well aware of the fact that she was his friend, and he went to her in time of trouble. Joe told Nina all, and cried like a child.

Nina's sympathy was very much aroused for Joe, and she promised to do all she could for him. Then Joe bade Nina goodbye, and left with his heart feeling much lighter than it did when he came to tell Nina the sad news, for Nina told him that she thought it would turn out all right, and that she was sure Sarah loved him.

As Joe went out the Hilt lawn gate he met Sarah and Will returning from church.

Joe stopped and said:

"Sarah, I would like to speak to you privately just one minute."

Will walked a few steps and waited for Sarah. Joe said, "Sarah, why do you treat me in this manner? Will you permit me to call and see you tomorrow morning?"

Sarah said she would, and walked on without another word. This made Joe madder than ever and he said harshly:

"Sarah, you seem to be in a hurry this evening," but Sarah answered not.

Nina was ready for Sarah when she came into the parlor. Nina said:

"You have treated poor Joe very rude tonight, Sarah; I never felt so sorry for anyone in my life. Why, he actually cried like a whipped child while he was talking to me and I came very near crying myself. How would you like to be treated in this manner? Remember, it is written in God's Holy Bible for us to 'Do unto others as we would have others do unto us.'"

"Well, Nina, how much is Joe Smith paying you to fight his battles," said Sarah; "I am sure it must be a great deal, for you are pleading his case like a lawyer in a criminal case. Will you just please leave this to us, and I will settle it my way."

"Your way! I suppose your way is to jilt Joe Smith for that big, awkward Will Evans," said Nina. "Sarah, your taste and mine are quite different; indeed it is. If I were you I would sure marry Joe in preference to Will Evans."

"Well, Nina, if you think Joe such a nice gentleman, why don't you get up a case with him yourself?"

"Just because he wouldn't make my style of a

husband. I could have gotten up a case with him when I returned home from school last spring, but I positively refused to accept any attention from him whatever."

"Nina, you surely don't mean to say that Joe Smith wanted to make love to you when he and I were already engaged. Do tell me how do you know he did, and who told you? Did he, himself?"

"Well, Sarah, you remember when I returned from school Joe Smith hadn't been here but a short while, and I think, Sarah, you are surely mistaken about you and Joe being engaged on such a short acquaintance. I knew he had been to see you several times, but I don't believe you were engaged."

"Well, that don't matter whether we were engaged at that time or not. Go on and answer my question," said Sarah.

"Very well. I will tell you, Sarah, but please don't tell Joe when you and he make up," Nina said.

"I promise, Nina, for I never expect to tell him anything of importance again."

"Oh, I suspect you will. You remember that beautiful spring day when I came home from school, for I suppose you had told Joe something about my coming home, as Narlington heard Joe telling a friend of his that he had been visiting Miss Sarah Hilt, and he understood that her younger sister, Nina, would return from school that day and he was going to set to her.

"Soon after I met him he tried to make a date with me, but I positively refused to accept his company."

"Why so, Nina, did you not think he was worthy

of your company?"

"I didn't say he was not. Let's not talk about this any longer. There is something of a great deal more importance to us both. Tell me, Sarah, are you in love with Will Evans?"

"I am not now, but perhaps I will be some day," Sarah said.

"Well, I cannot say that I admire your taste in your choice of a lover. Did Joe tell you he was coming around to see you in the morning?"

"No; he asked me if he could come."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him he could," was Sarah's reply.

"I am glad you told him he could come, sister. Now, suppose we retire, as it is twelve o'clock, but I am not one bit sleepy. Good night, sister, dear. I hope you will dream a good dream about Joe tonight, and will make up with him tomorrow."

"Nina, I will never make up with Joe, for he is just as jealous-hearted as John, and you know I just can't tolerate John Lynn, for he makes Mary's life almost miserable. No, I will never make up with him. I just let Will go with me to find Joe out. And, thank heaven, I have found him out before it was too late."

"Sarah, you don't mean to say Joe is jealous, do you? Who wouldn't get mad when they are treated like you treated Joe? I hope you are mistaken about his being jealous, for I just can't believe that Joe Smith is a jealous man. If I did I would never try to help him out of his trouble again."

Nina then went to her room and closed the door and pondered in her heart whether she was doing right or not when she was trying to get

Sarah to marry Joe; but she finally decided to let them decide this matter without her aid. Then she closed her eyes and went to sleep.

Sarah and Nina arose early the next morning, but neither of them mentioned Joe's name until Henry came in and announced Joe's arrival.

Sarah went slowly to the parlor, where she found Joe waiting very impatiently. He didn't wait for her to take a seat before he said:

"Sarah, I demand an explanation from you. Why did you let Will Evans go with you to church last evening when you knew I was coming to go with you?"

"Why, I am sure I did not know you were coming; I had no engagement with you," responded Sarah.

"Well, Sarah, I am surprised at you. I consider I have a standing engagement with you, at any and all times. Now, promise me, Sarah, that you won't accept Will's company any more."

Sarah replied: "No, I will make no such promise. Joe, you have a jealous heart. I just let Will go with me to find you out; and now that I know your jealous disposition—for, God forbid that another one of the Hilt family should marry a jealous man—I am thoroughly satisfied from your conduct last evening that we shall never marry. Here is your ring; take it, I shall never wear it again."

Sarah looked into his face and said:

"Joe, you had just as well take that ring, for I mean just what I say. I will never wear it again."

"Sarah, I surely must be dreaming, for I cannot realize that this is my own, dear Sarah speak-

ing these cruel words to me. How can you treat me thus when you know how much I love you, and I felt sure that you loved me in return? Oh, Sarah, how you have deceived me! How can I give you up? My life will be one dark and dreary day without you. When I was with you all was sunshine. This is more than I can bear. Won't you take back those cruel words, and make me happy once more? Let me put this ring, the emblem of endless love, upon your finger; then all will be well with us again."

"Joe, you may think me cruel and heartless, but I do not love you now. I loved you when I promised to be your wife, but since last evening's lesson my love for you is no more."

"Listen, Sarah. You say you do this because I am jealous-hearted, and I confess I am jealous, for where love is there also is jealousy."

"I don't believe anything like that, for I never did believe John Lynn loved Mary, and he is the most jealous creature on earth," replied Sarah. "No, Joe, if jealousy and love go hand in hand, I will never marry. I expect to remain Sarah Hilt until I find a lover who is not jealous. Now, Joe, I will bid you a long farewell."

Sarah arose and hastily left the room.

Joe hardly knew what to do. He sat down and looked into the fire a few moments. Then he arose, picked up the deserted ring, which he almost hated, since Sarah would never wear it again. He looked at it a moment, and dropped it in his pocket; then he walked hurriedly away from Hilt House.

Nina heard Sarah's retreating footsteps as she left the parlor, and she went to Sarah's room.

There she found Sarah as pale as death. Nina said:

"Oh, Sarah, what is the matter with you? You look so pale! Are you sick? I will get you the camphor bottle. Now, rub some on your face. Sit down and be quiet, and you will soon be better."

"I am not sick, Nina. I am just a little nervous, and I hope I will never see Joe Smith again."

"Why, Sarah, did you break your engagement with him?"

Sarah replied: "I certainly did; and, furthermore, I don't want to hear any of your pitiful pleadings for him."

"No, I will not, for I decided that evening when you told me that Joe was as jealous as John Lynn that I would never try to help him again. Well, Sarah, as you are not going to marry this autumn, you will teach school again, will you not?"

"That is my intention, Nina, and I think I will ride to the village this afternoon and put in my application."

Sarah went to the village that afternoon and got the promise of the school, and had to begin teaching in one week from that time. On her way home she met Will Evans.

Will bowed and said, "Where have you been, Sarah?"

Sarah answered: "I have been to procure the village school."

"You don't mean that you are going to teach this fall, do you, Sarah?"

"Yes, I will begin teaching Monday."

"I am surely surprised. I thought you and Joe Smith were to be married in October," said Will.

"I suppose everybody thought that, but that is a thing of the past. Joe and I are—well, I started to say friends, but I don't know that he is even my friend now."

Will said: "I am sorry for Joe, but I am glad to hear that you are not going to marry him, for I am in love with you myself, and have been ever since I first met you. I thought it was a settled fact that you and Joe were going to marry; that's why I never told you before."

Sarah made no reply to this, but quickly changed the subject by saying:

"My school will begin next Monday, and I will be very busy until then and if you will excuse me, Will, I will hurry on."

Will answered, "Sarah, would you object to my riding home with you?"

"I have no objections, but I am rather blue today and am not very entertaining," responded Sarah.

Will and Sarah rode slowly home together.

When Nina saw them coming she said to her father: "There comes Sarah, and Will Evans is with her. I hope he won't come in, for I feel bad enough today without looking at him. Somehow, father, I feel as though a corpse had just been carried from our house. I guess it is because Sarah and Joe have broken their engagement. Now, I suppose Will thinks he will take Joe's place. Oh! I just can't hardly stand the idea of Sarah marrying Will Evans. What do you think about it, father?"

"Well, Nina, I like Will the best of the two. I never could understand Joe; somehow he is a very peculiar man."

"But, father, Joe always looks so nice."

"Well, daughter, you can't always judge a man by his outside appearance; while Will doesn't look as nice as Joe, I suspect he has the best and purest heart and would make Sarah the kindest husband."

"He may, father; but for all that, I can't see how Sarah can love him. I know I couldn't."

"But you must remember, Nina, you are not old enough to love yet."

"I know that, father; but when I am old enough the man I love will have to be an up-to-date, nice-looking gentleman. No, father, Will is not coming in; he has gone back the way he came."

Sarah came in, and went to her father's room to tell him that she had gotten permission to teach the village school again. She was much happier now than she was when she left home. Nina hardly waited until Sarah told about the school before she said:

"Well, I suppose Will Evans is happy now; I guess he thinks he has poor Joe's place, and I believe you are just as anxious as he is, Sarah."

"Nina, please don't begin talking about Joe, for I don't want to hear his name mentioned. He is nothing to me now, and my mind is running in quite a different channel. I have a great deal of sewing and lots of other things to do this week, and I wan't you to help me."

Nina replied: "All right, I will help you, Sarah." Then she turned her head and looked towards the front lawn gate and said: "Look at the gate, Sarah." Sarah's heart nearly sank within her, for there came Joe walking briskly down the lawn towards the house.

"Oh, what shall I do?" said Sarah. "I will not see him. Nina, you meet him and tell him I would very much prefer that he would never visit Hilt House again." She then went into her room and locked the door.

Nina met Joe at the door and said, "Good evening, Joe. Will you come in?"

Joe replied: "Thank you, Nina. Is Sarah here?"

"Yes, Joe, she is here; but she told me to tell you she would not see you," said Nina.

"I am sorry, Nina, for I just came in to bid her good bye, as I am going far away, and possibly I may never see her face again. I would just like to see her for a few moments, if she will permit me."

"I will go and tell her, and perhaps she may see you," answered Nina.

Nina told Sarah what Joe said, but Sarah replied: "Tell him, again, I don't care to see him."

Joe listened to this reply calmly. He bade Nina good bye and said: "Nina, you are a dear, good girl, and you have been a true friend to me." Then he left her.

Nina could not keep the tears from her eyes as she watched Joe pass through the lawn gate for the last time. She wiped the tears from her eyes and went into Sarah's room, but didn't call Joe's name again.

The next week was spent very quietly at Hilt Home and Sarah and Nina were both very busy.

The next Sunday afternoon Sarah and Nina were walking in the front lawn, when they heard footsteps behind them. They turned, and who should it be but Will Evans. Will came up, and

said to Sarah:

"I thought possibly you were lonesome, since Joe is gone, and I came around to spend a few hours with you this afternoon."

"I am really glad you came, Will," answered Sarah.

That was enough for Nina. She said: "I guess it is time for me to take my departure."

Will said: "Don't leave us, Nina, I would like to talk to you, too, although I know you like Joe much better."

Nina replied: "I have no love for either of you myself. I will acknowledge I did all I could in Joe's favor, because I don't like to see anyone mistreated, like Sarah mistreated Joe. You know she did it, too."

"No, I can't say that she did, Nina. It might have been me who mistreated him. I made an engagement with Sarah to go to church."

"Well, Sarah ought not to have accepted your company. Oh, well, I am going to hunt father," and off she went.

Will was glad to be alone with Sarah, and the afternoon passed away very rapidly to him. For he was very much in love with Sarah, and told her so more than once before he left that afternoon.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### SARAH'S WEDDING.

Monday morning Sarah went to begin her school. Nina was so lonesome she decided to go and visit a friend of hers, Clara Winfrey, in the city of H——. She packed her trunk and left the next morning. So everything is now very quiet at Hilt House. Sarah came home late in the afternoon,

very tired, and, of course, mother and father didn't see much of her. Mr. and Mrs. Hilt were very lonesome and longed for Nina's return home. Will is a frequent visitor at Hilt Home now.

After a four week's visit Nina returned home with a light heart and full of fun. It took her several days to tell where she went and all she did. She was very glad to get home; although she liked to visit, still she was always glad to get home, for she said home was the sweetest place of all.

When Sarah returned home on the afternoon of Nina's return, she told Nina that she and Will Evans were engaged, and that they expected to be married as soon as her school was out. Nina didn't object, for she knew it would make no change in Sarah's business. But she thought lots, and often wondered if Will would make Sarah a good husband. The father's words would pass through her mind, and she would say: "Well, father knows better than I do, and he thinks Will is all right and gives his consent for them to marry; I guess I will, too. Will may be a good man, and he looks so much nicer since he has been going with Sarah. Well, I hope they will be happy, and I shall not bother myself any more about them."

Nina went to the postoffice one day and got a letter with a strange postmark. She couldn't imagine who it was from. She opened it and to her astonishment it was from Joe. He was then in Missouri, and said he would never forget Nina. He asked her to correspond with him, but she never answered his letter, as she does not believe in encouraging a gentleman unless she meant it.

John and Mary sold their little farm and bought

another, ten miles from Hilt Home. Nina missed Mary and Lyda very much, and she didn't get to see them often.

Months passed off rapidly and it is now the middle of January. Sarah's school will be out in two weeks. Sarah and Will are to be married the tenth of February, and Sarah and Nina are very busy getting ready for the wedding. Sarah worked after her school was out in the afternoon until late at night. Nina is to be Sarah's bridesmaid and James Redd, a friend whom Nina met on her visit to Clara, is to be Will's best man.

As the time drew near for the wedding Sarah couldn't help but think of Joe, for she knew how dearly he loved her. She had never seen him in reality since he came to bid her farewell. But she often saw him and heard his pleading words in her dreams, and she would say to herself—for she never called his name to Nina since her engagement with Will—"if Joe didn't have that miserable fault of his, I could still love him. But, oh, pshaw! it is only wasting time to think of him, for tomorrow is my wedding day, and, of course, I will be happy with Will; I know I could be very happy if I could never think of Joe again."

Nina came in and said: "What's the matter with you now, Sarah, you are looking blue? It seems to me like this ought to be one of the happiest days of your life. You know you are to marry the man you love best tomorrow. I am sure that I shall be all smiles the day before I wed."

"Oh, Nina, you don't know what you will do. You don't even know what the first principle of love is."

"Well, I guess I don't; but I have a mighty good idea of what it is, and, possibly, I may know some day. Well, I won't worry you any longer, Sarah."

"You are not worrying me, Nina. You can't imagine how much I hate to leave you so lonely."

"Don't worry about me, Sarah; I will make it all right. Don't you think about anything but yours and Will's happiness now, and you will be looking beautiful tomorrow. Now, I bid you good night."

Nina closed the door and Sarah retired.

Sarah's wedding day was a beautiful day, but rather cold. Everybody at Hilt Home was preparing for the wedding.

Soon the hour arrived and Will and James Redd were promptly on time. Sarah was looking unusually pretty today. Nina was the jolliest of the wedding party.

James laughingly said to Nina: "Suppose we make this a double wedding?"

Nina replied: "Oh, let's don't; you know that is bad luck."

The parlor was crowded with friends and relatives, and as the clock struck twelve the solemn vows were made and Will and Sarah were husband and wife.

They left immediately for Will's home, just a nice drive through the country.

Nina and James accompanied them. Nina spent a few days with Sarah in Sarah's new home. But now she thinks of mother at home with so much to do. She wished Sarah and Will a happy life and left them.

## CHAPTER IV.

## GUY BOYD.

When Nina arrived home all were very glad to see her, and asked a number of questions about the newly married couple and their new home.

Nina was somewhat excited on Sarah's wedding and she didn't see half of the people who were present. So Mrs. Hilt named the wedding guests over to her. Among them was a stranger to Nina, Guy Boyd. Nina stopped her mother and said: "Did you say Guy Boyd, mother? Who is he?"

"Yes, Nina; didn't you hear your father speak of the young man who has recently moved on the farm joining us?"

Nina said: "Has he bought the farm, mother?"

"No, I suppose not, for he is very young; he is the doctor's son, who has recently moved to the village," replied Mrs. Hilt.

Nina said: "I wonder how old he is, and is he handsome, mother?"

"Why, Nina, what's the matter with you? Why do you want to know so much about this Guy Boyd?"

"It is just curiosity, mother; nothing else. You know all girls have curiosity, and especially when a strange young man moves into their neighborhood. Wasn't you curious when you were young, mother?"

"I suppose I was," replied Mrs. Hilt.

"Well, then, mother, you ought not to mind telling me all you know about Guy Boyd."

"I don't mind telling you all I know, but I do not know much. He is a low, heavy man, has blue eyes and light hair; in fact, if he conducts himself as well as he looks, he is all right."

Nina laughed and said: "Well, I guess I will set my cap for him."

Mrs. Hilt said: "You had just as well not, for he is a poor boy, and I don't believe your father will ever give his consent for you to marry a poor man."

"Why so, mother? I value love much higher than gold."

"Now, Nina, you are talking nonsense. You do not know anything about love."

"Mother, what makes you think that father wants me to marry a man with money?"

"Because I have heard him say that your health was not good, and he could never bear the idea of your having to **work hard.**"

"Well, I wish father would get this idea out of his head, for I am quite sure I am no invalid, and I don't mind working at all."

"Your father knows what is best for you, Nina, and you had better listen to him."

"Listen to him, mother! Do you mean obey him?"

"That is just what I mean, Nina."

"Mother, I always have obeyed father, and always will. I don't know that I will ever marry, but if I should, I do hope father will allow me the privilege of marrying the one I love."

"You will marry the man you love—father or no father—I guess. That's the way a great many girls do."

"You are mistaken about me. I will never dishonor my father that way; Never. I have seen the fruits of it. Just think of poor Mary. What a miserable life she is living, and John is getting more cruel to her every day she lives. Poor child!

I do hope she will have a bright crown to wear in heaven, for she has lived in torment in this world." Nina didn't remain to hear her mother's reply, for tears now dimmed her eyes. She went to her room and began to rearrange the furniture, brush and dust the room. She tried to forget this last conversation, but she could not. It would run through her mind, time and time again. "Father wants me to marry for money. It would be real nice if I could love a rich man, but love comes first with me."

That day at Sarah's wedding was the first time Guy Boyd had even seen Nina. When the wedding party came in he looked at Nina instead of the bride and thought to himself: "Well, I am going to see that girl, if she will permit me. I like her looks fine. I am determined to meet her at my very earliest convenience." Thus he thinks.

The next Sunday after Nina's return from Sarah's, Guy thought he would walk by Hilt Home, and possibly he might see Nina. Guy's home was just one-half a mile from Hilt House. So, early in the afternoon, he started on his walk. Just before he got in sight of the house, he saw some one walking in front of him; the thought struck Guy that it was Mr. Hilt, and he hastened his steps. As he drew near he said: "What a lucky boy I am; sure enough, that is Mr. Hilt. I'll just overtake him, and may be he will ask me in when we get to his lawn gate, and if he does I will surely go. And, then, suppose Nina is not at home; my visit won't amount to a red cent. Well, I'll risk it, and if she isn't there, perhaps I will make a good impression on the old folks."

Mr. Hilt heard steps behind him and turned

around to see who it was. Guy said: Good evening, Mr. Hilt. I believe you and I have the same notion this fine afternoon. We are both out for a walk."

Mr. Hilt said: "Yes, and this shady lane is a fine place to walk, and especially in the spring when the trees have put forth their foliage."

By this time they were at the Hilt lawn gate. Mr. Hilt said: "Won't you come in and chat with me a while? You are a new neighbor, and I always like to have my neighbors visit me."

Guy saw Nina sitting on the veranda, and he replied: "I thank you, Mr. Hilt; I am sure I like to be neighborly," and they both went in.

When they got to the veranda, Nina arose and Mr. Hilt said:

"Mr. Boyd, this is my baby girl, Nina." Then they all took seats on the veranda.

After Mr. Hilt had talked a while, he said he would go and find Mrs. Hilt.

When Mr. Hilt went to his wife's room she was not feeling well, so he went back and asked Guy to excuse him, as his wife was sick. He also said he was very sorry and hoped Guy would come to see him again. He thought Guy would leave at once, but Guy said: "You are very excusable, Mr. Hilt; I will remain and talk with Miss Hilt a short while, if she has no objections."

Nina replied: "I will be very glad to have you stay, for this has been a long, lonesome day to me."

Then Guy said: "I get awfully lonesome on Sundays, and I guess we will have to spend them together—I mean, the afternoons."

Nina said: "I think that would be real nice."

If Mr. Hilt had known the purpose of Guy's walk that Sunday afternoon, he would not have asked him in.

Late that evening Mr. Hilt told his wife that he suspected he had made the mistake of his life when he had asked Guy Boyd to come in, for Nina might be silly enough to fall in love with him, and then we would think our troubles had just begun.

Mrs. Hilt told her husband to let Nina and Guy alone, for they were just having a little social chat, and young folks will be young folks.

Nina and Guy both certainly enjoyed the afternoon very much, and were sorry when Guy had to say good bye. Guy said he would be back next Sunday afternoon.

Nina thought to herself, after Guy was gone, that she would give anything if she had some one to whom she could talk to, and tell how well she liked Guy. She knew it would never do to mention his name to father, and she was afraid to risk mother, for fear she would tell father.

Mrs. Hilt noticed all the next week that Nina seemed to be in a deep study, and she wondered what was the matter with her. Nina was thinking of the last Sunday afternoon and she looked forward with joyous anticipation to her next meeting with Guy.

Sarah and Will came home Saturday to stay until Monday.

Nina was very glad of this, for she knew Sarah would listen to all she had to tell her.

When Sarah and Will came Nina met them at the front gate.

Sarah said: "Well, Nina, you surely must be glad to see us."

"Yes, I am, for I have so much to tell you. Sarah, it seems to me that I will die if I don't tell some one my troubles."

"Your troubles, Nina; I didn't think you knew what trouble was."

"I didn't, until that day I came from your home."

"Pray tell me what can it be, Nina?"

"Mother said father would never agree for me to marry anyone unless they are rich."

"I wonder what made father take such a notion as that. Will isn't rich, and he never objected to my marrying him. Oh, I reckon father must love you better than he does me."

"No, he doesn't, Sarah; everybody knows you are father's pet, and, of course, he loves you best."

"Well, that don't look like love to me."

"Oh, Sarah, I have the nicest friend; he came last Sunday and spent several hours with me," said Nina.

"Who on earth is it, Nina?"

"His name is Guy Boyd, and he is just as cute as he can be. He lives next door to us and he is our new physician's son."

Sarah said: "Hurrah for you, Nina; I would like very much to see him."

"Well, you shall see him, for he will call tomorrow at three o'clock, and you may help me entertain him."

"I will be glad to meet him, Nina; but you know I have Will to entertain. Will is perfectly lovely to me, Nina, if he isn't rich."

"Oh, pshaw, Sarah; riches do not make happiness, and I expect some rich people are miserable. If I was rich, I wouldn't be rich long. I would

soon give it all away to the poor people who are suffering for something to eat and wear. Then I would have something to be happy for."

"Nina, if you had given it all away, you would then be poor yourself."

Nina replied: "Yes, so far as this world's goods are concerned, I would be; but I would have treasures in heaven, and that is the kind of riches I want. Let me tell you, Sarah, I am afraid father will not permit Guy to come to see me long, for he is a poor boy, but he is well educated and very entertaining. Somehow, Sarah, I would rather talk to him than anybody I ever talked to."

"Did father object to him coming last Sunday, Nina?"

"No; he came with father. But Guy told me how he worked father, to get to come to see me, and, you see, father does not know it, and don't you say a word to him about Guy until you see him tomorrow afternoon."

According to promise, Guy came at three o'clock. Nina hastened to invite him into the parlor before her father came to the door, and no one but Sarah knew he was coming.

Sarah went in and sat a short while with them. Then she excused herself, and went out and told Will she liked Nina's new beau fine, and she didn't see why father should object to him, for he appeared to be a perfect gentleman.

To Nina and Guy the afternoon almost flew. And they parted feeling they were much better friends than when he came.

Guy's visits were continued every Sunday afternoon for many weeks.

## CHAPTER V.

## A DARK DAY.

Nina and Guy are very dear friends now. And Nina was so happy before. But a dark day is approaching.

Guy has one fault Nina never dreamed of, that is, of taking his toddy. One day he was with some of his supposed to be friends, and they asked him to drink with them. Jack Green—a boy who had tried so hard to make love to Nina—was one among the party, and he went to Hilt Home the next day and told Mr. Hilt that he saw Guy Boyd drunk, and Mr. Hilt told Nina that he must not come to see her any more. This almost broke Nina's heart.

Jack Green was a noted liar in the village, and Nina believed that Jack did it just to beat Guy's time.

A part of his scheme worked all right, but not all, for Nina never had had any love for Jack, and now she hated him.

Weeks and months passed before Nina and Guy met again.

When Christmas came, Guy sent Nina a handsome present to let her know he had not forgotten her.

They tried every way imaginable to try to spend a few hours together, but Mr. Hilt did not permit his daughter to go anywhere, if he had any idea Guy would be there.

Nina had a dear friend, Dora Reeves, who lived near by. Nina went over to spend the day with her. Nina met Guy as she was on her way. Guy made an engagement with her to call that afternoon. When Guy came Nina said: "This seems

like old times."

Guy said: "These have been the most miserable months I ever spent. I just felt like I could not live without you. Now, promise me, Nina, that you will be my wife."

Nina said: "With father's consent, I promise."

Guy replied: "I think we will get that all right. Nina, I am going to see you at your home once more; and if your father does not want me to come he can tell me so. But I shall not make my visits so frequent as I did before."

"All right, Guy. I don't think father will object to you visiting me now, as he has found out that you are not a drunkard, as Jack Green tried to make him believe you were. And I don't believe father ever thought that you were a drunkard, for he knows Jack Green can't tell the truth to save his life. But father was just looking for an excuse to stop you from coming to see me, and he thought this tale of Jack Green's was a good one, for, of course, no man wants his daughter to marry a drunkard."

"Nina, I think that story of Jack Green's is not worth noticing, for we all know what he did it for. He knew I wasn't drunk. I acknowledge I took a drink with the boys, and Jack was the first one who asked me to take one with them."

"Really! Was he, Guy? Well, he is the most undermining species of human flesh I ever saw. You ought to have known, Guy, that he wasn't after any good."

"Oh, I didn't stop to think, Nina. You know how boys are when they are out for a good time."

"Guy, now promise me, for my sake, never to be caught with that insignificant Jack Green

again."

"No, I never will again, since I have found him out. He was a mere stranger to me then. You know I hadn't been in this neighborhood long when that occurred."

"I know you hadn't, and so you are excusable for associating with him. I guess he rushed right in to see you as soon as you moved here, for he always pushes himself on some one who doesn't know him."

Guy said: "I have found out he was of the pushing kind, but he will never push himself into my company again. You may rely on me."

"I believe you, Guy."

"Nina, you said something awhile ago that I can't understand."

"What was it, Guy?"

"You said your father was hunting for an excuse to stop me from visiting you. Will you please explain this to me?"

"It almost breaks my heart to tell you, Guy, but you will have to know it sooner or later. And I had just as well tell you now. Father wants me to marry a rich man, and he says he will never give his consent for me to marry any one unless he has money."

"Well, Nina, that cuts me out, for I am as poor as a church mouse."

"I know you haven't much money, but you are very young, and have good health, and I don't see any reason why you shouldn't make an independent living for you and I. Of course you can accumulate enough to set up to housekeeping by the time we are ready to marry."

"I know I can, too, Nina. And now if we can

only get your father to think this way. What are Mr. Hilt's reasons for not wanting you to marry a poor man?"

"Father says he doesn't want me to have any work to do, as I am not very strong. But I don't mind work, and it would be a pleasure for me to help the man I love."

"Well, Nina, let's cheer up and try to get your father to change his notion. I think we can."

"I will try to hope so," responded Nina. "You don't know father like I do. When he gets his mind made up it is awfully hard to change him."

"Nina, I can't imagine who your father wants you to marry. None of your gentlemen friends are very rich, are they?"

"No, Guy; but father has a friend whose parents have recently died, and they were very wealthy, and he is their only heir. Father told me he would be a fine catch for me."

Guy looked very serious about this, and asked what was his name and where he lived.

Nina replied: "His name is Tom Ware, and he lives on a fine farm near the city of H——."

"Nina, do you think you could love him?"

"Love him! I know I shall never love him."

"Oh, Nina, I am afraid you will, for it would be very easy to love him with all that gold."

"Guy, don't you know that love and money are two very different things. Love is the gift from God and will last forever, while money is earthly and will be destroyed by moth and rust."

"You talk like you mean what you say, Nina, but you may change your mind when you see Tom Ware in all his splendor."

"Indeed, I won't," answered Nina.

Then Guy said: "I will call to see you tomorrow afternoon and we will go for a drive again."

"All right, Guy; I will feel like my old self again if father welcomes you."

So, with burdened hearts, Guy and Nina parted.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### GUY VISITS HILT HOME AGAIN.

Guy is very much discouraged, since he heard Mr. Hilt's notion about Tom Ware. But he will not give up the fight yet. But thinks possibly he might win, as the promise is to the faithful.

Nina's feelings could not be expressed when she would think of what she would do, and how miserable she would feel if her father would not let her see Guy when he came. But she felt somewhat relieved when her mother told her that her father had been invited to dine with a friend that day, and she supposed he would not come home very early.

After Guy came, he and Nina went for a walk in the lawn and garden. They were gathering and eating fruits and berries, and talking of the past and future.

But Nina's mind would wander back to her father, and thinking he might return home at any moment. She glanced her eyes toward the house, and, sure enough, there sat Mr. Hilt on the veranda.

She then said: "Guy, let's go into the parlor. We will pass in right by father, and if he has anything to say we will listen to him."

When they stepped in the door, Guy said: "Good evening, Mr. Hilt. We have been gathering some of your nice fruits. Won't you have

some?"

Mr. Hilt's expression changed and he said:

"No, thank you; I dined out today and am not hungry."

Guy said: "I think these are the nicest berries I ever saw; and, in fact, Mr. Hilt, you have a nice selection and quite a variety of fruits. What nursery do you patronize?"

Guy struck the right key note, for Mr. Hilt liked very much to hear his fruits complimented. He told Guy very politely where they came from.

Then Guy and Nina walked into the parlor feeling very much relieved.

Nina thought her father would reprove her for permitting Guy to come to Hilt Home that afternoon, but he did not.

The next time she saw Guy she told him that she was feeling very much encouraged. And she now looked forward to a bright future for them.

Nina saw Guy quite often now. She passed by the little bachelor house frequently, going to the village for the mail. And he called at Hilt House occasionally. In fact, they are both very happy now.

Doctor and Mrs. Boyd were great admirers of Nina's, and she was equally as much in love with them. Mrs. Boyd had Nina visit them quite often at the village.

One day when Nina had just returned home from a visit to them, Dr. Boyd said to his wife: "I would be glad if Guy and Nina would marry, for Guy needs some one to keep house for him. I don't like this way of boys keeping bach anyway, and I believe Nina would make just the kind of wife Guy needs, for I think she is a fine girl."

"I think so, too, Doctor, and I shall do all I can to encourage them."

One day, soon after this, Dr. Boyd called to see Mrs. Hilt, who was sick, and, as he was leaving, he met Nina in the front hall. And after talking a short while to her, he said, "Nina, when did you see Guy last?"

Nina blushed, and told him when she saw Guy.

He then said: "That's all right, between you and Guy. Just go ahead, for you certainly have my consent."

Nina bowed, and replied, "Thank you, Doctor." Then she thought to herself: "Why can't my father talk like that? O, how happy I would be if he only would. Perhaps he will some day."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### TOM WARE.

Mr. Hilt went to the city of H—— one day, and on his return home he met Tom Ware.

Tom told him that he was coming to Hilt House one day that week to see his daughter. He said he had seen her once, and liked her looks very much and was anxious to meet her.

This pleased Mr. Hilt very much, and he came home with good news for his wife, but very sad news for Nina, for she feared this would change her father's conduct toward Guy, as Mr. Hilt had been real nice to Guy for some time. Nina wished from her heart that Tom would never come. But if he came she decided to treat him with courtesy, for her father's sake.

Soon the day arrived for Nina to meet Tom Ware.

She heard footsteps on the front veranda, and she turned to look. There stood a tall man with dark complexion.

The thought came to her instantly that this man was her father's friend, Mr. Ware. She hurried to her mother's room and told her mother there was a stranger at the door.

When Mrs. Hilt went to invite him in, Nina caught these words, as he said, "I presume this is Mrs. Hilt? Ware is my name. I have known your husband quite a while and we are good friends. And I presume he told you and your daughter that he saw me on his return from the city."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Ware. He thinks of you frequently. I know he will be glad to see you; walk in."

After Tom was seated in the parlor, he said: "I suppose Mr. Hilt delivered my message to Miss Hilt, did he not, and is she at home today?"

"Yes, he told her, and she is here. Excuse me, and I will tell her that you have arrived."

Mrs. Hilt told Nina to arrange her toilet and come into the parlor just as quick as she could, for Mr. Ware was waiting for her.

Nina replied: "All right, mother," but she took her time. She dreaded all the while to meet him. Her mind was thoroughly made up so far as giving him any encouragement whatever was concerned. But she decided to go in and see what he looked like.

When Nina looked into the parlor, she thought he looked like a Catholic priest, as he arose with his long, flowing coat and advanced toward her with his hand extended.

Mrs. Hilt said: "Nina, this is your father's friend, Mr. Ware."

Nina bowed and said: "Howdy do, Mr. Ware?" and took her seat.

Mrs. Hilt thought of some very important business she had to attend to, and left the room immediately.

Nina couldn't describe her feelings at this time. She didn't know what to do or say. But Tom rattled away.

Nina responded "yes" and "no."

The thought struck Nina: "What would Guy say if he could see this picture?"

"Miss Hilt, did your father deliver my message to you?"

"What did you tell father to tell me?"

"That I was coming to see you this week."

"No; father said you were coming to Hilt Home, but he didn't say you were coming to see me."

He replied: "Well, that's exactly what I came for."

Nina made no reply to this, but, thinking she would change the subject, she said: "Is this your first visit in this neighborhood, Mr. Ware?"

Tom replied: "Oh, no; I have a farm near here, and I come down to look after it tolerably often. I have passed by here several times. The first time I ever saw you, you were standing in your front lawn and I fell in love with you at first sight."

Oh, how Nina wished her father would come in and relieve her of this bore, for she was getting miserably tired of him. She listened for him, and when she heard her father's voice she arose

quickly and said:

"Father has come and I know he will be glad to see you. I will go and send him in."

Out she went for Mr. Hilt. When she found him, she said, "Go in the parlor, father; your friend, Mr. Ware, has come to see you."

Mr. Hilt went in where Tom was and Nina went to the dining room to assist her mother. Mrs. Hilt asked: "Why did you leave the parlor, Nina?"

"Oh, I am tired, mother. Father can entertain that man. It gives me the 'Jimmies' to hear him talk. He must be very peculiar; at least, he appeared that way to me."

When dinner was announced, Mr. Hilt invited his friend to the dining room. Nina was missing; that was something very unusual for her. Mr. Hilt said:

"Where is Nina, Mrs. Hilt?"

Mrs. Hilt replied that she did not know, but supposed she would be in soon, and said it wouldn't be necessary to wait for her.

Mr. Hilt and Tom were again seated in the parlor before Nina appeared in the dining room. After eating a light dinner, she went into the parlor a short while.

Nina hadn't been in there long before one of her young lady friends came by to get Nina to drive to the village with her. She wanted to excuse herself and go with her friend, but Mrs. Hilt interfered, by saying:

"Nina has company, and I will be glad to go with you to the village."

Nina arose and left the room, which was very annoying to Mr. and Mrs. Hilt. Nina knew this

was very rude of her, and was sorry on her father's account that she had to act in this manner, but she could not tolerate Tom Ware; and she knew if she gave him any encouragement whatever he would almost worry the life out of her. Furthermore deceit is one thing that she would not practice.

When Mrs. Hilt and Nina's friend went to the village, Nina left Mr. Hilt to entertain Tom for quite a while. Finally, her father got restless, as he had some very important business to attend to. He left Tom alone and went to find Nina.

Nina appeared to be very busy when her father found her. But she found how very much worried her father was as he said:

"Nina, won't you come to the parlor awhile; I have some business which must be attended to at once?"

Nina responded: "I am very busy, too, father."

"Well, Nina, your business is not very urgent, and mine is."

"All right, father; I will go."

When Nina went to the parlor, Tom knew something had gone wrong with her, and he said:

"Miss Hilt, you ought not to have stayed at home on my account."

"Oh, no, Mr. Ware; I didn't stay on your account at all. I stayed because mother wanted to go."

Tom said: "If you wish to go to the village, I will drive you over."

"No, I thank you, Mr. Ware. I don't care to go to the village today.

Nina thought her mother never would return, and she got very impatient.

But, to her relief, Tom arose and said he must go, but told Nina he would be back in the near future.

Nina breathed a sigh of relief when he was gone, and now she is anxious to see Guy and tell him about Tom's visit.

The next time Guy came, he said: "Well, Nina, how did you like Mr. Ware?"

Nina said: "O, I don't like him at all, he is simply disgusting."

"Well, when did he say he was coming back?"

"Oh, I don't know when he is coming back. I hope he never will."

"Didn't he make a date with you, Nina?"

"No; he just said he was coming back, but didn't say when. And I don't know what made him say he was coming back, for I didn't give him the least bit of encouragement."

"You didn't, Nina? Well, he surely must be a curious kind of a man."

"Oh, he hasn't a bit of discretion. I didn't stay in the room where he was half of the time he was here; and then, to think, when he left he said he was coming back again. I guess he thinks his money will marry him off. But I pity the girl who could fancy Tom Ware. I know I couldn't love him if he had the wealth of Jay Gould."

Nina talked and thought so much about him through the day, that she dreamed one night she and Tom were married. She was the most miserable girl on earth. But when she awoke the next morning and found that it was only a dream, she felt like thanking God it was not reality.

Tom came back again the next week.

Mr. and Mrs. Hilt were very much pleased, for

they thought, of course, Nina had given him some hope of winning her love, by his coming back so soon.

When Nina was in Tom's presence she entertained him by telling him what Guy said and did, and, of course, this was very unpleasant for Tom.

Nina could tell that Tom did not like to hear this, and it was her chief delight to tease him in this manner.

One day when she had finished telling him a great narrative of this kind, Tom said: "Nina, you talk about Guy Boyd a great deal. He certainly must be a wonderful creature."

"He certainly is, to me," replied Nina.

"Does he talk very much, Nina?"

"Why, yes; he talks quite a good deal. Why do you ask such a question as that?"

"Well, I was just going to say that I never saw anyone who talked much that didn't tell falsehoods."

"You are very much mistaken, Mr. Ware, in this case. I am sure I never caught Guy in a story in my life, for he is a perfect gentleman; indeed, he is."

Tom said: "I would like very much to see him, Nina; why not have him here some day when I am here."

"When are you coming? I never know when you are coming, until you are at the door; and, besides, Guy would never come here if he thought there was any possibility of your being here."

"Why not? Is he afraid of me? He surely must be a coward."

"Not he; he is not afraid of you; neither is he a coward. But, in the first place, Guy knows it

isn't proper, or etiquette, for a young lady to entertain two gentlemen at the same time. In the second place, I have heard him say that he had no desire whatever to meet you."

Tom grew weary of this conversation, and soon took his departure.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### GUY LEAVES THE VILLAGE.

Mr. Hilt's manner towards Guy and Tom was quite different.

Guy noticed how very formal he was toward him since Tom had been visiting Nina, and he said to Nina one day:

"Nina, I would never come to Hilt Home again were it not that I love you so dearly. For your father's conduct to me recently is almost intolerable."

"Guy, I know father does not treat you right. Let's look on the bright side, and hope that it will work out all right in the end."

Both Guy and Tom continued their visits until Christmas; when Guy came one day and told Nina he had decided to give up "baching," and he was going to run his grandfather's farm, as he had written for him to come.

"You know, Nina, it grieves me to leave you, but I feel that it is my duty to go, as you know my mother died when I was young, and this present Mrs. Boyd is my stepmother. Well, after my mother died, grandfather took me, and reared and educated me, and I feel I can never repay him for his trouble."

Nina said: "Oh, Guy, this is bad news to me, but I cannot ask you to stay, for, under the cir-

cumstances, I think it is your duty to go. But, Guy, something tells me somehow that this will separate us forever."

"Nina, don't talk that way. Why, it is not more than forty miles to grandfather's, and I can come to see you tolerably often. I will also write to you."

"Yes, but I have so often heard of engagements being broken through correspondence, and that will be about the way ours will end."

"Oh, no, I hope not. Well, I will see you again soon, Nina."

He bade her good bye and returned to his home.

When Mr. Hilt learned that Guy was going to his grandfather's to live, he said to Mrs. Hilt:

"I am glad Guy Boyd is going where Nina cannot see him so often. And it may be that she will soon forget him and learn to love Tom Ware. We will try to get them married while Guy is away."

Nina was in the adjoining room and heard every word her father said.

She stepped into his room, and said: "Father, I will never marry Tom Ware, with all his gold. I would rather marry Guy and work for my daily bread."

Mr. Hilt said: "Nina, I thought you had some judgment, but I am sorry to say you haven't a bit."

"No, father, I will admit that I haven't, if marrying Tom Ware is judgment."

She then went into her room and burst into a flood of tears.

It was a sad time to Nina when Guy came to bid her good bye, the day before he left for his grandfather's, for she knew Tom would do as her

father had said; he would try to take advantage of Guy's absence; but she didn't tell Guy what Mr. Hilt had said, for she didn't want to worry him.

The hours flew by and at last Guy arose and said: "Well, Nina, I must leave you," and both promised to be true to each other and parted.

Guy arrived at his grandfather's late the next afternoon.

After talking to his grandfather awhile, his thoughts ran back to the girl he left behind him. Remembering his promise to write, he went to his room and wrote a long letter to Nina, and hurried to mail it.

Nina felt very lonesome after Guy left, and could hardly wait to hear from him. It was two days before she heard from him, as the mail was carried through in a coach, by the way of the city of A——, and from there was sent to the village.

On this afternoon, Henry, her brother, went to the village for the mail. When he returned he brought Nina three letters, and gave them to her in the presence of her father.

Nina took them and glanced at the postmarks. Then she opened Guy's letter first.

Henry unthoughtedly said: "I knew you would read Guy's letter first."

Mr. Hilt looked at her quickly and said: "My conscience, Nina, have you begun receiving letters from Guy Boyd?"

"Yes, father; this is from Guy."

Nina's heart leaped in her throat, for she suspected her father would forbid her writing to Guy. But he didn't say another word about it.

Nina answered Guy's letter immediately.

As soon as Tom heard that Guy had left the village, he thought to himself, "Now is my time to try to win Nina's love, so I will just have my horses hooked to my buggy and drive to Hilt Home this afternoon, and begin my suit right."

When Nina saw Tom coming, she said:

"I would give anything in reason if Tom Ware would stay at home and let me alone. I can't see why he keeps coming here, anyhow."

Her father said: "Oh, Nina, you ought to be nice to Mr. Ware; you know he has lots of money, and don't you think you would like to be a nice, rich man's wife."

"Well, father, if the one I loved was rich, I would like to be his wife. But I don't think riches without love would be any good. I know Tom has the money, but I could never love him."

Then Mrs. Hilt said: "Oh, Nina, don't talk that way; you know how much your father thinks of Tom."

"It is only the love I have for father that makes me treat him with any sort of respect."

Mrs. Hilt looked out and saw Tom driving up, and said: "There he comes now, Nina. Do be nice to him this afternoon."

As Nina entered the parlor door, Tom greeted her by saying: "Nina, how well you are looking this afternoon."

"Thank you, Mr. Ware; but I am not feeling very well, as I am very lonesome and blue since Guy left."

"Yes, I heard he was gone, and I hope you will never see him again."

Nina said: "Well, the idea of you saying such a thing. I wouldn't wish anyone such bad luck as

that. For I am sure I would be very sad indeed if I thought I would never see Guy again. But I don't entertain an idea like yours, for an instant. Pray tell me why you should say such a thing?"

"All right; I have been wanting to tell you for a long while and you wouldn't let me. Now listen, Nina, You are the first girl I ever really fancied and I must acknowledge to you that I am in love with you and want you to be my wife."

Nina looked straight into his eyes and said: "Mr. Ware, this can never be, for I do not love you and I could not marry a man that I do not love. Furthermore, I am Guy's promised wife. On the evening before he left I promised him I would always be true, and I am determined I will keep my promise."

Tom said: "Oh, some times people change their notion almost before they know it, and I believe you could, if you would try. I have a beautiful home and plenty of money which you would enjoy. You know Guy is a poor boy."

"That is all right; if Guy is poor, he is quite young yet, and he may be rich some day."

"Well, Nina, I want you to study this matter over well, and I will come back again soon and see if you don't talk quite different."

"Don't put yourself to so much trouble, Mr. Ware, unless you have the time to lose."

Tom said he didn't consider time spent with her lost. Then he left her.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### GUY'S LAST VISIT.

Several letters had passed between Nina and Guy, and Nina has written last. She is expecting a

letter from him today.

That afternoon when Mr. Hilt returned from the village, Nina said: "Father, have you a letter for me?"

Her father replied: "No, Nina, I haven't any for you."

Nina didn't think her father meant to tell her a story, but somehow she felt like he must have a letter for her.

So she sat in her father's room and talked and read to him that evening until late bedtime. She thought often of the letter she ought to have had.

She bade her father and mother good night. Then went to her room and waited until her father had retired. She then stole softly back to his room and examined her father's pockets. There she found her letter. She crept back to her room quickly, and read her letter. When she thought how near she came to not getting Guy's letter, a shudder ran over her frame and she tried to think that her father didn't do it intentionally.

She answered the letter immediately and told Guy about her father getting her letter and not giving it to her. But she told him she thought, perhaps, he didn't do it intentionally.

The next letter Guy wrote he told her he was coming to see her soon. And at the appointed time he came.

But Mr. Hilt knew nothing of the expected visit until Guy came.

When Mrs. Hilt told him Guy was in the parlor talking to Nina, he said: "It seems to me that Nina is determined to marry Guy Boyd against my wishes. I have had enough trouble of this kind. O, how I wish she would listen to me."

Mrs. Hilt replied: "Do not be uneasy about Nina marrying against your wishes, Mr. Hilt; for I have heard her say many times she never would."

"You have, wife? I know Nina has always been a good, obedient child. But from the way things are going, I am afraid this will be one time she will not obey me."

"Well, I wouldn't worry any more about it, Mr. Hilt."

Guy returned home without meeting Mr. Hilt, and they continued their correspondence without any interference.

Tom Ware came again, thinking perhaps Nina had changed her notion. But Nina would not see him alone since that day he had tried so hard to make love to her. In fact she did not want to see him at all, but her mother insisted on her going in for a few minutes.

Nina replied: "All right, mother; I will go in, if you will promise not to leave us alone."

Tom thought it very strange that Mrs. Hilt should remain in the room. He insisted on taking Nina for a drive.

But she thanked him and said that she didn't care to drive.

So he decided that he would not return to the Hilt Home any more soon, as he did not seem to be winning Nina's love like he thought he would.

The last letter Nina had from Guy he stated that he was coming to spend Christmas holidays with his father, and that he expected to be with her quite a good deal.

So she put the house in order and helped mother do her baking with a light heart and she seemed to be so happy that Mrs. Hilt suspicioned that Guy

was coming.

On the evening before Guy was to come, Mrs. Hilt told her husband that Nina had been unusually jolly that week and that she suspected Guy Boyd was coming soon.

Mr. Hilt returned: "Well, wife, just let him come for he may make much of this visit, because this must be the last time he will come to see Nina."

"Why, Mr. Hilt, you are not going to tell him to stop visiting Nina, are you?"

"I don't know that I will tell him in words, but he must stop, for he has been coming here long enough. And just as long as he is permitted to come here Nina will reject Tom's love and you know that will never do. I am afraid he is already tired of coming here without any encouragement whatever from Nina. It looks that way to me, as he hasn't been here now for two weeks."

"Mr. Hilt, I am sure Nina will never care for Tom Ware, whether Guy is permitted to come or not."

"Oh, I hope she will; I haven't given up yet," replied Mr. Hilt.

Guy arrived at his father's on Christmas eve, and early the next morning he went over to spend the day with Nina. It had been three months since he last saw her.

Nina met him with a happy smile as usual, and the mornig passed off rapidly.

Promptly at twelve dinner was announced.

Nina's first thought was, I wonder how father will receive Guy. Oh, I do hope he will be nice to him.

When they entered the dining room, Mr. Hilt

spoke to Guy as though he was a stranger.

Nina talked to both Guy and her father, and tried hard to get up a conversation between them. But Mr. Hilt seemed perfectly indifferent, and Nina felt very much relieved when they were out of her father's sight.

Guy said: "Nina, I never had any one treat me with as much indifference as your father did to-day. I don't think I shall ever dine at his table again until I am sure I am welcome."

"Guy, don't think you are not welcome; that is not the reason he acted so cool and indifferent toward you. You know the real reason just as well as I do."

Guy said: "Well, yes; I suppose it is all on Tom Ware's account."

"Yes, that is the reason why, and I wish I had never met Tom Ware, for he has certainly caused a great deal of trouble," replied Nina.

Guy came to see Nina every day through the Christmas.

On the evening before his leaving he and Nina were out driving. Guy said: "Nina, I have given up all hope of ever getting your father's consent for us to marry and I believe you have, too; and I can't see why we should let this separate us forever. Now, listen to me, Nina, if you are willing we will never return to your home again until you are my wife."

"Oh, Guy, I cannot marry without father's consent, for he would never forgive me in this world. I can't think of such a thing as running away to get married. Just think! Mary ran away and father never forgave her and didn't permit her to come home for two years, and he would not

have let her come then but she and John were preparing to move away, and father thought he might possibly never see her face again."

"Oh, yes, Nina, I think your father would soon forgive you; you know you have always been his pet. You know when he introduced me to you he called you his baby girl, and he always seemed to love you so much."

"Yes, Guy, I know father loves me; that would be why it would seem so hard to forgive me. And, furthermore, Guy, I am somewhat superstitious about runaway couples. I never heard of one who lived a very happy life. Did you Guy?"

"Well, I don't know, Nina; I guess I have. Nina, I never heard you say you were superstitious before."

"No, I guess not. I don't know that I ever told you that I was superstitious, but don't you remember I told you when you went to live with your grandfather that I had a presentiment that some ill fate would befall us."

"Well, you see there is nothing in this notion of yours. We have been getting along nicely with our correspondence and I have been allowed to visit you at your home."

"Yes, I know all this, but I still fear that something will happen yet to part us forever."

"I can't see why you have such a notion as this, Nina."

"Listen a moment, and I will tell you something I have been keeping from you so long. I heard father tell mother after you left the village that he was very glad you were gone, and that he thought I would soon forget you and would learn to love Tom Ware. He also said that was the

time for them to do all they could to get Tom and I married. Someway or somehow Tom heard you were going and he came at once to propose to me."

Then Guy said: "Nina, did you promise to marry Tom?"

"What a silly question, Guy. You ought to know me well enough by this time to know that I would never do such a foolish thing as to engage myself to two gentlemen at once. My conscience would not allow me to do such a thing, and, besides when a girl or boy engages themselves to two different ones at the same time she or he is bound to know that they are telling a falsehood, for they surely are false to one or the other, and God forbid that I should ever prove false to any one."

Guy replied: "Nina, I haven't the least fear that you will ever prove false to me."

After Guy and Nina returned to Hilt Home and were in the parlor, Nina asked Guy to sing for her, as Guy had a splendid soprano voice. When Guy came he brought Nina some music, among which was the latest love song.

So while Guy was singing this song, Mr. Hilt was in his room and heard these words:

"Don't forget me, little darling,  
Tho' from you I'm far away;  
But remember, little darling,  
That I think of you each day."

This was more than Mr. Hilt could endure. He arose quickly and went into the front hall and promenaded back and forth across the hall the entire time the song was being sung.

Nina heard her father and recognized his footsteps, and expected any moment to see him enter the parlor door.

After the song was finished Guy bade Nina fare-

well and went to spend the night with his father's family, and returned to his home the next day.

After Guy left Hilt Home that evening Mr. Hilt said: "Nina, I never want to hear Guy Boyd sing another love song to you, for I think it is disgusting to hear boys sing love songs to girls; it is something I won't tolerate."

"No, I don't suppose you will, as it is Guy; but if it was Tom Ware you would really enjoy it. I don't think Guy did any harm, for I asked him to sing for me."

"Well, I hope you will never ask him to sing again."

"Father, I really felt sorry for Guy today, and I think you and mother mistreated him badly; and, pray tell me, father, why you walked the front hall while Guy was singing? Why did you not come in and ask him to stop, if he was bothering you? I am quite sure he would have stopped immediately."

"Nina, I am sure your mother did not mistreat him."

"Well, I don't know whether mother meant to mistreat him or not; but when Guy left I walked with him to the door, and mother was standing in the front hall. I don't know how long she had been there, or what she was there for, but I noticed Guy's face turn red when he saw mother standing in the hall, and I could tell from his looks that he thought mother was trying to hear what we were talking about; and, mother spoke so cool when Guy told her good bye."

Then Nina arose and went to her room, and wondered if any other girl ever had so much trouble as she. Tears flowed from her eyes for

some time, and then she thought how foolish it was of her to cultivate her trouble in this manner. She wiped her eyes and said: "Life is too short to spend intears; I will brace up and try to bear my troubles as best I can; maybe they will soon be over. I know my life will be bright and happy when I am Guy's wife."

Then she thought of the letter, which she expected to receive from Guy very soon.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THREE MISSING LETTERS.

One week has passed since Guy returned to his grandfather's, and Nina has not had a letter from him since he returned to his home. She could not imagine what was the matter with Guy.

She made inquiries of every one who went to the office for mail; but no letter came to her. Two, three weeks, and then a month passed, but the expected letter did not come.

She was very anxious about the letter she never received for the first two or three weeks; but now she is worried at Guy and she thought to herself: "Well, perhaps Guy has grown tired of our engagement, and wants to be free; and if he does, he shall be. Who wouldn't get tired of being mistreated as father has mistreated him?"

So she wrote Guy a letter and asked him why he had quit writing to her since his return home, and asked him if he had grown weary of their engagement, and, if so, she would release him at once.

When Guy received Nina's letter, he was shocked to think Nina hadn't received any of his letters, as he had written her three letters and had not received an answer to any of them. He knew

something was wrong. So he answered her letter at once and told her that he had written her three times and had been very much worried at not having received an answer to his letters. He said he feared some one had gotten his letters and destroyed them.

This letter came to Nina all right. She became very indignant and said: "I don't believe Guy ever wrote those letters; if he did why did I not receive them, for this one came all right."

When she answered Guy's letter she said: "Guy, your letter came all right and you said you had written three letters before this one, and insinuated that my father had destroyed them. Guy, I don't believe you ever wrote those letters. I am sure you are tired of our engagement, and I ask to be released at once."

When Guy read this letter he said: "Well, I guess Mr. Hilt and Tom Ware have Nina going their way now, so I will accept her proposition. For I know Mr. Hilt will never consent for Nina to marry me. He is determined for her to marry Tom Ware. It grieves me very much to think of Nina's ever being Tom Ware's wife, but I must submit."

The correspondence between Nina and Guy grew very warm, and soon the engagement was broken, and all letters returned.

Sarah was at home on a visit when Nina returned Guy's letters.

When she had them all packed ready to mail, she threw her arms around Sarah's neck and said: "Oh, Sarah, this has turned out just like I thought it would when Guy left the village. Well, this is the last of my first love. At one time I was so

happy with him, and now I must try to forget him. Sarah, don't you know, I believe in lottery. I know God never intended that Guy and I should marry. That is the reason why we have had so much trouble during our engagement. And, Sarah, I believe that is the reason you didn't marry Joe Smith, because God intended that you should marry Will. I thought you and Joe had lots of trouble, but you don't know what trouble is. Well, this will be a lesson to me. I will never suffer myself to love another boy whom father objects to. In fact, if I always feel as I do now, I will never care for another one."

"Cheer up, Nina, I am sure you will soon get over all of this, and you will find someone that you will love better than you ever loved Guy Boyd. Girls rarely ever marry their first love."

"Is that true, Sarah?" Oh, yes, you didn't marry your first love either, did you?"

"No," replied Sarah.

"Poor Joe, I wonder where he is now? Did I ever tell you, Sarah, that he wrote to me soon after you were married, and asked me to correspond with him. He was living in Missouri then."

"Did you answer his letter, Nina?"

"No, I didn't."

"Did he say anything about me in his letter?"

"Nothing in particular, only he said he didn't think I would mistreat him as you did. Sarah, I hope he has found some nice sweet girl to love him. Poor boy! you know how much I used to sympathize with him, and now, since I have had so much trouble, I sympathize with him more than ever."

"Nina, please don't talk about your troubles any more. Let me tell you something. I am going

home tomorrow and I want you to go home with me and spend a week or two. James Redd lives near us and he will make you have a nice time, I am sure. James is a fine neighbor. I wish you and James would get up a case and get married; then you would be my neighbor.

“I will go home with you, Sarah, but, understand, I am not going to try to ‘catch’ James Redd or any other man, for I expect to remain Nina Hilt many years and perhaps all my life.”

When Nina told her mother and father she was going home with Sarah, Mr. Hilt said: “Don’t stay long, my daughter, for you are not looking well, and I shall be worried about you.”

“Oh, don’t worry about me, father; I am all right.”

After Sarah and Nina had gone, Mr. Hilt said to his wife: “I don’t know what can be the matter with Nina, for she is looking so pale and thin and she seems to be in trouble. I sometimes think we ought not try to get her to marry Tom Ware, for I really believe she hates him.”

“I know she does, Mr. Hilt, and I feel just like you do about it.”

“Well, wife, hereafter we will let her decide her love affairs without interfering, for I feel that I have treated her unjustly. My conscience hurts me when I think how much pain she has endured about those *letters* she ought to have had.”

“Well, well, Mr. Hilt, it is too late to be sorry now; so don’t say anything to Nina about Guy or those missing letters either, for I think she will soon forget him. If she does not want to marry Tom Ware, she will soon find some one else whom she likes. I am sure there will be no trouble for

Nina to marry; for Nina makes friends wherever she goes."

"I have my doubts about her falling in love again soon," replied Mr. Hilt. "This will just about make an old maid of her, and I can't bear the idea of Nina being a cross old maid, and have everybody hating her; furthermore, if I should die and leave her, who would she have to care for her?" Mr. Hilt almost broken down.

Mrs. Hilt replied: "Cheer up, Mr. Hilt, for I am sure Nina will make her way through this world all right. I really believe that you are sorry Guy and Nina's engagement is broken, as much as you opposed their marriage."

"No, I never wanted Nina to marry Guy, for I wanted her to marry Tom Ware. But since she and Guy have split up, she won't even go in the parlor where Tom is when he comes to see her. So I have given up all hopes of this match."

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## CHAPTER XI.

### NINA'S VISITS TO HER SISTER.

Nina had a much more pleasant visit at Sarah's than she had anticipated.

James Redd was real nice to her. He drove a lovely span of horses which Nina enjoyed very much, and she considered James one of her best friends when she left Sarah's.

After she had spent two weeks with Sarah, one morning she said: "Sarah, I am going to leave you today, but I am not going home, for everything at home reminds me of the past. I have decided to make Mary a visit, as I haven't seen her for a good while. Mr. Redd is going to accompany me to Mary's."

"I am really glad you are going to see Mary, Nina, for poor Mary so seldom gets to come home."

Nina said: "You know I will have to pass by home on my way to Mary's, so I will run in and tell father, in order that he may know where I am."

James Redd drove his beautiful horses up in front of Sarah's gate and stopped. Nina then bade Sarah good bye and she and James were soon far on their way. After they left Sarah said to Will: "I think it will do Nina a great deal of good to visit Mary now, for I think she will become more reconciled about her broken engagement when she sees the consequences of marrying against her father's will."

"Oh, Nina has known for quite a while how uncongenial John and Mary are," said Will.

"I know, Will, but it has been quite a long time since she has been with them, and she can't imagine how bad it really is."

When Nina and James drove by Hilt Home, Nina ran in and told her father she was on her way to visit Mary and that she would return home some time soon, but she didn't know exactly when.

She bade her father and mother good-bye and then returned to the front lawn gate, where James was awaiting her.

James alighted and assisted her into his buggy and Hilt Home was soon far behind them.

When they arrived at Mary's, a neat little cottage home, James assisted Nina out, turned his horses around, tipped his hat to Nina, and was gone.

Mary saw James as he drove away and she ran out and met Nina and said: "Oh, Nina, I am so

glad to see you; but do tell me who that gentleman is who came with you."

"That was Mr. James Redd. You remember him, Mary; you know he was Will's best man when Will and Sarah married."

"Yes, I remember him. But how came he with you? And where is Guy? The last time you came to see me Guy came with you, and you seemed to be the best of sweethearts. I have been expecting to get an invitation to your wedding ever since."

Nina replied: "I came from Sarah's today, and I thought it real nice of Mr. Redd to bring me." Then she hesitated.

"Well, go on Nina, you haven't answered my question about Guy. Tell me where he is?"

"Mary, I am trying to forget Guy and rarely ever mention his name to anyone, but I will tell you. You can't imagine how many trials and tribulations we have endured. You know how much father disliked Guy? Well, I hope father is happy now since all is over between us. For I am sure I am not happy, and don't believe Guy is, although men do not take trouble to heart like women do."

"Oh, what on earth has happened, Nina?"

"Nothing only there were some missing letters and Guy and I quarreled about them, and now we are only friends."

Mary said: "I didn't know people were generally friends after they quarreled."

"I will always be Guy's friend, no matter what happens. Just think. We were engaged two years and now it is broken on account of three missing letters."

"What do you suppose ever became of the letters.

Nina?"

"Oh, I don't know whether he ever wrote them or not. I know I never received any. Guy says he wrote them, and someone else got them. Some how I couldn't believe that he had written them, and you know, Mary, how quick tempered I am. So I wrote to him, and you can imagine what kind of a letter I wrote. We quarreled, and that was the last between us; and, Mary, it is a great mystery to me, which I fear will never be solved, what ever became of those letters."

"Why, that's no mystery to me, Nina. Of course, father got the letters and destroyed them. Remember, you found one in his pocket, soon after Guy left the village, and it's my opinion that that is where these three landed."

"Oh, Mary, I don't want to suffer myself to think this of father. Let's talk of something else. Tell me, Mary, why are you so sad, and pray tell me what is the matter with you? Why don't you cheer up? You make me feel right blue. When I left Sarah she looked so bright and happy, and that's the way we all ought to look."

Mary replied: "I wish I could look happy and cheerful, but I haven't seen but very few happy days since I married John against father's will. Oh how many times I have repented of this act. I would never advise any girl to marry against their father's wishes, for I certainly have reaped a bitter reward for my disobedience to father."

Nina seemed to be in a deep study the whole time Mary was talking, and when she had finished Nina said:

"I will take warning from your ill fate, Mary, and I now promise you to quit grieving about those

missing letters. If father got them, of course, he didn't think it best for me to have them, and from this on I shall wear a bright and smiling face and try to be happy myself and make other people happy."

"That's a good determination, Nina, and I hope you will not depart from it."

"No, I shall not, for my mind is thoroughly made up in regard to this matter."

Nina was thoroughly disgusted as to John's treatment toward Mary during her two weeks' visit in Mary's home.

When she was ready to leave and bade Mary good-bye, she said:

"Mary, home will be much sweeter to me now. I think I shall go home and live a life of single blessedness."

When Nina arrived home Mr. and Mrs. Hilt were never so glad to see her before, and they were perfectly surprised to see her looking so jolly and happy. They wondered what had caused this change and thought perhaps she had seen Guy and wondered if they had made up again.

No, Nina never expected to see Guy again; neither did she care to. Her mind was made up quite different from this. She went about home singing and laughing and talking to her father and mother, and spent many hours reading to them, as she hadn't done for months past.

Mr. Hilt said: "Well, wife, Nina is herself once more. This is our Nina of old, returned to us."

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## CHAPTER XII.

### NINA IN SCHOOL AGAIN.

Nina went to the village quite often and fre-

quently visited Mrs. Boyd, as they are still very dear friends; and she has other friends whom she visits at the village, and among them is Mrs. Bell, a widow lady, whose husband was supposed to be very rich. But after his death, when his property had to be divided by long division, as he had quite a large family, Mrs. Bell's income was not as much as she anticipated. So she decided to teach a class of young ladies, to earn her living without drawing on the money left her by her husband.

One day when Nina was visiting at her home, Mrs. Bell told Nina of her intention to teach, and asked Nina if she would like to attend this school. Nina was delighted at the idea and she told Mrs. Bell she would let her know as soon as she consulted her father.

When Nina arrived at Hilt House that afternoon she said: "Father, I have some good news to tell you."

Mr. Hilt said: "What is it, daughter?"

"Mrs. Bell informed me today that she is going to teach a class of young ladies at the village and she is very anxious that I attend. I told her that I would come if you were willing, as I am anxious to review my studies."

Mr. Hilt very readily gave his consent, and the next Monday morning Nina was one among the twelve young ladies who gathered in Mrs. Bell's school room.

Nina looked around and said:

"Well, girls, this makes me feel like a child again."

Ella Cash, one of Nina's best friends, said: "Nina, I am sure you are not much more than a child."

"No, Ella," said Nina, "I am not very old in years, but I am in experience."

Mrs. Bell then called the school to order and Nina and Ella sat together.

Mrs. Bell was on the reserved order, and she thought she had the jolliest set of girls in Kentucky. She named them "The Jolly Twelve."

The girls were all very fond of Mrs. Bell, and she loved all the girls, but Nina was her favorite. So often at recess Mrs. Bell would ask Nina to sit and talk with her. Nina considered this a great pleasure, as Mrs. Bell was very entertaining. So Nina and Mrs. Bell got to be very dear friends, and she counted these some of the happiest days of her life and felt that she would be sorry when school was out, when she would have to bid her teacher and dear girl friends good-bye.

One morning when the school was nearing to a close Nina entered the school room as usual with a bright and radiant face. Mrs. Bell called her and said: "Come here, Nina, and sit by me, I have some bad news for you."

Nina said: "Bad news! What can it be, Mrs. Bell? I would much prefer hearing good news."

"Dr. Boyd heard last evening that Guy was married."

"Oh! that isn't bad news for me, Mrs. Bell, for Guy and I have split up long ago."

Then Mrs. Bell, just to tease Nina, began to sing:

"Thou hast learned to love another,  
Thou hast broken every vow,  
Oh! that I this tie could sever,  
For I am sad and lonely now."

Of course this brought the past up fresh in

Nina's memory and it weighed heavily on her heart for a few minutes, but she had determined long ago not to allow herself to worry about Guy Boyd any more. So she applied herself to her studies harder that day than ever and would not allow herself to think of Guy. She soon threw the feeling off, and was herself again.

The day Mrs. Bell's school was out each pupil went to their home feeling that they had spent a few happy days together, long to be remembered by them.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### CLARA'S VISIT AND THE DEATH OF MRS. BOYD.

There was quite a number of young ladies and gentlemen who lived in and near the village, so it was considered quite a jolly place. There was always some place of amusement to go to. The young people gathered at the skating rink, ball room, or some social entertainment several evenings during the week. Nina was present on most all occasions. One evening when Nina was at a ball dancing, a friend of hers stepped up to her as the music stopped and said: "Nina, Mr. Robert Jones has been watching you dance."

Nina said: "Mr. Robert Jones! What of that? That old man!"

"Yes, he told me to ask you if you hadn't rather be an old man's darling than a young man's slave."

Nina just in fun laughed and said: "Tell him yes," for she thought, of course, it was a joke.

Mr. Jones was a jolly old bachelor with a good deal of means, and he meant every word he sent to Nina.

In a very few days Mr. Jones was found on his

way to Hilt House, but, to his regret, when he got there, he found that Nina was not at home. Mrs. Hilt told him that Nina was visiting her sister, Sarah.

He then asked permission to go and bring Nina home, but Mrs. Hilt thought perhaps Nina would think she was trying to get up another Tom Ware case, and also remembering the promise she and Mr. Hilt made to each other never to meddle with Nina's love affairs again, said: "No, Mr. Jones, I am sure Nina's visit isn't out yet, and I would prefer you not to go for her."

Mr. Jones said he was very sorry to have missed Nina, and took his departure.

When Nina returned home and Mrs. Hilt told her of Mr. Jones' visit, she said: Oh mother! The very idea of that old man coming to see me! I wonder if he thinks I would marry him? I would feel as though I was marrying my grandfather. His head is as white as cotton. Well, I won't worry myself, for I don't suppose he will ever come again. I'll catch my horse and ride to the village and perhaps I'll get a letter from Clara Winfrey."

Nina went to the village and returned with a letter from Clara stating that she was coming to Hilt House the next week. This was good news for Nina for she had often wished for Clara to visit her.

She spent the whole of the week preparing for Clara's visit and invited all her friends, both girls and boys, to call as soon as her guest arrived.

Clara came one day earlier than Nina expected her. She came running in and said: "Nina, I hope you will excuse me for coming a day sooner

than I wrote you, but Frank Gage, a friend of mine, had some business to attend to in the city of C—— and he asked me to come with him. You know, Nina, I could not refuse Frank.”

“Oh! that’s all right, Clara; I’m real glad you came today. Isn’t Frank coming in?”

“No, he said he would call on his return.”

“Clara, is Frank your best friend now?”

“Oh! yes, and he is such a dear, good boy, and he is perfectly lovely to me.”

“Clara, I believe you are in love with him.”

“Sure! I am, and we are engaged, but we haven’t announced our engagement. We thought we would wait until after I had made this visit.”

“I’m so glad you haven’t, for if you had announced your engagement the boys would not be near so nice to you, and I want you to have a good time. So many have told me they were going to call while you were here. The boys at the village are always nice to visitors. Do you dance, Clara?”

“Oh! yes.”

“Well, we’ll go to the ball Wednesday evening. We have such nice balls, and mother says I may give a reception Tuesday in honor of you, and then you will meet all my friends. I want this to be the grandest entertainment of the season.”

“Oh! that’s so nice of you, Nina. Are the invitations out?”

“Oh! yes. The cards have been out several days. You know tomorrow evening is the time for the reception. Mother is going to serve a nice lunch, and she said she wanted you and I to arrange the table. Can’t you suggest some new ideas, as you have been attending such swell entertainments in the city?”

"Oh yes, Nina, I am sure we shall have the table looking beautiful."

Then Clara said: "Nina, you are not listening to me. What are you studying about?"

"I was only thinking it would be nice if Mrs. Cole would entertain while you are here. I have been to several nice dances at her home and she knows just how to make everybody have a good time. Her table is always loaded with everything nice and good to eat."

"Is Mrs. Cole a young married lady, Nina?"

"Oh no, but she is one of the loveliest old ladies I ever saw and she seems to enjoy the dances just as much as the young people."

"Wouldn't it be nice if she should entertain while I'm here, Nina?"

"I am quite sure she would if she knew that we wished her to so much, but I can't think of asking her to. You know they are lots of trouble as well as expense."

"There comes Frank now; I want you to meet him, Nina. He isn't handsome but he is a good boy."

"Of course you think he is good, and I'm surprised at you not thinking he is handsome as you are in love with him, for it is an old saying that love hides a multitude of faults; and I think it is a true adage, as that was my experience when I was in love."

"There's Frank at the door, and I want you to tell me after he is gone what you think of him."

"All right, I'll tell you, Clara. You know I've had a good deal of experience and am a pretty good judge of human nature."

Clara met Frank at the door and led the way into

the parlor. Nina advanced toward them with extended hand and said: "I am glad to meet you, Mr. Gage. Clara tells me that you are a very dear friend of hers, and there's a warm spot in my heart for all of Clara's friends." Frank thanked Nina politely and took his seat.

Nina thought to herself: "Well, Clara told the truth when she said Frank wasn't handsome for I know he is the ugliest man I ever saw. I can't see how on earth Clara can love him. I am sure I could never love an ugly man, and especially one as ugly as Frank Gage. I hope Clara won't ask me how I like his looks, for I don't want to hurt her feelings, but if she asks me I shall sure tell her the truth. I guess Clara thinks I ought to ask him to our party tomorrow evening, but I don't think I shall, as I already have an even number of girls and boys invited, and if he were to come he would want to occupy all of Clara's time, and I want Clara to meet my friends. No, I shall not mention party to him."

Frank didn't make a long visit as it was getting late, and he had quite a distance to drive.

As soon as he was out of hearing Clara said: "Nina, I'm so glad you didn't invite Frank to the party, for I can see him any time when I'm at home and I am making this visit to you and your friends."

"Clara, I hardly knew what to do about inviting Mr. Gage, as I had not consulted you about the matter and I am so glad it is all right with you."

Nina talked away and tried to evade the question she excepted Clara to ask her any minute.

Finally Clara said: "Let me talk awhile, Nina; I am very anxious to know your opinion of Frank

Gage."

I was very much in hopes you would not ask me that question, Clara, for you know I will not tell you a falsehood and I hope you will not become offended at me."

"No, Nina, I shall not get mad at you; I will allow you the privilege to say what you please this time."

"Well, Clara, I must say I do not think he is one bit handsome, but you say he is good, and it certainly is a good thing he has some fine quality to atone for that horrid, ugly face of his."

"Oh, I would much rather he was good than handsome."

"Yes, Clara, I will admit that goodness is far superior to beauty if it comes from the heart and continues through life. But I have known some people who appeared to be extremely good until they got married and then an angel from heaven couldn't live with them."

Clara replied: "I don't believe Frank will change that way."

"I hope not, Clara, and I am not saying this to discourage you in the least, but you had better listen to a friend's advice and be sure you know Frank's disposition before you marry him."

"Thank you, Nina, I will do my best to find him out, but you know this is something hard to do. I have always heard that marrying was like a leap in the dark, and you do not know where you are going to light or what is going to happen to you until after you have made the leap."

Clara and Nina were very busy all day Tuesday decorating and preparing the house for the party. After this was done their attention was turned to

dressing the table, which Mrs. Hilt pronounced beautiful when it was done. They then hastened to their rooms to adorn themselves in beautiful evening dresses of white organdy.

When the party hour arrived guests came in from all directions and were received by the fair hostess and her visitor with a joyous welcome.

Among the first who came were Harry Willis and Harvey Simpson, two of Nina's best friends.

The evening was spent in playing games and other amusements. At ten o'clock they were invited to the dining room and were led by Harvey and Nina. Everyone acknowledged this to be the best feature of the evening. Too soon the hour came for them to take their departure for their respective homes. After expressing thanks to the hostess for the pleasures of the evening they bade her good-night.

Harvey Simpson and Harry Willis were the last to leave. Harvey paused at the door and asked if it would be agreeable for he and Harry Willis to accompany she and Clara to the ball the next evening. Nina very readily accepted.

When Clara and Nina were in their room that night Clara told Nina that she liked all her friends very much, but that Harry Willis was her favorite.

"And I believe Harvey Simpson is in love with you Nina, judging from the way he acted tonight."

"Harvey Simpson in love with me, Clara, the very idea of such a thing. No, Clara, we are only good friends. Harvey is real nice to me and comes to see me quite often, but we will never be anything but friends. I don't suppose he is in love with me, and I am sure I am not in love with

him."

"Nina, you are a very peculiar girl; somehow I can't understand your disposition. You don't seem to care any more for one of your gentlemen friends than you do another, and that is so different from most girls. You surely have some reason for this. Now, Nina, please tell me what it is."

"As I know you to be a true friend of mine, Clara, I will tell you. I made up my mind several years ago that I would not permit myself to fall in love with anyone, for it is now my intention to live a single life for quite a while, and perhaps as long as I live."

"What makes you talk that way, Nina? Have you been disappointed in love?"

"No, the one I loved didn't disappoint me, but father did."

"Oh, yes; Harry told me last evening about some missing letters which gave you a great deal of trouble, and he said he sympathized with you so much."

"Yes, Clara, I think everybody at the village heard about these missing letters which I never received. Well, that was long ago. Let's talk about the future. Harvey and Harry are coming to take us to the ball this evening."

Mr. Hilt came in and interrupted the conversation by saying "I've a letter for you, Nina."

Nina took the letter, opened it quickly and said: "Oh, Clara, how lucky we are. This is an invitation to a dance at Mrs. Cole's Friday evening. I shall accept the invitation at once."

Nina wrote and thanked Mrs. Cole that they would gladly accept the invitation.

Nina and Clara attended the ball at the village

Wednesday evening and danced until a late hour. The next day Nina was scarcely able to leave her room.

Mrs. Hilt told Nina she thought she had been taking too much exercise, and she thought it best for her to remain at home a few days.

Nina replied: "Oh, mother, I would hate very much to miss Mrs. Cole's dance. Perhaps I will be well enough to go by that time."

Mrs. Hilt feared not, as it was just two nights off.

Nina was but little better on the morning of Mrs. Cole's ball. But Nina insisted that she was able to go. She was persuaded by her mother to remain at home.

Clara said she would also remain at home with Nina as she, too, needed rest.

So Nina sent Mrs. Cole the following regret:

"My Dear Mrs. Cole—Words cannot express how very sorry I am that I am not well enough to attend your ball. My friend, Miss Winfrey, begs to be excused.

"Your true friend,

"NINA."

Then Nina said: "Well, Clara, I suppose we will not have any company tonight as all the boys will go to the ball."

But she was mistaken, for when Harvey and Harry went to Mrs. Cole's and found that Nina and Clara were not there they decided to spend the evening with the girls at Hilt Home.

It is useless to say the girls were very much surprised to see them.

Nina was well again in a very few days, and all the girls and boys returned their party call.

When Clara's visit was out she told Nina she thought the village was an ideal place to live, and that she was not surprised at Nina not wanting to marry, for she had such a good time, and she also declared this had been the most enjoyable visit of her life.

The next week after Clara left Hilt Home, Nina went to visit Mrs. Boyd a few days in the village. She found Mrs. Boyd in very poor health.

Mrs. Boyd said she was very much afraid she had consumption, which proved to be true. Nina spent a great deal of her time with Mrs. Boyd during her illness. On one occasion Nina had remained away from Mrs. Boyd longer than usual, during which time Mrs. Boyd rapidly grew worse and Dr. Boyd became very much alarmed about her condition. One day he sent for Nina to come immediately.

Doctor Boyd told Nina when she arrived that his wife could not live long and that he wanted her to remain at his wife's bedside until the last, as Mrs. Boyd was so very fond of her, which, of course, Nina did.

Dr. Boyd had also sent for Guy, but Nina didn't know this until Guy walked in.

This was the first time she had seen Guy since they had bade each other a happy farewell on that New Year's day.

When Nina saw Guy she thought, what a great difference there was in their last parting and this meeting. When they parted they were so very happy and now they meet around his mother's deathbed. Then Nina thought of where she was and how much she hated to see Mrs. Boyd die; and oh, how sorry she felt for her now motherless

children.

Nina remained at Dr. Boyd's until after the funeral. She then returned home, feeling she had lost a very dear friend, who had been almost as a mother to her.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### CLARA'S WEDDING.

Nina had a letter from Clara stating that she and Frank Gage were soon going to be married, and asked Nina to come to the city of H—— at once as she wanted Nina to be her bridesmaid.

Nina began to make her arrangements to go, but before she was ready to start she had another letter from Clara telling her not to come, that she had changed her notion about the place where she was to get married, and said she was coming to see Nina and tell her all about her arrangements.

Nina thought this rather a strange way to do, and worried about it considerably.

But soon Clara came and informed Nina that she decided to marry at Hilt Home in remembrance of that pleasant visit there just one year ago.

Nina said: "All right, Clara; I will be very glad to have you marry here. When are going to marry?"

"Next Wednesday; just one week from today. Frank and I have decided to have a quiet wedding, and we want you and George Wilkins to stand up with us. And as soon as we are married we are going to a reception at his father's, and, of course, you and George are expected to go with us."

"That's real nice, Clara, for George Wilkins is and old schoolmate of mine and I always liked him

fine."

"I am real glad of this, Nina, for of course he will be pleasant company for you."

Frank Gage and George Wilkins called at Hilt Home the day before the wedding and all arrangements were made for the engagement the following afternoon at 2 o'clock sharp.

On the morning of Clara's wedding Nina said: "Clara, I do wish you were not going to marry; I shall be so lonesome without you, and somehow I can't help but feel blue about it."

"Oh, you won't miss me long, Nina, for I guess you and Harvey Simpson will be marrying before long."

"Oh, I told you once before, Clara, that I would never marry Harvey; that we were only friends."

You must be very dear friends judging from the number of times he comes to see you."

"Oh, he has a nice horse and buggy, and you know I enjoy that."

Promptly at 2 o'clock Nina and Clara were dressed for the wedding, and a few intimate friends were gathered in the parlor, but the groom-to-be had not yet arrived.

Clara kept watching the clock until it struck three. Then her face grew pale and she said to Nina: "I wonder what can be the matter with Frank? It is now 3 o'clock and he ought to have been here an hour ago."

Nina replied: "Be patient, Clara; they will surely be here in a short while, for people rarely ever marry on time, you know."

Clara listened at Nina, then begun walking the floor. The clock struck four and yet he hadn't come.

Clara looked out and saw her friends and the minister had left the house and gone out on the lawn to see if they could see anything of the groom-to-be. She then grew desperate and said: "What shall I do, Nina? Oh, just look; even the preacher is out looking for Frank."

When the clock struck five she tore the beautiful flowers from her bosom and said, "I will not marry Frank Gage if he should come."

Nina said: "You don't talk with any reason at all, Clara, I am sure something has happened to Frank or he would have been here on time. Now you sit down and be quiet; I am sure he will come or send some one in a short while to let you know what has happened."

"No, he isn't coming at all, and I don't believe he ever intended to come. I just don't believe I can stand to face the sneers of the outside world," replied Nina.

Nina had gotten somewhat nervous by this time herself, but tried to appear composed on Clara's account. She walked to the front window and saw Frank and George at the lawn gate. Oh, there they are now; I believed they would come. Now, Clara, cheer up and look your best when they come in."

"No, I will not, for I am mad at Frank and will be until I have had a thorough explanation from him why he has been delayed."

"Now, Clara, please don't quarrel with him."

When Frank and George entered the room neither Frank or Clara spoke to each other.

Nina said: "What has been the trouble and why are you so late?"

Frank said something about George's buggy getting broken, and that they had to stop at the

shop and have it repaired.

Clara acted so very indifferent that it made Frank mad and he almost wished he had not come at all.

They were all silent for some time. Then Nina said: "Are we going to have a wedding here to-day? If so, it is time we were going in the parlor, for the guests have been waiting four hours, and I am sure they must be getting tired. Come on, Clara, you and Frank, I am getting anxious to walk out on the floor if I am not going to get married myself. When Sarah married I thought I would be the next one to marry at Hilt Home, but you see I am not, for Clara is going to be the next one."

Then Frank offered his arm to Clara and the wedding proceeded.

After the wedding ceremony was over both couples started on their way to the reception. When they had driven a few miles, Nina said: "Well, George, I never experienced a wedding like this before, and I hope I never shall again. Just think, they stood up and made those solemn vows in the presence of God and man, to love and cherish each other as long as they both should live, and at the same time they were so mad they wouldn't speak to each other. Did you ever hear of such a circumstance as this before?"

"No, I never did before, Nina. We could have gotten there on time, but at two o'clock Frank was almost out of the notion of going at all, but I told him that would never do, and by the hardest talking I got him to consent to go."

Nina said: "Well, I thought that tale about your buggy being broken was too thin, for I am

sure it would have been an easy matter for you to have gotten another buggy. Well, I hope they will live happily together. I have often heard it said, 'A bad beginning makes a good ending,' and if this be true they will sure be happy when they are old."

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## CHAPTER XV.

### NINA AT JOHNSON'S BEDSIDE.

After Nina returned from the Gage reception, she said to her mother, with tears in her eyes: "Mother, I pity Clara."

"Why so, Nina?"

"I fear Frank doesn't love her as he should."

"I can't see why you should think that of Frank."

"Well, George said he had to persuade Frank for hours before he could get him to come at all. I would rather live single all my life than to marry a man who had to be persuaded to marry me, or one whom I had to be persuaded to marry."

"Well, I guess that's the reason you did not marry Tom Ware."

"Don't mention Tom Ware. I had almost forgotten he was in existence."

"Nina, your father is very much worried about you."

"Why is he worried about me, mother?"

"Well, you know how much father dislikes old maids, and he has fears that you are going to be one."

"I'm sure I would much prefer being an old maid than to be married to someone who wasn't worthy of me."

"Nina, I had forgotten to tell you we heard

some bad news from your brother Johnson while you were gone."

"What can it be, mother?"

"He had a very painful accident somehow. I do not know the particulars about it. But he is confined to his room, and he wants you to come and stay a while with him."

Johnson was married and living at Mayfield.

"Oh, I wish I knew how it all happened," said Nina; "I do hope brother is not seriously hurt. I will pack my trunk and start immediately, and will do all I can for brother. Now, mother, you said father didn't want me to be an old maid. Just suppose I was married now, who would brother have to come and help nurse him. I think that is the proper thing for me to do—just be an old maid and help my brothers and sisters when they are in trouble."

Nina's trunk was soon packed, and she took the next train for Mayfield.

When she got there she found Johnson fast in bed, and suffering intensely.

When he saw her great tears rolled down his cheeks and then he laughed for joy.

Nina sat by his bedside and told him all she knew about home and the village, which was very dear to him.

After Nina had been there a few days Johnson said: "Nina, I think your visit is helping me, and I shall soon be able to sit up some."

This was good news to Nina, for she was afraid, when she first saw him that he would never be well again, and it made her rejoice to see her brother improving so rapidly.

After Nina left home Mrs. Hilt told her hus-

band what Nina had said about her being an old maid.

Mr. Hilt replied: "Yes, I am sure that is her intention now, and it seems strange to me why she does not fall in love with some of these village boys who come to see her so frequently."

Mrs. Hilt responded: "I know Nina doesn't care anything for these village boys, but perhaps she may find some one whom she likes while on this visit."

"Oh, no, I am satisfied she won't, for she never has seemed to care for anyone since that engagement was broken, and I don't censure anyone but myself for it."

Johnson was soon able to be up and Nina spent four weeks very pleasantly with him; then returned home by the way of Paducah, where she stopped with some friends for a few days.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### NINA'S PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

After Nina had gotten home and related the details of her visit to Johnson, her father said: "Well, Nina, you came home just at the right time, for there is a protracted meeting in progress at the village church, and numbers of souls are being saved."

Nina was not yet a Christian, and Mr. Hilt was very anxious about her salvation. Nina had often wished very much to be a Christian, but she could not give her consent to give up dancing. She frequently said that she couldn't see that there was any harm in dancing. But on this occasion, when her father told her about the meeting, somehow she was impressed very forcibly that

she ought to be a Christian, and it was now time for her to begin to honor God. She had always attended church when it was convenient, but she liked the ball room better, and her father was aware of this last sad fact.

After she had attended this meeting several evenings, her heart grew heavy and she longed for something higher than the ball room. She tried to wear the feeling off, but could not.

One evening when she and Harvey Simpson were on their way to church, she said: "Harvey, let's not sit up near the front tonight; if we do some one will sure try to get me to go to the mourners' bench."

Harvey replied: "All right; we will sit wherever you wish."

Nina suggested that they take a back seat.

Harvey noticed that Nina paid very strict attention to the sermon that evening, and when the minister had closed his sermon and he invited penitents to the altar, Nina didn't wait for the second invitation, but went at once, and there she promised God to give up dancing and all of her sins if He would only relieve her of this miserable feeling, and God converted her soul right then and there. This was the happiest period of her life. She then joined the Baptist church and was baptized.

A short while after this she was invited to another dance, but she said: "No, I will not go, for I have given up the ball room forever, and I am going to live for God."

## CHAPTER XVII.

ROBERT JONES

One year from this time Nina was sitting on the front veranda at her home. She looked at the lawn gate and saw an aged gentleman drive up and stop. At first glance Nina recognized him to be Robert Jones. Her heart leaped to her throat and she went quickly into her mother's room and said: "Mother, Mr. Robert Jones has come. Go quick; he is at the door. I will not go where he is."

Mrs. Hilt invited Mr. Jones into the parlor, and after they had had a short conversation Mr. Jones picked up the album and began looking at the pictures. After he had turned a few leaves he said: "Oh, this is a new picture of Nina; I think it is real good of her."

Mrs. Hilt said: "Yes, I think it is a very good picture."

"Is Nina at home? I would like very much to see her."

"Yes Nina is at home, and I will go and send her into the parlor."

When Mrs. Hilt went to Nina's room and told her that Mr. Jones had asked to see her, Nina replied: "Mother, I don't want to see him at all."

But her mother insisted that she would come in a short while, but she could not prevail upon her to go in.

After Mrs. Hilt returned to the parlor, Nina reflected to herself thus: "It really looks silly for me to act in this manner. I am sure it will not hurt me to treat Mr. Jones with politeness. I will go in and see him for a short while."

So, after arranging her toilet, she went in to

see Mr. Jones.

He seemed highly pleased to see her, and he was in very high spirits.

Nina sat and listened to his jokes and jolly conversation with amazement. She had often seen him, but this was the first time she had even been in his company.

When he arose to go, he said: "I will bid you all good bye."

Mrs. Hilt said: "Good bye, Mr. Jones; come to see us again."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Jones; "I will, if Nina is willing."

"Certainly, we will be glad to see you, Mr. Jones," answered Nina.

After he had gone, Nina laughed at the idea of that old, gray headed man coming to see her. She said: "Mother, he is as jolly as a sixteen-year-old boy. I like to hear him talk very much, but that is all. He said he was coming back. I wonder if he thinks there is any probability of my marrying him when he is so old and I am so young. If he does he certainly is mistaken. Well, I suppose this will be the last of him for another two years. Do you remember, mother, it has just been two years since he came to see me the first time. Poor old man, I wonder why he waited until he was ready to die before he started out to get married. He has lots of money, I've heard, and it would be real nice if some girl would marry him and get to enjoy that money; but I am sure I never will."

"Why, Nina, are you not ashamed to talk about Mr. Jones in that manner. He is quite a nice old gentleman, and is one of your father's best friends.

I have often heard your father say that Mr. Jones had the biggest heart of any man he knew of, and that he was the poor man's friend, for he never knew Mr. Jones to refuse to help anyone who was in trouble."

"Mother, I didn't mean any harm; I was only having a little fun."

"Yes, Nina, at Mr. Jones' expense."

Mr. Jones went home thinking he had found the right girl at last, and he decided that he would soon be found at Hilt Home again.

Harvey Simpson still continues his regular visits to Nina. So when he came the next time after Mr. Jones' visit, Nina had quite a good deal of fun telling him about her rich old bachelor beau.

Harvey didn't seem to enjoy this as much as Nina had expected, and Nina soon changed the subject, as she didn't care to talk about anything that wasn't pleasant to Harvey.

In a very few days we again find Mr. Jones at Hilt Home. This time he took Nina for a long drive behind a quick-stepping steed.

Nina told Mr. Jones his horse traveled beautifully, and that she had enjoyed the drive very much.

Mr. Jones was very much encouraged, and thought he was progressing nicely, and he continued his visits regularly once a week.

Nina thought it quite romantic to have a beau so much her senior, and she liked him much better now than she ever thought she would and she began to think very seriously of his visits, as he had told her how he fell in love with her in the ball room two and a half years ago, and also said his love for her had been increasing ever since he

knew her.

Nina thought she would consult her father before she went too far this time, and one morning at the breakfast table, Nina said: "Father, what do you think of Mr. Jones visiting me?"

"That's all right, Nina," said Mr. Hilt, "there never was a more perfect gentleman than Mr. Jones."

"But, father, he is so much older than I am. What of that?"

"Oh, that's all right. I have known lots of young girls to marry old men who had money."

"Money, father; money wouldn't be any inducement for me to marry a man, old or young, unless I knew I loved him."

The next time Mr. Jones came, he said: "Nina, I came to talk business to you this time. I know I am a great deal your senior, and some would think it was perfectly absurd for us to marry, but I can't see it that way. I have lived a long and lonesome life, and I have decided that I will spend the last part of my life quite differently if you will only consent to marry an old 'bach' like me. I will do all in my power to make you happy. I am sure I cannot live long, and if I should die first I would leave you all I have in this world, and you would be independent. Now, Nina, can I ever hope that you will be my wife?"

Nina was in a tremble, and her head felt dizzy, and as soon as she was more composed, she said: "Mr. Jones, it seems to me as though there is too much difference in our ages for us to live a very congenial life."

"I have no fear of our happiness, whatever," replied Mr. Jones, "and I am sure I am willing

to risk it."

Nina answered: "This is very unexpected to me, and I will have to ask time to consider this matter."

"All right, Nina; how long do you want?"

"I can't say how long I want."

"Well, I suppose you will be ready to give me my answer by the next time I come, will you not?"

"I suppose I will; that is, if you don't come back too soon?"

"Well, I will be back in one week," answered Mr. Jones.

After he had gone Nina went to her room and sat there quite a while with her head bowed and both hands pressing her temples as she thought, Oh, can I marry this man? Would it be right, and do I love him? She battled with her conscience for some time in this manner. Then she decided to retire for the night, thinking perhaps she would get a good night's rest and be better in the morning. She slept very little that night, and the next morning she had a burning fever and was not able to leave her room.

When Nina failed to make her appearance at breakfast the next morning, her father said: "I wonder what is the matter with Nina this morning. It is very unusual for her to be late to breakfast; she certainly is sleeping very soundly or she would have heard the bell. Mrs. Hilt, suppose you go to her room and see what ails her. Perhaps she is sick."

Mrs. Hilt replied: "Oh, I don't suppose she is sick; she seemed perfectly well yesterday."

When Mrs. Hilt entered her room and saw her flushed face, she said: "Nina, what is the matter

with you? How long have you been sick?"

"All night, mother; I have slept scarcely any."

"Why did you not call me? I would have come to you at once had I known you were so very sick?"

"I didn't want to disturb you, mother, and I thought I would soon be better. Don't worry about me, mother."

"I will leave you now, and you try to go to sleep."

Mrs. Hilt felt very anxious about Nina's condition. She said she feared she was going to have a long spell of sickness.

Almost a week passed and Nina was no better.

Mrs. Hilt said to her husband: "Something seems to be worrying Nina. I wonder what it can be? I wish she would tell me, but I will not ask her for fear it will excite her and her fever will grow worse."

Mr. Hilt saw Mr. Jones in the city of C—— and told him Nina was very ill.

Mr. Jones said he was very sorry to hear that bad news and said he would call to see her the next morning.

That evening when Mr. Hilt returned home he told his wife of Mr. Jones' intended visit and said he thought it best not to tell Nina before he came.

Nina's fever was not as high the next morning as it had been and the symptoms for her recovery were good.

At nine o'clock Mr. Jones was wending his way through the lawn at Hilt Home. He was met at the door by Mr. Hilt. Mr. Jones asked if Nina's condition was any better today.

Mr. Hilt said that Nina was some better and he would go at once and tell her Mr. Jones had come and wanted to see her.

He wondered if Nina would permit him to see her.

When Mr. Hilt told Nina Mr. Jones wished to see her, she said: "All right, father, he can come in if he wishes, but I don't feel like talking to any one today."

"Mr. Jones is aware of that fact," answered Mr. Hilt, "and he is not expecting you to talk to him very much."

Mr. Jones made a very short visit to Nina's room as he feared his presence would do more harm than good.

When he arose to leave, he said: "Nina, I am glad to find you are getting on so nicely, and I hope to find you well when I come again."

Nina thanked him. Then their last conversation arose fresh before her. Then she thought to herself, "I will try not to think of this any more until I am better."

She improved nicely, and was soon able to sit up. And again she began to consider this very important matter, and it seemed to her that she couldn't make up her mind as to what would be best for her to do. She knew Mr. Jones was liable to come at any time. While she was meditating in this way her friend, Dora Reeves, came to see her.

When Dora saw how pale and thin Nina looked she told Nina she thought a change would help her, and said she would be glad to have Nina come and spend a week or two with her.

It struck Nina very forcibly that this was the

right thing for her to do, as she remembered that Dora had assisted her when she was in trouble once before, and thought possibly she would be of some assistance to her now. She consented to go, but said it wouldn't be convenient for her to go until the following day.

Dora said that would be all right, and she said she would come for her the next morning.

The next morning, according to promise, Dora came, and Nina left home without leaving any word at all for Mr. Jones.

Very soon after they had gotten out of sight of Hilt Home, Mr. Jones came. He was very much surprised, as well as disappointed, that Nina was not at home.

Mrs. Hilt informed him that she didn't think Nina would be gone but a very few days.

Nina was surprised when, after they had gotten home and she was somewhat rested from the fatigue of her journey, Dora said: "Nina, I have heard that old Mr. Robert Jones has been visiting you?"

"Yes, he has," replied Nina.

"Pshaw! the very idea of that old man going to see a girl so young as you are. I hope you have better sense than to think of marrying him."

"I don't know what I will do, Dora; I am undecided. I rather think I will not marry him, but if I should decide to marry Mr. Jones I am sure it would be no disgrace, for there are lots of young girls who marry old men; and remember, you would have married one yourself had he not died just before the day set for the wedding, and he was an old widower with a grown child. Mr. Jones is an old bachelor and he says I am the first girl

he ever really loved.”

“You misconstrued what I said, Nina. I didn’t mean that you would be disgraced if you should marry Mr. Jones, for I know he is all right in every respect, but I think it would be so much wiser for you to marry Harvey, for he is a great deal nearer your age, and then, it would be so nice for you to live so near me. I can’t bear the idea of your marrying some one who will take you out of this neighborhood.”

“I am sure the Jones home isn’t very far from here,” replied Nina.

“Nina, are you really going back on Harvey Simpson?”

“Oh, no; Harvey and I are still good friends, and he still makes his regular visits to see me. But I am sure I could never love Harvey Simpson well enough to marry him, and there is no use for me to try.”

“I think you could if you would only allow yourself to, Nina. I sent a servant to Harvey’s home last night to tell him you were coming today to spend two weeks with me, and Harvey said he would call tonight at eight. Now, Nina, you are looking so tired, I know you must still be fatigued from your drive. Suppose you go to your room and lie down and rest; then you will feel more like entertaining Harvey tonight.”

Nina was glad to hear Dora suggest this, for she was anxious to spend a short while alone to try to decide what answer she should give Mr. Jones when she saw him. Then she thought, “What if he should come while I am away from home. Well, I guess that’s the best way to get rid of him, for I don’t believe I love him well enough to marry

him anyway.”

Nina got up and went to Dora's room and said: “Dora, if Harvey comes this evening, don't say anything about Mr. Jones in his presence, for I said something about Mr. Jones having been to see me one day and Harvey didn't seem to like it at all.”

“I promise, Nina, but I really think he ought to know how often Mr. Jones visits you, and I really believe you are liking him, or you would not let him come so frequently.”

“Yes, I will admit that I like him, but I can't say that I love him very much.”

“Well, then, I hope you are not going to marry him. I have often heard you say you would never marry a man unless you loved him.”

“Yes, I have said it, and I still say so.”

Harvey made his visits quite often while Nina was visiting Dora, and Dora did and said everything she could in his favor.

On several occasions Nina told Dora that she felt she ought to return home, but Dora insisted on her remaining longer.

At last, when she had been there two weeks, she said to Dora: “I positively will go home today, and must go at once.”

When she got home, Mrs. Hilt said: “Nina, you came too late; Mr. Jones has just gone. He has been here three times since you have been gone, and he said today he didn't know that he would come again, but he might possibly come one more time, and if he should fail to find you at home he would never return again.”

Nina listened to what her mother had to say and asked, “Why did you not send him for me,

mother? I would have been glad to have returned home with him."

"I didn't know that you wished to come home."

Nina had a very peculiar feeling somehow, and she just now realized that she loved Mr. Jones.

She said: "Mother, when do you suppose he will be back? Did he say when?"

"No, he didn't say for sure he was coming back at all."

Nina could see now how badly she had treated Mr. Jones, and she wished very much that he would come at least once more so that she might make an apology for leaving home as she did and staying so long.

"And you say he came three times, mother?"

"Yes, he came the day you left, and I told him you would only be gone a few days, and after this he made two more visits."

Nina said: "Well, he certainly loves me or he wouldn't have come so many times. I didn't intend staying but a few days when I left home, but Dora insisted so much that I stay, that is why I stayed so long. I can see now why she wanted me to remain. It is strange why I couldn't see it then. She doesn't want Mr. Jones to visit me, mother."

"Why does she not, Nina?"

"She told me she wanted me to marry Harvey, and you know I will never do that."

"I always thought Dora was a very peculiar girl; she is always meddling with other people's business."

Nina thought every morning, "Well, perhaps Mr. Jones will come today," until a week had almost passed.

And when she was thinking he would never come again, she looked at the front lawn gate and there she saw Mr. Jones coming.

Cold chills ran up and down her back and she thought what a strange world this is. "Well, I suppose that God intends that I shall marry Mr. Jones."

She met him at the door with a bright smile on her face.

As soon as Mr. Jones saw her smiling countenance he knew that all was well between them. He took her by the hand and said: "Nina, I claim you as my own."

She bowed her head in assent.

Mr. Jones told Nina he didn't believe in long engagements, and said he was ready to marry at any time, and that he would speak to her father, and if he was willing and it was agreeable with her they would be married very soon.

She agreed to this, and soon began to make preparations for the wedding.

Both she and Mr. Jones determined that this should be kept a profound secret outside of the family until their wedding day.

When Mr. Jones went home he ordered his servants to make a general house cleaning, and for them to make his house look nicer than it ever did before, for he was going to get married and bring a mistress to his home.

The servants thought Mr. Jones was only joking, but went ahead and obeyed his order.

Just one week before the wedding Mr. Jones was at Hilt Home, and Nina said: "Mr. Jones, Harvey is coming to take me to church tonight. I suppose you don't object."

“No, I do not object to your going with Harvey, but you know you are not very well yet and going out in the night air might possibly make you sick again.”

Nina said she was accustomed to going to church in the evening and she did not think it would hurt her. And she didn't want to disappoint Harvey, as this would be the last time he would ever accompany Nina Hilt to church.

When Harvey came that evening Nina felt that she ought to tell him of her approaching wedding, but she remembered her promise to keep it a secret, and so she did not tell him.

Little did Harvey think that this would be the last time he and Nina would travel that dear old road to the village church together.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### NINA'S WEDDING.

The next time Mr. Jones came he told Nina that he had failed to tell her that two of his old servants, who had belonged to him in slave time, were living in the back yard. Their names were Polly and Ann. He said Polly had been partially crazy ever since the slaves were freed, and Ann wasn't very far behind her in this respect, and as they had been good servants he did not like to see them sent to the asylum or poorhouse, where they would possibly be mistreated, and he had made arrangements with the court to keep them for a certain amount of money per year. Mr. Jones told Nina that after they were married she could send the negroes to the asylum, poorhouse, or anywhere she wished if she did not want to keep them.

Nina said she would decide this matter after she

saw them.

She walked with him down to the front lawn gate as he was leaving, and Tom Ware was passing by.

Mr. Jones had a touch of rheumatism that day and was walking with a cane. When Tom saw Mr. Jones with his cane he hallooed and said: "Old man, you will have to throw that stick away if you want to go with that girl."

"Why didn't you tell him you could beat his time and walk with two sticks," said Nina.

This was the first time she had seen Tom since the day she had refused to see him at all.

A few days before the wedding Mr. Hilt rode over to Sarah's to tell her of Nina's approaching wedding. He said: "Of course you and Will will be present."

Sarah said she could not say for sure whether they would be or not, but supposed they would.

When Will came home that evening, Sarah told him that Nina was going to marry old Mr. Jones, and that she thought it was a shame for a young girl like Nina to marry such an old man, it made no difference how much money he had.

Will said: "I do, too, Sarah; and just wait till tomorrow and I will go and see if this match can't be stopped."

"I hope you can break it up," replied Sarah, for I can't see what father is thinking about by letting Nina marry him, unless it is because he has money. You know father has always said Nina should never marry a poor man. That is why he would never let her marry Guy. I think it would have been much better to have let her marry Guy than old Mr. Jones, for he will soon

die and leave her a widow; and how will she look going around with a long face and wearing a long veil, as young as she is. She wouldn't look like our jolly Nina at all. Oh, I can't stand the idea, Will."

Early the next morning Will was on his way to try to break up the match. When he got there he told Nina that he and everybody else thought it was perfectly ridiculous for her to marry that old, gray headed man, and that she would be perfectly miserable after she had married him.

"Will, you and Sarah may think so, but no one outside of our family knows anything about our wedding unless you have told them. I am very sorry to have to disappoint you and Sarah, but I surely will fulfill my promise to Mr. Jones if I live through next Tuesday."

After Will had said all he could to discourage Nina, he left Hilt Home, feeling that his visit was of no consequence.

A flood of tears rolled down Nina's cheek when she was alone.

When Mr. Hilt came in he saw that Nina had been crying. He said: "Daughter, what is the trouble now?"

She told him of Will's visit and all Will had said to her.

"I don't know what Will means by this," replied Mr. Hilt, "for he knows there never was a nicer man than Robert Jones. Cheer up, Nina, and do not pay any attention to Will's foolishness."

When Will got home Sarah rushed out to meet him, and could tell by his looks he had made a failure.

He told her she had just as well make up her mind to go to the wedding, for without a doubt it is going to take place.

"Well, if I should go I will tell Nina just what I think of this match."

Nina sent out a number of invitations to her friends to be present at Hilt Home at three o'clock November the twelfth, but didn't state what was going to take place.

On the morning of the wedding Mr. Jones told Jack, his favorite servant, that he was going to get married that day, and told Jack to go to Hilt Home and get Nina's trunk.

Jack said: "Mars Robert, you don't tell me youse gwine to git married. Well, I declar', I'm s'prised at you. What is yore lady's name?"

Mr. Jones told him.

Then Jack laughed outright, and said: "I jest wants to see dat lady; sho nuf I do."

Jack hitched up the wagon and went on his way. When he got to the village he stopped to warm; and the village boys, not knowing where Jack was going, thought it would be funny to make Jack drunk and have some fun out of him; as Jack always said so many funny things when he was drunk.

So they asked Jack if he wouldn't have a drink this cool morning.

Jack said: "Yes, sir; I never 'fuses liquor." So he kept on drinking until he was drunk.

The boys kept him there dancing and telling funny jokes to them till near the wedding hour.

When Jack happened to think where he had started he went out at once and got into his wagon, drove slowly to Hilt Home and got Nina's

trunk and put it in the wagon. Then he got in, took his seat and said: "I'se goin' to wait 'til this weddin's over before I starts."

Jack soon went fast asleep.

At the appointed hour the wedding guests came, Dora being among the number. Each one wondered what was going to happen, and wondered if she was going to marry, which it would be, Harvey or Mr. Jones. But their minds were soon relieved, when Mr. Jones, with the preacher and several of his friends from C——, arrived.

Just before Mr. Jones entered the room where Nina awaited him, Sarah and Will came.

Sarah rushed in and said: "Nina, I never would have thought this of you."

Nina looked straight into Sarah's face and said: "You know I don't want to hear anything of this kind. How do you like my wedding gown, and how do I look, anyway?"

"I guess your gown is all right, but I have seen you look prettier lots of times."

Then Mr. Jones entered, and he and Nina walked slowly to the parlor, where they were made one.

Then Nina bade her father, mother and dear old home good bye and all the wedding party went out to the gate, where a dozen or more vehicles were waiting to take them to the groom's home.

As they drew near the gate Jack woke up and looked at them with his great white eyes for a minute. Then he gathered up his lines and started out just in front of the bride and groom and the whole wedding party, who were going to a grand reception to be given at the Jones home.

When Mr. Jones said: "Get out of the road and let us pass," Jack replied, "No, Mars Robert, I'se goin' to lead dis here p'ocession."

Then Mr. Jones said: "Clear the road, Jack; clear the road."

Jack very reluctantly pulled aside and let the party pass, and they were soon out of Jack's sight.

When Jack got to the village he took the wrong road and he had gone quite a distance before he found out his mistake.

He was now getting sober, and he remembered that Mr. Jones told him to get back by noon, so he turned around and went home at a lively gait.

When he got in sight of home he saw Mr. Jones, Nina and several of their guests at the gate looking for him, and wondering why Jack was so late.

Jack drove up, took his hat off, and waved it to the crowd and said: "Ladies and gentlemen, I'se happy now since Mars Robert done gone and got married. Now, Mars Robert, which one of these here ladies is your wife?"

Mr. Jones took Nina by the arm and said: "This one, Jack. Now, what do you think of your 'Miss' Nina?"

Jack walked in front of Nina and made three low bows. "She's all right, dat's what she is, Mars Robert," replied Jack, "and it 'pears to me dat she's mighty young; looks like you might be her father. And now, Miss Nina, I sho does welcome you to dis here place."

Nina thanked Jack very much for his hearty welcome and the whole crowd roared with laughter.

Mr. Jones then said: "Well, Jack, take Miss Nina's trunk into her room and we will excuse you for the night."

Jack replied: "All right, Mars Robert, but I want some of dat good supper dat dey's been cooking all dis week, sho."

After supper was served and all the guests were seated in the parlor, all at once they heard heavy footsteps and a mighty muttering sound in the reception hall. All eyes turned toward the door, and, to their astonishment, Polly came running into the parlor muttering, "Where is she? Where is dat woman? I want's to see her." And muttered something about Mars William, who had died some years ago.

Mr. Jones saw Nina was very much frightened and he arose quickly and said: "Get out of here, Polly, and go back to your cabin and don't you ever come in this house again."

Then he turned to Nina and said: "Don't be afraid of Polly, Nina; she wouldn't hurt you. I guess she has heard the other negroes talking about you, and she couldn't wait until tomorrow to see you."

Nina said: "Yes, I will admit that I am afraid of her. Who wouldn't be afraid of an old crazy negro blazing their big white eyes at them like Polly did at me?"

Every one present laughed and teased Nina about being afraid of Polly.

After Polly was thoroughly discussed, Mr. Jones had tables and cards brought in and games of various kinds were indulged in until the clock struck twelve.

When the guests were ready to depart for their

homes, rain began to pour down in torrents and the whole party was compelled to spend the night with Mr. and Mrs. Jones. But by the next morning the rain had ceased and all the party, wishing Mr. and Mrs. Jones a long and happy life, departed to their respective homes.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### NINA'S NEW HOME.

Mr. Jones then drew a large bunch of keys from his pocket and said: "Come and go with me, Nina, I want to show you through your new home."

Nina followed and looked with astonishment, and after they had looked through every room and closet in the house, they went to the cellar, meat house and dairy, which were all well filled.

Nina said: "Mr. Jones, everyone who knows my father considers him a fine provider, but I must say this surpasses anything I have ever seen." She then said: "Mr. Jones, where is Polly's cabin? Let's go in and see her?"

When they went in, there sat Polly with her bonnet pulled down over her face and her feet in the ashes, for her fire was almost out, and Nina said: "How pitiful she looks."

Then she walked up near Polly and said: "How are you today, Aunt Polly? Are you not cold? Don't you want some more fire and some warmer clothes?"

Polly made no reply and didn't even look at Nina, but tucked her head and pulled her bonnet further over her face.

Nina turned to Mr. Jones and said: "Where are Polly's clothes? She hasn't enough on to keep

her comfortable.”

Mr. Jones replied: “Polly hasn’t many clothes, as I haven’t anybody to make them.”

“Well, I can sew, and I will make them some clothes.”

They next went to the kitchen, where Louise, the cook, was doing her work, and Ann was helping her.

Ann was ragged and dirty and looked at Nina with a silly grin.

After Nina had talked to her awhile she said to Mr. Jones: “Ann will be all right when I get her cleaned up, and I think she will be lots of help to me. But it almost makes me sick to think of poor Polly, for I think she is a first-class lunatic.”

After Mr. Jones and Nina went back to their room, Mr. Jones handed his keys to Nina and said: “Here are the keys to every door on this place. Take them; they are yours, and everything I possess is yours now. And I want you to feel you are at home, and be happy.”

“I am quite sure I am very happy, Mr. Jones. I think I would be a strange creature if I was not, when you are so lovely to me. And then we have such a nice, sweet home, which I know I shall enjoy very much.”

“I am so glad you like this new house, Nina.”

Mr. Jones had just built this house a very short while before they were married, and Nina congratulated Mr. Jones for his good judgment in the way he had planned his new house. She said it could not be improved in the way of convenience and beauty.

This made Mr. Jones very happy, to know that

Nina was so well pleased with her new home. He said: "Nina, you see I have not furnished the house yet as it should be as I did not know what kind of furniture you liked."

"I think the furniture you have is good enough for this winter and we will furnish our home beautifully next spring," replied Nina.

"You certainly are a sensible woman, Nina."

"Yes, Mr. Jones, I think it will be much nicer to have everything fresh and new in the spring. I think your yard is beautiful and I have already selected a place for my flower garden, for I am very fond of flowers."

Nina couldn't bear to think of those poor, dirty and ragged negroes, and very soon she had made them both comfortable clothes, and it made Nina feel that she had done some good when she thought how proud Ann was when she saw her new clothes.

Ann fell very much in love with her mistress, and Nina soon found that she had a great deal more sense than she thought she had when she first saw her.

So Ann was substituted for a house girl, which pleased Ann very much.

Often when Nina had company she would call Ann in the reception hall and have her tell who she loved.

Ann would get a broad grin on her face and say, "I loves my Miss Nina."

Of course, this made Nina feel good to know she had made the poor unfortunate negroes happy.

Tom Ware did not live a very great distance from the Jones home, and, after most all of the neighbors had called to see the newly wedded

couple, Tom, glad enough to have a chance to see and talk with Nina, got in his buggy one afternoon and went to see them.

He found both Mr. and Mrs. Jones at home, and they received him very courteously.

After he had been there some time he said to Mr. Jones: "It seems strange that Nina refused to marry me and married an old man like you."

Mr. Jones said: "Yes, I could not understand that myself."

"I can tell you why," said Nina; "It is because God intended it this way."

Tom said: "Well, Nina, you must believe in predestination."

"I certainly do. Just think how hard I fought against marrying Mr. Jones when he first proposed to me, and then of my own free will and accord I have married him and am now living happily with him. This proves to me that God intended that I should marry Mr. Jones."

Tom spent the afternoon very pleasantly talking of old times when he used to visit Nina, the only girl he ever loved.

And since Nina's marriage Tom has decided to live a confirmed old bachelor.

Tom extended congratulations and went on his way home.

Nina became dearer to Mr. Jones every day, and he praised her to the highest to every one he was with.

He frequently told Nina he wished he had married her when she was first grown.

One morning he told Nina he was going to the city of C—— and have his lawyer, Mr. B——, to write his will, for life was uncertain and he was

liable to die at any time, for he wanted her to have all he left in this world. He kissed Nina and left.

Nina stood and looked at him as he drove away and thought to herself that God had never made a better heart than Mr. Jones had. When Mr. Jones returned that afternoon, he told Nina that Mr. B—— was out of town and he failed to have his will written, and that he was going again as soon as he thought Mr. B—— had returned to town, as Mrs. B—— had informed him that her husband would be absent about two weeks.

Mr. Jones often talked to Nina about dying and leaving her and would say to her, "Nina, you are very young and I shall not ask you not to marry again, for that would be an unjust request, and if you should marry again I want you to be sure that you are marrying a man who loves you and will be kind and good to you. There are numbers of men who would marry you for the money I am going to leave you, and when the money is squandered they would mistreat you. I am sure I won't live very long, and I want to feel that you will live a happy life after I am gone."

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## CHAPTER XX.

### POLLY SENT TO THE POOR HOUSE.

The weather is getting very cold now, and Nina found Aunt Polly to be a great care. She watched after her through the day and would go to her cabin at night to see that she was comfortably in bed.

But Polly had a habit of running off when she would get out of Nina's sight, and one very cold

day she ran off and spent the day and night. Nina didn't know where she was. She had the whole community searched over, but Polly could not be found.

Late the next evening Polly returned home, almost frozen.

Nina made her as comfortable as she could, then returned to her room and told Mr. Jones that Polly was such a care since she had gotten the idea of running away that she thought it would be best for her to be sent to the asylum, where she could be better cared for, for she was afraid Polly would run off and freeze to death.

Mr. Jones answered: "All right, just as you say, Nina. I think it has been real good of you to bear with her as long as you have, for I know she has been very annoying to you. I am going to town tomorrow to see Mr. B—— about my will, and I will have proper arrangements made to have Polly sent to the asylum."

When Mr. Jones returned from town, he said: "Mr. B—— has not yet come home, and some men will come after Polly tomorrow morning to take her to the asylum."

Early the next morning Nina was in Polly's room, packing her clothes and helping her to dress.

Polly wondered what Nina was going to do with her, and, as usual, began to mutter something about Mars William..

Mars William was a brother of Mr. Jones, whom Polly was very fond of, and she had talked a great deal of him ever since his death.

Mr. Jones came to the cabin, told Nina the wagon had come for Polly, and asked if she was

ready to go.

"Yes," replied Nina. She took Polly by the hand and said, "Come on, Polly."

But Polly said: "Where? What is I gwine to do, and where is Mars William?"

"Come on, Polly," said Nina, "and you may go to see Mars William."

Polly laughed out loud and walked straight to the wagon.

Both shook hands with her and helped her in the wagon.

Polly went off talking about going to see Mars William.

Nina looked into Mr. Jones' face and saw great tears streaming down his cheeks. This was almost more than she could bear. She went to him and threw her arms around his neck with tears in her eyes, and said: "Husband, forgive me for this, for I would not have sent Polly away had I known you hated so much to see her leave."

Mr. Jones replied: "Oh, I know it is best for her to go, but it makes me sad to see her leave, because she has been such a faithful servant to me, and I don't suppose I will ever see her alive again."

Polly died two months after she left the Jones home.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### CHRISTMAS DAY.

Nina had heard Mr. Jones say he had never celebrated his birthday, although it was on the twenty-fifth of December, Christmas day. And, as Nina was anxious to do everything she could to make Mr. Jones happy, she decided that he

should enjoy this birthday. A few days before Christmas Nina sent out a number of invitations to his friends to dine with them on this day.

Of course, all gladly accepted, as they knew what a pleasure it was to dine at Mr. Jones' table.

Christmas day Mr. Jones was very much surprised to see his friends gathering in from all quarters, and he was very much delighted with this surprise.

When the dinner hour arrived the guests found the table burdened with everything good to eat. Every one did ample justice to the meal, and many toasts were offered at the close of the meal.

Mr. Jones entertained his guests that afternoon by telling what a fine wife he had, and regretting that he had not married her years ago, and the guests left, feeling that they had spent one of the "pleasantest" days of their lives.

Mr. Jones had quite another surprise this evening.

About eight o'clock the young people gathered in from all over the neighborhood and spent a delightful evening with Mr. and Mrs. Jones, for Nina had been quite a favorite in society and her friends were not yet willing to give her up, even though she was married.

After they had all gone Mr. Jones told Nina he had enjoyed her surprise very much indeed, and he felt that he could not thank her enough for planning this pleasant day for him.

One day during Christmas Mr. Jones made his third effort to get his will written, but, to his regret, failed. He became somewhat discouraged, and he told Nina if he should be taken ill before his will was written he wanted her to send for

Mr. B—— to come and have his will written.

Nina promised she would do so, and this seemed to relieve Mr. Jones' mind.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE CYCLONE AND DEATH OF MR. JONES.

One day in March Nina said: "Mr. Jones, you know we have our new furniture ordered, and it will be here soon, and what shall we do with our old furniture?"

Mr. Jones always considered everything in a business way, and after he had studied a few moments, he said: "I will get some carpenters to build a room to store the furniture in until we can dispose of it in some way."

The next morning Mr. Jones and the carpenters went to work on the shed and Nina went out and watched them for some time, and talked to Mr. Jones about how nice their old home would be when they got their new furniture in, and said: "How good you are to grant my every wish, Mr. Jones."

"Oh, I am not good; you know all I have is yours to do as you please with."

Nina went tripping back in the house with a light heart.

Very soon clouds began to gather and the winds began to blow a perfect gale.

Nina soon forgot all about her new furniture and her heart felt heavy and ached as it never had before, and she thought, what can be the matter with me. Oh, that dreadful wind; how it howls. I cannot stand it.

She threw her work down and fled to the yard, where Mr. Jones was, and said: "Ain't this an

awful wind? Somehow I just can't bear to hear it blow. Do you think we are going to have a storm?"

"I hope not," replied Mr. Jones; "but you had better go in the house out of the wind and I will be in soon."

Nina went back to her room and tried to write some letters, but she could not content herself long enough to do anything.

She got up and walked the floor, and went from one room to another, but she could not think of anything but the mournful howl of the wind, which never ceased the whole day through.

Late in the afternoon Nina and Mr. Jones were out in the yard looking at the clouds. Nina noticed that the limbs of a large oak tree were almost lapping the ground. She told her husband not to go near the tree for fear it would blow down.

Mr. Jones replied: "Oh, no, Nina, I am sure that tree would never blow down. You see what a large trunk and immense roots it has."

At sunset the wind had subsided a great deal, but the lightning continually flashed all over the canopy.

Just before eight o'clock two girls who were distant relatives of Mr. Jones came running in and said: "Oh, Uncle Robert, we are going to have an awful storm."

Mr. Jones, Nina and the two girls went into the kitchen, where Mr. Jones said he thought would be the safest place.

Very soon they heard a horrible, roaring sound, which, in a very few minutes proved to be a cyclone.

When the cyclone struck the house the door blew open and the window lights flew across the house as though they were feathers, and the fire was blown in every direction.

Ann was standing by the window washing the dishes, and when the cyclone struck the house Nina hallooed to her to get out of the way of those flying glasses.

For an instant the wind almost ceased, and Nina ran and closed the door and locked it. But soon the fatal twist came, the door flew open again and Nina said: "Lord have mercy upon us," and started to the front part of the house with Mr. Jones, the two girls, and Ann following her, but when she opened the door that led into the dining room all was dark to her and the house was blown to atoms. The inmates were scattered in different places. Each one thought that every breath would be their last. After the wind had ceased, hail beat down upon them for a few moments and then there was a calm. The moon came out and shone as bright as day.

Nina was the first one to regain consciousness, and she wondered if she could speak, and then she thought she would try it.

So she called to Mr. Jones to see if he was alive and conscious, for she feared she was the only one of the party that the cyclone had left with life. And, to her relief, Mr. Jones answered her and said: "No, Nina, I am not dead, but very near it."

Then Nina got up and went to him and tried to help him up, but his ankle was broken and he could not stand up.

Neither the girls nor Ann were hurt seriously,

and they very soon left Nina and Mr. Jones alone among the ruins to go to seek aid.

Mr. Jones looked pitifully into Nina's face and said: "Don't leave me, wife."

Nina sat down on a sill beside him and said: "You need not fear, Mr. Jones, I will never leave you."

While she was sitting there beside her husband, she saw a big light across the way, which did not seem to be far away, and she said: "I wonder if that is a fire, and what it can be that's burning? Oh, I hope no one else is in as much distress as we are. But I will not murmur, for I know God will give me grace to bear my troubles."

Soon help came, and Nina and Mr. Jones were carried to a tenant house, the only building the cyclone left standing on the Jones farm.

Doctor Boyd was sent for immediately. When he came and had examined Mr. Jones' and Nina's wounds and bruises, he said, he didn't think they were seriously hurt. But it would take some time for Mr. Jones' broken limb to get well, and he also said he would get another doctor to come and attend to setting it the next day, and said:

"Your condition is good, Nina, compared with Mrs. Macks'."

Mr. and Mrs. Macks were two of Nina's best friends.

Nina said: "Oh, Doctor Boyd, what has happened to Mrs. Macks?"

Doctor Boyd said: "Why, Mr. Macks and two negroes were burned up in his store, and now Mrs. Macks is lying prostrate from grief. And Mr. Wing, one of Mr. Macks' clerks, barely escaped with his life, and had it not been for a brave

young lady who pulled the weatherboarding off of the store where he was pinned in, he would now be a pile of ashes, as Mr. Macks is."

Nina said: "Well, that was the light we saw, Mr. Jones."

There was no sleep for Nina that night.

The next morning as the sun was rising Nina stood at the window of that humble tenant house and viewed the ruins of her once beautiful and sweet home. She said: "Oh, I must be dreaming, this surely cannot be a reality."

Mr. Jones said: "Nina, won't you please go up to where the house was and see if you can find any of my papers and notes."

So she started to where the house had stood, but her heart nearly failed her before she got there.

She came to the lot first, and there she found four big mules dead; one of them had a rail run through its body and sticking straight up in the air. The stables and barns were all blown away entirely.

She then came to the cow lot and found their three fine cows with their little calves standing over them bleating. She then crept slowly to the place where she had had such a narrow escape from death.

Words cannot describe things as they really were. The house was entirely blown away, and some parts of it had blown half a mile from where it once stood. Even the foundations of the chimneys were blown from out of the ground.

These sights were almost sickening to Nina's heart. Then she walked near to where the old oak tree had stood, and she almost gave down when she saw the tree had fallen on Aunt Polly's

cabin and crushed it in. The tree was torn up by the roots and left an immense hole five or six feet deep. Nina remembered the conversation she and her husband had had about the tree the evening before.

She sat down near the fallen tree and burst into tears, as she thought how good God was to spare their lives through this dreadful cyclone.

While sitting there she heard her father's voice close behind her. She turned quickly and there was her father coming towards her. Nina arose and advanced to meet her father with outstretched arms. She came very near falling, but her father caught her in his arms, and said: "Thank God for saving my child's life. Nina, I can't see how any of you came out alive," said her father.

Nina said: "It was God who saved us, father."

Mr. Hilt and Nina then began to hunt for Mr. Jones' papers, but found very few, as they were scattered everywhere. Some of them were found ten miles from the Jones homestead.

The news of the great destruction of the cyclone spread rapidly and soon the Jones farm was covered with people who had come to see Mr. Jones and the ruins of his home.

Mr. Jones appeared to be getting on nicely until the fourth day, when he had a little rise of fever.

Nina was sitting by his bedside, and he looked at her, then at the doctor and said: "Dr. Boyd, can't you do something for my wife's bruised and swollen face? She is the ugliest thing I ever saw. She doesn't look like my Nina at all."

Dr. Boyd, being very uneasy about his patient, stepped into the adjoining room and called Nina to him. Nina knew at once that something was

wrong, and she became very nervous and hurried to Dr. Boyd.

Dr. Boyd said: "Nina, is Mr. Jones' business arranged like he should like to have it if he should die?"

"Oh, Dr. Boyd, do you think there is any danger of him dying?" And for the first time she thought of the promise she had made to Mr. Jones.

Then she told Dr. Boyd about how hard her husband had tried to get his will written, and he had made her promise to have it written if he should get sick.

"Well, this must be attended to at once," replied Dr. Boyd. "We will wait until tomorrow; then his fever won't be so high."

Nina said: "Doctor, do you think Mr. Jones is going to die?"

"My idea is that he will not recover," replied the doctor, "for there has been so much excitement and no way to keep him quiet in this small house; and you know, Nina, all of his friends went in to see him, and he told each one the whole story of the cyclone, and has worried so much about the loss of his property. This threw him into fever. I tell you this, that you may be prepared for the worst."

When Dr. Boyd took Mr. Jones' temperature the next morning he found that his fever was not very high. Then Dr. Boyd said: "Mr. Jones, I have heard that you have tried on several occasions to get your will written and failed to do so."

Mr. Jones said: "Yes, I have been to see Mr. B—— three times and failed to find him at home."

Would you like to have your will written this

morning, Mr. Jones? "Mr. B—— isn't here, but 'Squire H—— is, and he can write it as well as Mr. B——, if you wish to have it written."

Mr. Jones answered: "All right, and now, Doctor, I don't want any flaws in my will. I want it made hard and fast, so that nothing can break it. For I want my wife to have all the property I possess, both personal and real."

Mr. Jones' will was written to that effect.

Mr. Jones then took his will, read it, and signed his name.

Then he said: "Doctor, I want you to take my temperature and examine me thoroughly, and if you think I know what I am doing and am competent to make this will I want you to certify same on this will."

After Dr. Boyd had examined Mr. Jones he pronounced him perfectly competent to make a will and certified same on the back of his will.

From this time Mr. Jones gradually grew worse.

Dr. Boyd, Nina and Mr. Hilt sat by his bedside both day and night and did all in their power to restore him, but could not, and four days after his will was written, Mr. Jones passed into eternity, and left a young widow to mourn his departure.

Mr. Hilt went home at once to break the sad news to Nina's mother, who was in very poor health and had not been able to visit Nina in her trouble.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

NINA'S RETURN TO LIVE AT HER OLD HOME.

Mr. Hilt told his wife that Nina must return to Hilt Home to live.

Mrs. Hilt replied: "Yes, Mr. Hilt, bring the poor child back to her mother."

Mr. Hilt hooked the horses to the carriage that Nina had driven so often and he returned immediately to the Jones homestead, and told Nina to make her arrangements to return home with him immediately after the burial of her husband.

Nina answered: "Thank you father; you know I have no arrangements to make as I haven't any clothes save what kind and loving neighbors have furnished me since the cyclone. Father, what shall I do with Ann?"

Mr. Hilt said he thought it best not to take Ann to Hilt Home as his wife preferred not to have her.

Now what to do with Ann Nina hardly knew. But she finally decided to hire a man, who lived near by, to take care of her until she could be given up to the court.

The next day Mr. Jones was buried by the side of his sister in the little family graveyard on the hill, where he had often told Nina he wanted to be buried. Then Nina bade poor old Ann good-bye and told her not to forget her Miss Nina.

When Mr. Hilt and Nina left for Hilt Home Ann looked after them as long as they were in sight.

As Nina was returning to her old home her thoughts went back to the many times she and her husband had traveled this road together, and more especially of the day when she was a happy bride, not quite five months ago. Then she said: "I will not murmur; I must submit to God's will."

When they arrived at Hilt Home Nina was so weak she could scarcely walk to the house.

Her mother met her at the door and clasped the bruised and mangled form of Nina Jones to her heart once more, and led her to the room which she had not occupied since the night before she was married.

When she entered the room she fell upon her knees beside the bed that was her's in her childhood and thanked God for His goodness in sparing her life through all these dangers and trials.

The next day Nina was scarcely able to raise her head from her pillow. Excitement had kept her up the most of the time since the cyclone, but now her nerves relaxed and she was prostrated for several days. All callers were forbidden to mention the cyclone to her for some time; and she was soon able to be out again, but looked very pale and careworn.

Her friends did all they could to cheer her up and keep her from worrying over the past. She tried very hard to be cheerful, but she could not forget the past.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE JONES WILL CASE.

Mr. Jones had some distant relatives, who, very soon after the death of Mr. Jones, informed Nina that they were going to contest his will.

Nina disliked the idea very much of going to court, although she had no fears that Mr. Jones' will could be broken, and two weeks after his death his will went to probate and the work begun.

So Nina was notified to have her witnesses summoned and appear at the next term of court, to prove that Robert Jones was in his right mind

when he made his will

Nina braced up when she received the summons and said: "The sooner it is over the better it will be for me."

She went to the city of C—— immediately and employed Mr. B—— as her first lawyer and Mr. S—— to assist him.

She had quite a number of witnesses summoned and could have had as many more; for Mr. Jones had expressed himself so freely to his many friends before the cyclone as to what disposition he expected to make of his property, and he did just what he told his friends he was going to do with it.

The plaintiffs employed Mr. C—— ( of the city of H——, and Mr. H——, a lawyer who lived at the village near the Jones homestead.

Witnesses were summoned to be present on the fifth day of court, as this was the day set apart for the Jones will case to begin.

On this morning, leaning on the arm of her father, Nina entered the court room for the first time in her life.

When she entered the court room all eyes turned toward the door and saw a pale-faced, slender figure dressed in deep mourning walking down the aisle, and every one knew this was the widow Jones.

When the judge called the Jones will case, the lawyers on both sides answered "Ready."

Next the jury was to be selected.

Nina told Mr. B—— she wanted to be very careful lest they should get some one on the jury who would cause the jury to hang.

Then they begun selecting jurors, and Nina was

pleased with the looks of the first ten chosen, but when the eleventh was on examination and the judge asked him if he knew any of the particulars or had his mind made up in regard to the Robert Jones will case, he replied: "I have not."

Then the judge said: "Are you connected in anyway to any of the parties interested?"

He replied: "I am not."

Hot flashes flew over Nina's face as she said: "Mr. B——, will you please ask the judge that this man be excused, for to my certain knowledge he is closely connected to the plaintiffs."

Mr. B—— did as Nina asked, and this man was excused.

Two others were chosen and examining of witnesses proceeded for the next four days.

Nina sat in the court room from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and listened to the witnesses on both sides.

On the fifth day the lawyers made their speeches.

Mr. H—— spoke first, and his speech consisted of nothing but abuse of Mr. Jones and Nina from beginning to end, which thoroughly disgusted the judge and jury, and everybody in the court room was relieved when he finished his speech.

Pat, an Irishman, who was a good friend to Mr. and Mrs. Jones, had listened to this abominable speech, and he could scarcely wait until it was ended without interfering, so when Mr. H—— had taken his seat, Pat arose and said: "If two or three of you fellows will help me we will pitch that fellow head-long out of the window and there won't be grace enough in the chair to save him."

The whole audience roared with laughter at

Pat's wit.

The judge who was presiding was named Grace.

Mr. S—— made the next speech and began by saying he had made hundreds of speeches, and his conscience was clear of the fact that he had never been guilty of abusing a lady or the dead, and said: "Why not let the dead rest in peace." He then discussed the evidence and proved to the jury that this was Robert Jones' will.

Mr. C—— spoke next, and as he had no evidence whatever to prove to the jury that this was not Mr. Jones' will, he made his speech on the same line which Mr. H—— had, and also tried to work on the sympathies of the jury, by telling them to have pity on Mr. Jones' niece, who had cried so heartily when she was testifying. He then began abusing Nina by saying: "There sat that cold, heartless woman staring in your faces and she never shed a tear."

He didn't seem to realize that he was throwing cold water ont he jury through his entire speech.

Mr. B——made the last speech, which was the best of all, and he was cheered many times while speaking. He closed his speech by saying he was glad he had a client who was far above crying for a verdict in her favor, and said to the jury "she asks you for an honest verdict, and, I am sure it has been proven to you from the evidence that this is Robert Jones' will"

The judge then arose and said: "Court will adjourn for the evening and the jury will take the case the next morning at 9 o'clock."

When the court adjourned Nina was very nervous, as she had listened to these vile speeches.

Mr. B—— told her that he had no fears what-

ever of her not gaining the suit.

The next morning Mr. B—— told Nina that he thought it best for her not to go to the court room when the verdict was read.

So Nina stopped with a friend, who lived just across the street from the court room.

Promptly at 9 o'clock the judge instructed the jury and they retired to the jury room, but returned in a very short while with a verdict stating that they found this to be the Robert Jones will.

Nina had awaited anxiously but was relieved when she saw Mr. C—— coming across the street with a disappointed look on his face.

Then she heard him say to a crowd of men standing on the street: "Well, they have beaten us this time, but I am sure we will beat them when we take it to the Court of Appeals."

The thought struck Nina instantly that Mr. C—— was talking in this way to try to effect a compromise.

When the jury came out of the courthouse they saw Nina standing in the door across the street. They all went over and shook hands with her, and Nina thanked them very much for treating her so justly.

Nina returned to her home and felt very much relieved that this tiresome week was ended.

That afternoon Mr. C—— sent word to Nina that if she wished they would compromise, and if she would not they were going to appeal to a higher court.

Nina sent him word that he might take an appeal if he wished, for she would never compromise. So that was the last she heard from Mr. C—— for some time.

Nina now began to feel like herself once more, and she told her mother she hoped there would be a calm after such a long storm, as her life had been a continual storm ever since the morning of the cyclone.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

NINA REMINDED OF HER HUSBAND'S WARNINGS.

Fortunately the cyclone left two of Mr. Jones' favorite horses alive—Dique, a big black horse, which was Nina's saddle horse, and Charlie, Mr. Jones' buggy horse.

Mr. Jones had often told Nina that Charlie was not safe for a lady to drive, and he would never permit Nina to drive him alone. But Nina was not afraid of Charlie; so after the death of her husband she decided to keep these two horses for her own use. And she could never bear the idea of anyone else owning Charlie, for he was a great pet of Mr. Jones.

Narlinton, Nina's youngest brother, was at Russelville attending a theological school, and he was expected to return home very soon. Nina could hardly wait for him to come home, as she knew his presence would help her throw off the recollections of the past which had burdened her life so much.

Soon after Narlinton came home Nina told him of what a fine buggy horse Charlie was and said: "I am so glad you have come home. I will purchase a new buggy and you can drive him for me. I am not at all afraid of Charlie, but Mr. Jones never thought he was safe for me to drive."

The buggy was soon bought and Nina and Narlinton had quite a good time driving, as

Charlie traveled beautifully.

One day Nina said: "I believe Charlie is perfectly safe for me to drive now. I never knew him to do any harm. I shall drive him alone today and try him once anyhow."

Charlie behaved himself nicely and Nina was highly pleased with his conduct, and after this she often drove him alone, when it wasn't convenient for Narlington to accompany her.

One day she drove him to the village for the mail, and after she had returned home and opened her mail she found a letter written in a beautiful hand from a gentleman whom she had never seen or heard of. He stated that his name was Arthur Coleman and lived in St. Louis, and that he had just returned from the city of H——, where he visited relatives, and while there he was standing on the street one day talking to a friend when Nina passed by them and that his friend remarked: "There is a lady whose husband was a victim of the March cyclone."

And Arthur also stated in this letter that he liked her appearance and desired an acquaintance with her, and asked if she would correspond with him.

When Nina read this letter she remembered the warning words of her husband, and she said: "How true his words are proving; and it is only three months since his death. I am sure I wouldn't correspond with any man, more especially one I never saw or heard of before. He surely must think I am foolish if he entertains the least idea that I will catch on to anything of this kind. His pocket change must be getting scarce and he thinks this a good way to replenish it. But he will

be fooled this time if he thinks I will answer this letter. No, I will treat it with silent contempt, for my time is too precious to even notice such a man as he is."

"Oh, how I wish I had never gotten this letter. It makes me think of my past trouble and how Mr. Jones warned me about some one who wouldn't be kind to me.

"I think I shall be afraid to ever marry after this warning, much less to think of such a thing now, when my husband is just as fresh in my memory as he was the day he died."

She arose and tossed the letter into the waste basket and said: "I will have Dique brought out and go for a ride, which is much more pleasant than sitting here worrying over a letter that isn't worth noticing."

After she had mounted Dique she couldn't decide which direction she wished to ride this morning. So she gave Dique the reins and said: "Now Dique, you may choose the road we will travel this morning."

And of course it was natural for Dique to want to go back toward his old home. So he chose the road leading in that direction. Nina thought he traveled nicer than he had since he left his Jones home. She patted him on his neck and talked to him as she did in days gone by. Dique bore his neck with pride, and just now seemed to realize that this was his mistress of three months ago.

When they came in sight of the Jones farm Dique looked over the fields and neighed, but there came no response. When he got in front of the gate where the Jones house once stood he stopped.

Nina dismounted and rubbed his face and said: "Poor Dique, you are a noble horse."

She then went to the little graveyard on the hill, and as she stood there looking at the newly made grave she thought what her husband would have said had he known how very soon the work to deceive her would begin. And she now realized how well Mr. Jones understood human nature.

She noticed the flowers she had planted around his grave were growing nicely, and she decided that he should have a monument very soon.

She then turned and viewed the ruins once more, mounted Dique and returned home.

When she arrived home Mrs. Hilt said: "You took a long ride this morning, did you not?"

"Yes, mother," returned Nina, "I have been to my farm and visited Mr. Jones' grave, and I have decided to erect a monument at his grave. I shall start to Clarksville tomorrow to select one. You know they do very fine marble work there, mother."

"How long will you be gone, Nina?"

"Several weeks, I suppose. You know Will and Sarah have recently moved there, and I will spend most of my time with them."

Nina packed her trunk and had everything ready to take the early train next morning.

She rose very early the next morning and told Narlington to be sure that Charlie and Dique were well cared for while she was absent. She bade all good-bye and went on her way.

When she got to Clarksville Will was one of the first persons whom she saw, and he told her that he and Sarah had been expecting a visit from her for some time, and said he had felt impressed that

she was coming that morning and had come to the depot to see if there was any reality in this impression.

When Sarah saw Will and Nina coming she laughed and said, that Will certainly was a fortune teller.

Sarah and Nina spent the afternoon and evening in talking about everything that had happened since they were children.

And the next day they went to the large marble works to select Mr. Jones' monument.

Nina had never seen marble cut and worked in so many shapes and ways, and it was hard for her to decide what style monument she wanted. But she finally decided on a very handsome one, which was made, shipped and placed at the head of her husband's grave.

She had a pleasant visit at Sarah's, but she couldn't content herself at one place long at a time, and when two weeks were out we find Nina at Hilt Home again, driving Charlie or riding Dique every day and trying to get all the pleasure out of life she could.

Nina was invited to attend a feminine house party at the home of a friend of hers who lived at a village near the Jones farm, whose name was Mrs. H——.

Mrs. H—— had a lovely home, and Nina had often visited there in company with Mr. Jones. So on this occasion she gladly accepted Mrs. H——'s invitation.

Charlie was hooked to the buggy and Nina went to attend the party.

Mrs. H—— seemed surprised to see Nina driving Charlie, as she knew Mr. Jones had never

risked Nina to drive him, and told Nina she thought she ought not to drive him.

Nina insisted that she was not at all afraid of Charlie, and proposed driving Mrs. H—— to church that night, which was about three miles distant from there.

So Mrs. H—— agreed to go.

Charlie traveled very nicely as they went on their way to church, and Mrs. H——, like Nina, thought he was all right.

But after church was dismissed a crowd of boys came out and stood near Charlie, and each struck a loud popping match to light his cigar, and this got Charlie's metal up and he tried hard to get loose from the post, but could not.

When Nina and Mrs. H—— came out to start home Nina couldn't imagine what had gotten Charlie so excited, as she had never seen him in this condition before. She talked to him and tried to get him quiet and said: "I am sure he will be all right when he gets started."

Charlie reared and surged, and two men held him while Nina and Mrs. H—— got into the buggy. Nina took the reins and said: "Now go along Charlie, and behave yourself."

Charlie took them home almost at a two-forty gait while Nina held him firmly in the road.

Mrs. H—— said: "Nina, this is my first and will be my last time to ride behind Charlie."

Nina laughed at the idea.

The next day the party was invited to dine with another friend who lived a short distance from the home of Mrs. H——.

When the buggies and carriages were brought to the front gate and all were ready to start, Nina

was shocked when she looked at Charlie and saw that his eyes were red and he had his ears perched up and he did not seem to want any one to come near him.

She felt a little afraid of him at first, and then she said: "Come on, girls; two of you can ride with me. I don't think there is any harm in Charlie."

The party started on their way.

The house where they were going was some distance from the main road, and they had to go through two gates.

After they had entered the first gate, they found the road through the field very rough, and as they started down a small hill both of the front wheels to Nina's buggy dropped into a ditch and caused the axle to strike Charlie's legs.

Charlie jumped and ran as fast as he could go. He turned the buggy over and threw the girls in a heap in the ditch, then ran as fast as he could go, and never stopped for the second gate, but struck it center with his head. The gate flew open and Charlie fell senseless just after he had gotten through the gate.

When Charlie started to run Nina thought instantly of the warning her husband had always told her about the horse, and now she wished she had obeyed him.

Luckily none of them were seriously hurt, but they had received several bruises and were jarred considerably.

As soon as Nina struck the ground she jumped up and looked for Charlie, but he wasn't in sight, so she ran up the hill as fast as she could, and when she came to the gate there lay Charlie and

the buggy. She hurried and unloosed him from the buggy before he regained consciousness. Charlie soon got up and almost flew across the field.

Nina stood and watched him as he ran.

She said: "This is what I get by not obeying Mr. Jones, and I will not be guilty of such a thing again."

When the party returned that afternoon Nina drove a borrowed horse from her hostess, and she led Charlie.

The girls had a lot of fun going home, as they were kept busy whipping the old horse to get him to travel.

One of them told Nina that they were traveling on extremes that day; as they went too fast and were returning too slow.

Nina told the girls that night that she had made up her mind to sell Charlie as she now knew from today's experience that he was not safe for her to drive.

After this Charlie had a great deal of rest, as Nina wouldn't drive him unless her father or Narlington accompanied her.

Months passed, and now Mr. Jones had been dead one year.

We find Nina in society, and the village boys and girls count her as one of them again.

Mr. and Mrs. Hilt rejoice to see her again so cheerful, as they had pitied her when she was in so much trouble as only a father and mother can pity their child. And now they prayed God that the rest of her life would be bright and sunshiny.

One day when the Hilt family was sitting around their fireside they heard a knock at the

door, and when Mr. Hilt opened the door, to his astonishment, there stood Lawyer C——, who still had hopes that Nina could be persuaded to compromise this will case.

Without waiting to be invited he walked straight into the sitting room, looked into Nina's face, bowed and said: "How-do-you-do, madam," then took his seat. "Madam, I have come to give you one more chance to compromise this suit; if you do not I am going to appeal at once."

Nina replied: "Sir, you can carry this to a higher court just as soon as you wish, for I shall never compromise my husband's will with you or anyone else."

Mr. C—— said: "Madam, we may keep you out of your property two years or more."

"All right, sir; it will be good when I get it," replied Nina.

Mr. C—— left, thinking that Nina Jones was a brave woman and would not be scared into anything.

Now his last hope was blighted, and Nina was never bothered again about her husband's will.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

JAMES ANDERSON.

James Anderson was a young widower who lived in an adjoining county, and whose wife had died and left him one year ago, with four children, two boys and two girls.

On this particular morning he looked at his motherless children and then sat looking in the fire for quite a while in a deep study. As to what course to pursue he did not know. He had a good housekeeper, but he felt that he wanted a com-

panion and a mother for his children. He asked God to direct him as to what would be best for him to do.

After he had studied and prayed over the matter well, the Hilt family entered his mind. He knew that Mr. Hilt had a widowed daughter. He was acquainted with Mr. Hilt, as he had stopped at Hilt Home on one occasion while passing by several years ago, but he didn't meet Nina, and didn't especially care to as he was then a married man.

Now he decides to make an effort to meet her. He had a friend, Mr. Tyler, who lived near Hilt Home and who was well acquainted with the Hilt family. So he wrote Mr. Tyler that he wished very much to meet Mrs. Jones, and asked where he would be most likely to see her publicly as he would like to see her before calling on her at her home. He then sealed his letter and hurried to mail it and waited patiently to hear from Mr. Tyler.

At last his answer came and Mr. Tyler stated that Nina attended church regularly at the village, and he could meet her there on any Sunday.

James decided that he would go to Mr. Tyler's the next Saturday and attend church at the village the next Sunday.

The next Saturday afternoon James hooked a beautiful span of horses to his buggy and went to Mr. Tyler's to spend the night.

On Sunday morning he arose early, prepared his toilet, hooked up his horses and soon landed at the village church to await the arrival of Nina.

After he got to church he met a Mr. Reed, who was one of Nina's friends and who was standing in

the church yard waiting for the services to begin.

After Mr. Reed had conversed with James some time he found that he was well acquainted with some of James' relatives.

James turned his eyes toward the road and saw Mr. Hilt and a lady whom he supposed was Nina, coming to the church driving Charlie, who was stepping very gracefully.

James casually said: "Is that Mrs. Jones with Mr. Hilt?"

Mr. Reed replied that it was.

"I would like very much to meet her."

Mr. Reed replied: "She is a special friend of mine, and if you wish I will find out if it is agreeable with her to meet you."

To this James readily consented.

Mr. Reed went and assisted Nina out of her buggy, took her by the arm and started to the church. He said: "Nina, I have a friend here who wishes to form your acquaintance."

As Nina drove up she noticed a tall, handsome man whom she thought looked quite swell, standing in the church yard, and as soon as Mr. Reed had made this statement Nina knew this was the man whom he had reference to.

Nina said: "Who is he, Mr. Reed, and where does he live? Now tell me all about him."

After Mr. Reed had answered all of Nina's questions and assured her that Mr. Anderson was all right in every respect, Nina glanced toward where he was standing in the yard. She said: "All right, Mr. Reed; I will meet him after preaching is over," and then stepped inside the church and took her seat, and began to think,

“Well, I don’t know whether I ought to meet this strange man or not, for people will begin to gossip, and it will be all over the village and country that Nina Jones has set out to get married.”

But I can’t see that there is any harm in merely being introduced to a man, which of course, will be the last of him.”

Services were opened with a good old time song and the congregation gathered in.

And James Anderson went and sat where he could see every movement Nina made during the services.

After the doxology was sung and the benediction pronounced, Nina, as usual, was laughing and talking to her friends in a general way and had forgotten all about her promise to meet Mr. Anderson.

Suddenly Mr. Reed touched her arm and said: “Mrs. Jones, let me introduce to you my friend, Mr. Anderson.”

After Nina and Mr. Anderson had talked for a short while, Mr. Anderson said: “Mrs. Jones, if agreeable, I would like to have the pleasure of accompanying you home.”

This was very unexpected to Nina, as she hadn’t accepted any company since she had been a widow except the village boys, whom she didn’t consider as beaux.

She hesitated for a few moments, then replied: “I suppose it will be all right, Mr. Anderson; I came with father and will tell him that I shall not go back with him.”

Mr. Hilt said that would be all right, and when Nina and Mr. Anderson drove away from the church all eyes looked after them, and everybody

wondered who Nina's new beau could be.

The news spread rapidly that Nina Jones had set out, and that she had a new beau from church.

The village boys who had been frequent visitors at Hilt Home and whom Nina only considered as school mates and neighbors, saw Nina and Mr. Anderson as they drove away from church, and they decided that this strange man should not interfere with their regular Sunday afternoon visits.

They decided to go earlier today than usual and meet the new gentleman.

As soon as they had eaten their dinners, three of them set off for Hilt Home, and said to each other as they went on their way, "Well, he won't stay long after we get there, for we will take up all of Nina's time, and she won't have a chance to talk to him."

When Mr. Anderson saw the boys coming in he said: "Mrs. Jones, have you an engagement for this afternoon?"

Nina replied: "I have not; those are some of the village boys who come to see me quite often, and especially on Sunday afternoon."

Mr. Anderson said: "Well, if I am not intruding I will remain for a short while."

"I am sure it will be no intrusion whatever," replied Nina.

The boys came in and seemed to be very much tickled over their plans.

After they were introduced to Mr. Anderson and were seated Nina said: "Ella Moore, a friend of mine, is here, and if all of you will excuse me I will ask her to join us."

The boys said: "Certainly, bring Miss Ella

in.”

Nina soon returned with Ella following her.

She then resumed the seat near Mr. Anderson, where she was sitting before the boys came.

The boys tried hard to carry out their plans and each one directed his conversation to Nina and kept her busy the most of the time answering their questions and listening to their funny jokes. But finally she caught on to their scheme and every chance she had would say something to Mr. Anderson and try to make him feel comfortable.

Mr. Anderson also caught on to what the boys were trying to accomplish and decided to try to beat the boys at their own game; so he asked Nina if she would like to take a short drive before he left for his home.

She replied: “Yes, I would enjoy it very much,” and said to the boys, “I hope you will excuse me. Mr. Anderson and I are going for a drive. Ella will entertain you while I am gone.”

The boys turned red in the face and said: “All right. But they didn’t mean it, for Ella was not at all entertaining, for “Yes,” and “No,” was very near all they could get her to say. They soon grew tired of her and longed for the return of Nina and Mr. Anderson, for they were determined not to leave until after Mr. Anderson had left for his home.

When Nina and James returned from their drive James bade Nina good-bye at the gate and said he would like to have the pleasure of visiting her again, and he named the date. Nina gave him permission to come and hurried to the house.

When she entered the parlor there sat the boys all huffed up at her for leaving them.

Nina laughed outright and said: "Well, boys, the table has turned and it is now my time to have some fun."

She teased them a great deal about trying to run the "green" over James and how nicely he had turned the joke on them.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### NINA VISITS MEMPHIS.

Clara and Frank Gage were living in Memphis, and Nina decided to make them a visit, as she hadn't seen Clara since that day long to be remembered by Nina, when Clara was married to Frank Gage.

Nina remembered the many happy hours she and Clara had spent together, and thought of the many trials she had undergone since last they had met. So she decided to start off at once for Memphis.

When she arrived there and saw what a pitiful looking object Clara was, she at first was sorry she came, but after she had reflected a while she said: "I ought not to feel this way, for poor Clara seemed to be so glad to see me. It may be possible that my visit may be of some benefit to her, and I want to do all the good I can in this world. I shall do all I can to make Clara happy while I am in her home, for I know she can't possibly live very long."

Nina told Clara everything she knew that was wise and pleasant, but never mentioned the cyclone, death of Mr. Jones or any of her troubles, as she thought she would; but talked of the good times they had when they were girls, which she knew Clara would enjoy.

In a few days Clara seemed very much improved, and she told Nina that her visit had been of more benefit to her than all the medicine she had taken for two years. And she said she wanted Nina to remain with her just as long as she possibly could. And she wished so much that she was well and able to make Nina's visit pleasant. And said I am afraid you will soon get tired of this dull life and leave me, for I know what a jolly time you are used to having at the village.

Nina thought if Clara knew how many dark days she had spent she would talk in a different way. She said: "Clara, I am so glad I have been a help to you, and I hope you will continue to improve. Please don't worry about me, for I am sure I will be contented as long as I am doing good."

Nina saw, to her regret, that Clara was not happily married, and she was not surprised at this, judging from the start they made on their wedding day.

Frank came in one evening and told Nina that Harry Mitchell, a friend of his, who was one of the professors at the high school, had seen her and desired to meet her.

Nina told Frank that she hadn't set out to marry, and she never expected to marry again unless she was sure she was marrying a good man—one who loved her with a true and manly heart, and she thought it unnecessary for Mr. Mitchell to call.

But Frank said he wished very much for her to meet his friend.

So Nina said she would not be contrary, and she let the professor call.

The next day Frank called to see Prof. Mitchel and told him it would be all right for him to call on Nina some time while she was there.

A few evenings after this Prof. Mitchel made his call. But somehow he didn't make a very favorable impression on Nina's mind for he was entirely too inquisitive to suit her, for he seemed to want to know all about her business, but he was none the wiser about her affairs when he left than when he came. Nina believed in everybody attending to their own business and in letting other people's business alone.

Prof. Mitchel was not Nina's style of a man at all, although he was quite nice to her while she was visiting Clara.

A few days before Nina left for her home, Clara asked Nina to tell her all about the cyclone and how it ever happened that she escaped alive.

"I would have told you long before, but it makes me sad to think of how horrible it was, and I was afraid it would be unpleasant for you to hear."

Clara insisted, and Nina related all the facts about the cyclone and Mr. Jones' death and what a long siege she had in court and had come out victorious and stated that God had been her counselor and guide through it all.

The whole while Nina was relating this great tears ran down Clara's cheeks, and after Nina had finished, Clara said: "I find that I am not the only one who has trouble."

"Not by any means," replied Nina, "Remember it has been said by the poet:

"'Into each life some rain must fall,  
Some days must be dark and dreary.'"

"I think some people have more dark days than days of sunshine. I, for one, have," said Clara.

"Now cheer up, Clara, I was afraid to tell you for fear it would cause you to become despondent. When I have trouble I always try to look forward to a better time; and if it never comes in this world it will surely come in heaven, where dark days never come and all is joy and sunshine through all eternity."

"Well, I think I shall always try to look on the bright side of everything hereafter; and I can't express how much good your visit has done me," said Clara.

"I have enjoyed being with you, Clara, but I am going to leave you tomorrow, for I have an engagement that I must fill at home."

"Who have you an engagement with, Nina?"

"A friend of mine, Mr. Anderson."

"I never heard of him before, Nina. Do tell me all about him? I expect you will be married the next time I hear from you."

"No, I don't expect to marry any time soon, and may never. I never met Mr. Anderson but one time, and you see he is a mere stranger to me, but I like his appearance very well and think he would make a first class beau. I don't suppose he wants to marry, and I am sure I don't care to. I am free now and can go when I please, and stay just as long as I want to; and, if I was married I couldn't do this way. In fact, Clara, I didn't want to go very much while I was married to Mr. Jones unless he was with me."

"Well, Nina, if I were you I never would marry. I am sure if I were single again I would never marry any man."

"I hope you didn't understand me to say I would never marry again. I said, I didn't want to marry now, but perhaps I may change my notion some day. Mr. Jones did not object to my marrying again, but warned me to be particular whom I married."

"Oh, Nina, there comes Prof. Mitchel to make his last call. I wish you two would get married, and I would have you live near me."

"I would like to live near you very much, Clara, but if marrying Prof. Mitchell is my only chance I will never be your neighbor."

"I can't see why you don't fancy Prof. Mitchel. I like him very much and so does Frank."

"If you want my candid opinion about Prof. Mitchel, I will tell you, Clara."

"I hope it isn't bad, Nina."

"Well, I call it bad, I don't know what you may think about it. My opinion is he is wanting money instead of a wife, and I have no time to waste on such a man as that."

Nina went in the sitting room to bid him good bye.

He said he only dropped in for a very short while, as that was a very busy evening with him, and he hoped he would soon have the pleasure of seeing her at her home.

Nina made no response.

The next morning Nina returned to her home after an absence of one month.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### AT HOME AGAIN.

Nina told her mother of Clara's health and said:

"If I had met her away from home, I would never

have recognized her, for the rose has faded from her cheek, and her pretty brown eyes have lost their brightness and she certainly looks pitiful to me, mother, and Frank is so cold and indifferent and he doesn't show a bit of love for her. I don't believe he loves her, or he ever has loved her very much. I believe I would lose my mind if I had a husband of this kind."

Mrs. Hilt said: "Nina, you will have to be very particular, or you will be deceived like Clara was."

"I hope not, mother, for I am going to be on my guard, and I don't think I will be deceived. Oh, that reminds me, Mr. Anderson is coming tomorrow, and I haven't asked father what he thinks of me receiving gentleman company and how he likes Mr. Anderson. You know, mother, I don't want to displease father."

"Your father thinks Mr. Anderson is all right, and he doesn't object to his visiting you at all, Nina."

"How do you know, mother?"

"I have heard him say so. You know, Nina, your father doesn't want to deprive you of any pleasure."

The next day Mr. Anderson was a guest at Hilt Home again, and he soon became a frequent visitor of Nina's, and began to tell her of his love for her, and Nina began to think seriously about the matter.

One evening when she was expecting James, she was in a deep study and meditated with herself in this manner: "I know I could love James if I would only allow myself; and somehow I believe he would make an ideal husband."

She heard footsteps on the veranda. Then she arose and said: "There he comes now," and went to the door to meet him.

She thought she had never seen him looking so handsome before.

On this visit James took Nina by the hand and said: "Nina, I have come to ask you to be my wife and a mother for my children."

"I think it would be a great responsibility for a girl who has no experience of raising children to take a mother's place, and I really feel that I am not competent to fill this place," replied Nina.

"I am sure there would be no trouble of that kind," replied James, "you say you love me and I believe you do, and I am perfectly willing to risk this."

Nina told him she would give him a definite answer the next time he came.

So he left her.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### PROF. MITCHEL AT HILT HOME.

The next day Mrs. Hilt tapped on Nina's room door and said: "Nina, there is a stranger at the door who wants to see you."

"Who can it be, mother?"

"I do not know," replied Mrs. Hilt. "I am sure I have never seen him before."

Nina first thought it must be one of the plaintiff's lawyers who had come to worry her again about that horrid lawsuit.

It had now been about six months since they made their last attempt to effect a compromise and she had hoped so much that she would never hear of it again. And, with a shudder, she went

to meet the supposed lawyer, but to her astonishment there stood Prof. Mitchel, who was all smiles at the idea of surprising Nina.

When Nina saw who he was, her face turned crimson.

She extended her hand to him and said: "Why, Prof. Mitchel, I am surprised. I haven't thought of you for quite awhile. How is Clara?"

"Oh, she is all right. But, pardon me, Nina, did I understand you to say that you hadn't thought of me for quite awhile?"

"Yes, I believe I did say that I was surprised to see you, but I was hardly responsible for what I said as I was so surprised to see you."

"I hope it was an agreeable surprise," and to Nina's relief he didn't wait for an answer, but continued by saying: "I should have written you before I came, but I had to go to Louisville very unexpectedly to me, and I could not pass so near without stopping over to see you. In fact, Nina, you have a very warm place in my heart, and if you will allow me to tell you the honest truth, when I first saw you I determined to try to win your heart and hand, and can't you give me one ray of hope that you love me?"

"I cannot, Mr. Mitchel," replied Nina. "You are a stranger to me, but I will promise to be your friend."

Nina tried to change the conversation by stating something that occurred when James made his last visit.

Mr. Mitchel said: "Who is this James, Nina, I have heard you speak of so often?"

"Oh, he is a friend of mine, that's all."

Prof. Mitchel asked Nina if she would like to

go for a nice drive.

Nina replied she would go.

After they had started, Mr. Mitchel said: "I have always desired to see the ruins of the Jones home, as I have read so much in the paper of the great destruction of that cyclone, and if you have no objections we will drive in that direction this morning."

Nina said: "All right, we will drive that way, but the ruins have all been cleared away, and the Jones farm looks like all other farms now."

Nina had already caught on to what he was after, and she thought: "We will drive by my farm and hear what he has to say about it."

When they came to her farm, she said: "This is the noted Jones farm," and stopped to hear what he would say.

Professor Mitchel said: "This is a fine farm and a beautiful location and how very much I would like to live here, and it would be my delight to run such a farm as this."

Nina replied: "I never wish to make this my home again, for it would remind me too much of the few happy days that I was permitted to spend here that were ended so instantaneously by that dreadful cyclone."

Then the thought struck Nina: "What would Mr. Jones say if he could only see her with this man who had proved to her by his every act and word that he was seeking the property that Mr. Jones had left her, and she again remembered how often he had warned her of all men like this. A shudder ran over her frame and she said: "Let's go home, Mr. Mitchel, I am not feeling well at all." Her head throbbed and breast heaved, and

she did not hear half Prof. Mitchel said to her as they drove on their way home.

When they arrived at Hilt Home Nina said: "Prof. Mitchel, I hope you will excuse me, as I am feeling so badly, I shall be compelled to go to my room and lie down."

Professor replied: "I am very sorry indeed that you are sick and I hope you will soon be better and I expect to see you again very soon."

Nina was feeling too bad to answer anything more he had to say to her.

She bade him good bye and went to her room and fell across her bed, and said: "Oh, I am so thankful I am rid of Harry Mitchel once more. I hope I shall never see his face again."

Mrs. Hilt heard Nina go in her room and close the door, which was very unusual, for Nina had been in the habit of going to the sitting room after her company had gone and telling her father and mother something that was said or done, or any news her company had told her.

"I will go and see what is the matter with Nina."

She tapped on Nina's door.

"Come in, mother, said Nina, I have a nervous headache and I came to lie down for awhile."

"Who was your company?" asked Mrs. Hilt.

"Prof. Mitchel, of Memphis, mother. You've heard me speak of meeting him when I was in Memphis."

Mrs. Hilt said: "I think he is right handsome."

Nina said: "Oh, he looks well enough, but he is a perfect bore. I was never so surprised to see anybody in my life. I expected to find Lawyer C—— or Mr. H—— at the door, and I dreaded

so much to have to listen to some more of their woeful pleas. But I had rather listen to the lawyers, court and the jury than this man."

"Why do you talk in that way, Nina?"

"Mother, I will explain it all to you when my head gets easy. I don't care to talk about Harry Mitchel now. I want to be perfectly quiet for awhile."

Mrs. Hilt returned to her room and left Nina to take a rest.

After Prof. Mitchel had gotten to his home and had studied about his visit to Nina, he said: "Well, I think the easiest way for me to pay off my debts and get a financial start in this world is to marry the Widow Jones. I don't think there will be any trouble about winning her love, so I will write to her this very evening; for the sooner we get married the better it will be for me, as I am compelled to meet a five hundred dollar note which is due the first of next month. And if I can only win her love she will pay this note for me, or do anything else I ask her to do. I like her well enough I am sure, but I shall never make a fool of myself over any woman."

After thus meditating, Prof. Mitchel wrote the following lines:

"Memphis, Tenn.

"My Dear Nina:

"Words cannot express how very much I disliked to leave you yesterday afternoon looking so pale and sick. I hope you are feeling much better today.

"Nina, I never knew how very much I loved you until I was compelled to leave you yesterday. My heart yearns for you and I cannot live without

you, and I believe that you love me and if you will only consent to be my wife, no pen can express how happy I would be.

“Your sweet, smiling face haunts me every moment of my life, and oh, that I could be with you now and pour out the flow of loving words and feelings in your ear that my mind and heart contain.

“Nina, I have a plan to suggest to you which will be a novelty, if you only will consent.

“I will call any day you suggest and we will go to some point, wherever you wish, and get married, then return to Memphis and announce our marriage.

“I hope and believe this will meet with your approval, and I shall expect to hear from you by return mail. Your devoted,

“HARRY MITCHEL.”

“P. S. Nina, be sure to name the date for me to call for you; and now let’s keep this a profound secret.

HARRY.”

June 25, 18—.

After this letter was finished, Prof. Mitchel said: “Well, I guess I will be a married man soon, for I am sure most any girl would feel honored to marry a handsome man like myself.”

When Nina received Harry’s letter and saw that it was from Memphis, she said: “Oh, what made that man write to me? I am quite sure I don’t want to hear from him.”

After she had opened the letter and read it, she laughed heartily, and said: “Well, he surely has everything arranged nicely. He must think I care something for him, and I can’t see why, for I know I never have given him a particle of en-

couragement. Well, he has been worrying me long enough, and I shall stop him in short order. He is silly if he thinks for an instant that I would marry him."

She then penned these lines to him:

"Mr. Mitchel:—In answer to your letter of the 25th, I must say that the contents of your gushing letter does not meet with my approval in the least. In the first place, I cannot return your love, and in the next place, I shall never marry unless my love is wooed and won by a noble, manly heart, who will marry me because he loves me. I look upon marriage as being one of God's most sacred ordinances, and I shall ever regard it as such, and not like your letter was written, as though you were writing to some man about buying a farm or swapping horses. This isn't my style of love making. I hope this will be the last of our correspondence. Respectfully,  
"NINA."

Harry Mitchel was perfectly shocked at the downfall of his air castles when he read Nina's letter.

He wrote Nina again and told her she had misconstrued his letter and assured her that no one could love her more than himself, and insisted that she continue to write to him.

But Nina had understood Harry Mitchel's intention from the first time she had met him, and her mind was now thoroughly made up concerning him.

And Harry Mitchel never received an answer to his letter.

## CHAPTER XXX.

THE ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING OF NINA AND  
JAMES.

Nina is now looking with joyous anticipation to the next evening when James Anderson is to visit Hilt Home again, for James has won her heart, and she knows that she loves James Anderson; but she felt that this was a great responsibility to marry a man with four children, and felt that she could not rear them as they should be. She then asked God to decide the question for her, and impress on her heart what would be best for her to do. Then her mind was impressed in this manner: "I believe James will make me a devoted husband. I will marry him and do the best I can by his children, and this is all God requires of me."

The next evening James came, and, after he had been with Nina a short while, he said: "Nina, I am waiting patiently for your answer, and I am anxious to know if you will be my wife?"

Nina then repeated these lines to him:

Dear James, God intends  
That you and I shall wed.  
I have prayed to Him for guidance,  
And this is what He said:

"Do not hesitate any longer  
About your wedding vow.  
I have always been with you,  
And I will not forsake you now."

I shall do as God directs me,  
For I am sure He knows what's best.  
If I only make an effort,  
God will always do the rest.

And I know He will be with me,  
 If I undertake His care,  
 For He said: "Do as I bid you."  
 Now, let us have a word of prayer.

There they knelt, both James and Nina,  
 On that dear old parlor floor,  
 And they prayed for richest blessings  
 From the One whom they adore.

When they arose James said to Nina:  
 "Now that I am sure of this,"  
 And, as a token of love and affection,  
 On her cheek he imprinted a kiss.

Nina went into her mother's room after James had gone and said: "Mother, before many months have passed I will leave you and father again, for I have promised I would marry him in the near future."

Mrs. Hilt replied: "I know your father and I will be very lonely and will miss you, but I can't ask you not to marry Mr. Anderson, for I know you are young and will leave us some day, sooner or later, and, my dear child, I hope you will live a long and happy life."

"Thank you, mother, replied Nina, and I am sure I shall be very happy with James, and, mother, you know I shall hate to leave you and father so alone, but, mother, I will come to see you quite often. But Henry and his wife will be lots of company for you, as they live so near. Soon Narlington will complete his education and I am sure you won't get lonesome then."

"Oh, you know I will rejoice when Narlington comes home, but I fear he won't remain at home long, as he is to be a minister of the gospel, and you know they don't live at one place long at a

time, and he may be called far away from home to preach any time."

"I hope not, mother; possibly he may get work near home."

Then Nina caught Dique and went to the village again for the mail. And she got a letter from another strange man. It was written in beautiful language with several verses of flowery poetry.

She tossed this letter into the waste basket just as she had done other letters she had received from strangers, and said: "I am sure I shall never care for any one else but James, and I don't care to receive letters from them."

Ora Williams was a niece of James, whom he was very fond of, and he often spoke of her in Nina's presence.

One day he told Nina he would like so much for her to meet his niece.

So the next letter Nina wrote to James she gave him a special invitation to bring Ora with him the next time he came to Hilt Home.

James answered immediately and accepted Nina's invitation.

So Nina was very busy the whole of the week getting ready for her visitor, Miss Williams, who was to come the next Saturday afternoon and remain a week at Hilt Home.

Nina was anxious that her visit should be pleasant and she asked the village boys to be especially nice to Ora.

After James had arrived in company with Ora, Nina was perfectly charmed with Ora and thought she had a real sweet face. She was very entertaining, which was also thought by some

of the village boys, judging from the frequent visits they made to Hilt Home during Ora's visit.

Nina soon became very fond of Ora and was sorry when the time came for her to take her departure; and she thought of how much company Ora would be for her after she and James were married.

Now the village boys thought James was making his visits too often and did all they could to interfere.

They often wrote on the back of Nina's letters to James and told him not to come to see Nina any more; for him to stay at home and find him another girl, etc.

But this didn't interfere with James' business a little bit, and he made his visits just the same.

When the summer months had passed, and autumn was here Nina and James began to plan for their wedding, which was to take place in October.

One day James called his children to him and told them he was going to bring a new mamma to their home.

The children thought anything their papa did was all right and they were tickled at the idea; and they asked papa a score or more questions about this new mamma.

Alfred was the oldest child and was now fourteen years old; Beatrice came next, then Charlie and Cora, the youngest was seven years.

They were all very attractive children, and their father was well aware of this fact.

Now their little hearts were full of glee and they could scarcely wait for their father's wedding day to come.

Ora came to assist her uncle in getting ready for the wedding, as the time was drawing near, and nothing that was done escaped the children's eyes. They were sometimes in the kitchen where the cakes were being baked, then in the parlor, bedrooms and dining room, which were being arranged by Ora's good taste.

When the wedding day came James, with Ora and quite a number of his friends, set off for Hilt Home, where they found Nina with a number of her friends around her, all ready for the wedding.

Then they entered the parlor and Nina was married to James Anderson in the same room where she was married to Robert Jones just two and a half years ago.

They left immediately after the ceremony for James' home, where they found quite a number of James' relatives and friends assembled to meet James' new wife.

The children met them at the gate and gave their new mother a cordial welcome to their home.

Nina thought this was so good and sweet of them. She soon knew them well and felt very much at home with them. They all called her mother and this, among other things, made Nina feel very near to them. She often looked at them and thought of how her mother had died and left her when she was so young. Nina loved her children and she tried to treat them as though they were her own. She liked her home and neighbors, but quite often her mind would wander back to her dear father and mother at home and she was a frequent visitor at Hilt Home.

Sometimes Nina didn't go home as often as her mother thought she should, and Mrs. Hilt would say to her when she came: "Well, Nina, I have waited and watched for you daily and it seemed to me that you would never come."

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### NINA MOVES TO THE CITY.

Mrs. Hilt rejoiced when Narlington returned home from school. She had reared him from a baby and she often said she loved him as her own child and now she hoped and prayed that God might give him work near home, so that he might live with her and his father through their old days.

One day soon after this, when Narlington was visiting Nina and James, he received a letter from Mr. Hilt stating that he had been called to preach to a church near his home and stated his mother was very happy as he could accept the work and also get to be at home a great deal.

Narlington returned home immediately to rejoice with his mother at his good fortune; and he accepted the care of the church immediately. And Mrs. Hilt thanked God for answering her prayer so soon.

Narlington was a bright young minister and gave entire satisfaction to his church.

A short time after this, when it was nearly time for the fall term of school to begin, Nina said to James: "I think it is too far for our children to have to walk to school, more especially the little one, and I think this school is very inferior, anyway, and isn't worth the long walks our children have to take, and my notion is that it would be

a good plan for us to move to the city, where our children can be thoroughly educated without trudging through so much dust and mud.

After James had studied over the matter well he agreed with Nina and they went to the city and purchased them a beautiful home on a lovely and popular street.

After placing their farm in good hands they moved to their new home in the city, where their children entered school.

A few months after this Nina was the happy mother of a little girl baby, whom she called Louise.

The children were very much pleased with their little baby sister and Beatrice especially thought Louise was a wonderful little creature and she often called her her little darling pet.

Louise had blue eyes and curly hair and was almost the image of Beatrice, who was considered beautiful.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### NINA AND CLARA VISIT HILT HOME.

Nina wrote to Clara and told her she had moved to town, and asked her to come and make her a visit.

Clara wrote Nina that as she was still in very poor health she would prefer going to the quiet country for a rest from the noise and bustle of the city, and said: "For old time's sake let's you and I visit dear old Hilt Home once more together before I die."

Clara also had a girl baby now, two years old, and its name was Bessie.

Nina then wrote Clara that she was going to

spend Christmas at Hilt Home and for Clara to meet her there on Christmas eve. For all of Mr. and Mrs. Hilt's children and grandchildren were going to assemble there to spend Christmas with the old folks.

Clara and Bess also came, but she didn't look like the Clara of four years ago when she left Hilt Home a bride.

There were quite a number of grandchildren there, but little Louise was her grandfather's favorite of them all, and on the last day of the year when the guests were preparing to leave, Clara said to Nina, "I fear I will never visit Hilt Home again, for I know I can't live long and, Oh, Nina, it almost breaks my heart to think of leaving my child, poor little Bess, without a mother and of Frank marrying again. I just can't bear the idea of Bess ever having a stepmother."

"Clara, I am sure there are lots of worse things might befall Bess than having a stepmother. I have a stepmother and I am sure she is a good woman, and I am one myself, but I can't say that I am good, but I know I am not mean at heart. I love my children and I believe they love me."

"Oh, Nina, I wasn't thinking of your being a stepmother, and I hope you will forgive me for speaking as I did. You know there are exceptions in all cases, and I don't doubt but that you are an exception in this case."

"Oh, I don't know that I am," replied Nina.

Clara then said: "Harry Mitchel isn't married yet, Nina, and I can't see why you didn't marry him instead of Mr. Anderson, who had all those children."

"Oh, the very idea of you talking that way,

Clara. Why, James is such a dear, good husband, I would rather have married James with a dozen children than to have married Harry Mitchel, whom I cannot tolerate."

Clara said: "Well, I am sure Harry Mitchel is all right, and he is a good friend of mine."

Nina thought she wouldn't worry Clara any more about Harry Mitchel, as she was sick. So she left Clara and went to seek Sarah and Will.

Jack Willis had been running the Jones farm ever since the cyclone and she thought how nice it would be to have Will and Sarah live at her Jones home, and she could visit there and feel at home once more. She told him if he would go she would build a new house and everything that was necessary.

At last Sarah and Will agreed to go.

Then plans were made for the house and they promised to move as soon as the house was finished.

Then all the children and grandchildren bade Mr. and Mrs. Hilt goodbye and departed.

It had been a custom for Mr. and Mrs. Hilt to have their children spend their Christmas holidays with them, and they looked forward to this joyful time from one Christmas to the next.

On this occasion they were very sad as the children departed, and watched them out of sight.

Nina and James were the last to leave. Nina kissed their dear old wrinkled faces, wiped the tears from their eyes and said: "Cheer up, mother and father, we will soon meet again. I am coming back to see you real soon."

Then Mr. Hilt smiled and blessed little Louise, and Nina and James started for their home.

After they had gone Mr. Hilt said to his wife: "Nina is a dear, good girl. She has always been a dutiful child, and she is the image of her mother and she reminds me of Mary every time I look at her. Wife, it won't be long before we have a family reunion in heaven, where there will be no partings. Just think, a few years ago we had six children at home and now only one left, and I hope God will permit him to remain with us the remainder of our lives, for I am sure it won't be very long."

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### MR. AND MRS. HILT VISIT NINA.

After Nina and James got home that day, Nina said: "James, it made my heart ache to see those dear old people mourning for their children and to think how lonesome they are since we left them. Now, let me see, I believe I will write to them to come and make us a visit, and if they should come, we will try to make their dear souls happy while they are here. You know mother has never made us a visit and I am determined she shall come if I can possibly persuade her to leave home. For mother has stayed at home so long she doesn't even care to go anywhere except to church.

"That is the very thing to do," replied James.

Nina wrote to her parents to come at once, and the next afternoon when Mr. Hilt returned from the village, he said: "Wife, I have a letter from Nina."

Mrs. Hilt said: "Oh, Mr. Hilt, what has happened? I hope none of them are sick, and how came Nina to write so soon after they got home? Do tell me?"

“Just stop talking a minute and I will tell you. Well, Nina and James are anxious for you and I to make them a visit, and you know you have never been to see Nina since she moved to the city, and I really think we ought to go. What do you think about it, wife?”

Mrs. Hilt said: “I would like very much to go, but it is so far to the city I am almost afraid to undertake the trip.”

Mr. Hilt said: “It wouldn’t seem very far, as they would go on the train and would get to the city almost before they were thinking about it.”

When Mrs. Hilt saw how anxious her husband was about the visit she consented to go with him.

So they wrote Nina and named the day they were coming.

Nina went to work to try to arrange the house so as to look its prettiest and prepared the best bedroom for them.

Soon they came and Nina ran out to meet them and said: “Mother, are you very much exhausted from your ride?”

“No, not in the least,” replied Mrs. Hilt.

Nina took her mother and father out in the city quite a good deal and did everything she could for their pleasure while they were visiting her home.

But Mrs. Hilt couldn’t content herself away from Hilt Home very long so they bade Nina goodbye and returned home, after a three days’ visit to Nina and James, and told Narlington and her neighbors of her delightful visit to Nina’s home in the city.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## CLARA'S DEATH.

When Clara left Hilt Home on New Year's day she went to spend several days with Frank's people at his old home. She then returned to Memphis, almost exhausted and was compelled to take to her bed, and soon the sad angel of death wafted her soul to her eternal home.

The morning after her death Nina read the notice of her death in a Memphis newspaper and, of course, this was very sad news to Nina. She thought of Clara's life from a school girl to the present time, then she penned these lines to Clara's memory:

When she was young her heart was gay,  
Her life was joy and bright,  
But on her eventful wedding day,  
Her joy and sunshine turned to night.

And, O, just think how she and I,  
Upon her wedding date,  
All decked with violets and roses,  
Watched the front lawn gate.

Expecting every moment  
Frank and George to see,  
With radiant, smiling countenance,  
And as happy as they could be.

When the clock struck three,  
And yet they hadn't come,  
Clara's form began to tremble  
As she walked across the room.

She then turned and said to Nina,  
"I wonder why they are so late?  
Surely Frank has not forgotten  
That two o'clock was the date."

Then Nina, with much love,  
Embraced Clara's trembling form,  
And said, "Be patient, Clara, dear,  
I'm sure Frank soon will come."

When the clock struck four,  
And yet Frank hadn't come,  
The wedding guests impatient grew,  
And left the parlor room.

And now Clara, pastor and guests  
Were waiting for Frank to arrive;  
Some walked the lawn, some the road,  
And soon the clock struck five.

"What shall I do," pale Clara cried,  
And from her bosom the flowers tore,  
And tossed them into Nina's hands,  
And said, "I ne'er will wear them more."

Then she said, "I cannot stand  
To meet the outside world,  
For you know how people always talk  
About a jilted girl.

"O, God, hast Thou forsaken me now?  
If thou my faith would try,  
I'd gladly lay me down to rest,  
If Thou wilt let me die."

Then Nina turned her eyes once more  
Toward the Hilt lawn gate,  
And there were coming Frank and George,  
Just now four hours late.

When they came in Nina said to them,  
"Oh, tell the reason why  
You've kept us waiting so long,  
And Clara has prayed to die."

Neither Frank or Clara spoke  
That day before they wed,  
And George and Nina could plainly see  
That they were very mad.

Then Nina said, "Let's go right now  
And have this wedding o'er."  
There was nothing ever equaled this  
In all this world before.

And there they stood upon the floor,  
In the presence of God and man,  
And promised God to love, Clara and Frank,  
As they held each other's hand.

The preacher then said, "Husband and wife  
I pronounce you now to be,  
And never dishonor or forsake,  
Until you enter eternity."

But Clara felt down in her heart  
That trouble would be her fate,  
Since Frank upon their wedding day,  
Was just four hours late.

Sure enough, it was as she had thought;  
Her life was far from bright;  
It's true she had some sunny days,  
But many were dark as night.

And now, that God has taken her  
To dwell with Him on high,  
Where all is joy and peace and love,  
And no one ever die.

She will receive a just reward  
For all her trials here,  
And all her days will be sunshine,  
And none of them drear.

And now, dear Clara, I believe  
And hope I'll meet you in that land,  
Where I can see dear Jesus Christ  
And hear that heavenly band.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## DEATH OF MR. AND MRS. HILT.

When little Louise was two years old God sent her a baby sister whom James and Nina called Elizabeth.

Elizabeth was a big fat baby and soon was almost as large as Louise. After they had grown older people often took them to be twins.

Between the two they managed to keep their mother busy looking after them. But Nina considered this a great pleasure, as she was a very fond mother.

One day two years later when Nina was busy amusing her little girls, she heard a familiar voice in her yard and hastened to the door, and there she met her father and mother.

Nina said: "Oh, what an agreeable surprise this is, mother; come in and lie down to rest, then you will feel all right."

After Mrs. Hilt had kissed and loved Louise, Elizabeth and all the children, she lay down to rest. While lying there she said, "Nina, I am making my last visit to see you and James, I suspect, for I am sure my time on earth is short."

"Oh, mother, I hope not. You may live quite a long time yet."

"No, it cannot be, for my health is poor," replied Mrs. Hilt.

When Mrs. Hilt and her husband were ready to depart for their home, she kissed Nina and the children goodbye with tears in her eyes.

Little did Nina think that this would be the last time she would ever see her dear old mother alive, although she knew she was getting old and had poor health.

One morning about three weeks after this Nina heard a sharp ring at her door. She hastened to open it and there stood the telegraph boy, who had a telegram for Nina.

Nina's heart leaped to her throat. She said, "Oh, what can it be?" She read it and found it was from her father. She then read again: "Nina, come home. Your mother is dead."

Nina burst into tears, and said: "How can this be possible? I can't realize that mother is dead. She surely must have died very suddenly."

She telephoned for James and they started on their way to Hilt Home, which was now a house of mourning.

Nina said: "I must brace up before I get home, on father's account, for I know he is almost heartbroken. But, to Nina's astonishment, when she arrived at her home, her father appeared very calm, and, with a smile on his face, he said: "Nina, it is God's will, and we must submit. Your mother has gone before and very soon I will follow, where I will meet with Jesus and both of your mothers."

The next day while Mrs. Hilt's funeral was being preached, Mr. Hilt, with his children gathered around him, sat near her coffin with a bright and shining countenance.

When Nina noticed her father's expression she wondered what on earth could be the matter with her father, as she hadn't seen him shed a tear, and she had never seen his face look so bright before.

After the burial of Mrs. Hilt and the family had returned to the lonely home, Nina said: "Now, father, as you and Narlington are left alone, I want you to go to the city and live with

James and I.”

Mr. Hilt replied that he didn't know yet what he would do, but he thought he would spend the few remaining days at Hilt Home.

The next morning James returned home. Nina said she would remain with her father until he had determined what he would do.

When Mr. Hilt talked about his wife, he spoke as though she had gone on a visit and that he expected to see her again, soon.

Four days after the death of Mrs. Hilt, when Mr. Hilt arose that morning he complained of not feeling well at all, and, that afternoon, he, Nina, and Narlington were sitting on the front veranda talking of what would be best for them to do, and Nina noticed that her father quit talking very suddenly and looked at him to see what was the matter. She arose quickly and said, : “Oh, what is the matter with father?”

His eyes were set and he was as pale as death.

Narlington gathered him up, carried him to his room and laid him on his bed, and he soon passed into that heavenly home to meet Jesus and his loved ones.

Of course, this was an awful shock to Nina and Narlington.

Soon Nina's nerves relaxed and she was prostrated. The doctor was sent for and when he came Nina said: “Oh, doctor, I haven't any more feeling than a marble statue. Can it be a reality that my father is dead, or am I dreaming? And I cannot shed a tear. I believe I shall die. Do some one telegraph for James to come to me.”

Then she prayed God to come and help her bear

this great trouble.

The news of Mr. Hilt's death spread rapidly and the house was soon full of sympathizing friends. Among them was the village pastor, who came to comfort the orphan children.

As soon as Nina saw him she called him to her and said: "Oh, pray God that I may be able to bear this burden, for the sake of my husband and children."

Then the minister dropped on his knees and prayed an earnest prayer to God for Nina's special benefit.

When James arrived at Hilt Home that night, Nina was somewhat relieved, as he tried to console her as best he could.

She was able to be up for the funeral the following afternoon, and all of Mr. Hilt's children gathered around their father's coffin in the parlor where Mrs. Hilt's funeral had been preached four days ago.

It was revealed to Nina during his funeral why her father never grieved for her mother.

Mr. Hilt was carried to the little graveyard and buried by his two wives.

It was very sad indeed for Nina to return to her old home after the burying, with neither father or mother there. She felt that Hilt Home would never be home to her again. She went into her father's room and almost melted in a flood of tears.

Louise nor Elizabeth could understand why their mother was so much grieved. They went and laid their little heads on their mother's lap and said, "Mother, who's going to take my grandpa and grandma out of them big holes."

When Nina listened to them she remembered

how very much her father and mother had loved her two little girls.

She studied for a while what to tell them, for she didn't want to grieve their little hearts; she brushed away the falling tears and said, "My darling babies, God will take them out."

She then thought of Narlington, who was almost heartbroken.

She went to his room and said: "Narlington, I am going to leave here tomorrow, and you must go with me. I will help you pack your clothes and you must take all you have, for my house is your home from this on. James welcomes you just the same as I do."

"God bless you, sister," replied Narlington. "I am glad to accept your offer. You know I will be gone to my work a great deal of the time, but I want to have some place I can call home."

Arrangements were made with Johnson to care for Hilt Home until it could be otherwise disposed of. Then each of the other children departed for their homes.

Narlington went to live with Nina.

A few months after this Hilt Home was sold to a strange man.

After Nina had returned from the sale she wrote the following poem:

Dearest mother, God saw fit  
 To call thee to thy heavenly home,  
 And ere you entered that heavenly gate  
 He bade dear father come.

Our dear old home is lonely now  
 Without mother and father dear,

The sunshine has almost gone out  
And all is dark and drear.

I cannot see thy smiling face,  
Or hear thy welcome voice  
To greet us at dear old Hilt Home,  
To make our hearts rejoice.

Oh, how my heart did ache  
When our Hilt Home was sold,  
For it has been far dearer to me  
Than rubies, pearls, or gold.

I know that I ought not to grieve  
About this little sale,  
For father and mother would not come back,  
Since they have passed beyond the vale.

Your dear old home has passed  
Into a stranger's hand,  
But brighter far is your sweet home  
In that celestial land.

I would not have you back again  
In this old world of woe,  
For sooner or later God's summons will come,  
And you would have to go.

God has called you on before  
To that heavenly home,  
But you will not wait there long  
Before each one will come.

God knows what's best for one and all,  
And we must submissive be,  
To all his wond'rous works and ways  
If we His face would see.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### CONCLUSION.

Two years after the death of Mr. and Mrs. Hilt  
Narlington was called to a church in Tennessee.

He told Nina he hated to leave her, but he must go where God called him. So he bade them all good bye and left to take charge of his new work, and Nina's love and prayers followed him.

Now Alfred is almost a man and is attending college at Lexington. He is a very bright scholar and is a great pleasure to his teacher, as well as his parents, who always look forward with pleasure to Alfred's visit home during vacation.

Beatrice is now a beautiful blonde of eighteen summers and attracts a great deal of admiration wherever she goes, and is also very popular in society. At the age of twenty she was married to a young merchant who lived in a neighboring city.

Alfred graduated with honor and returned home to attend his sister's wedding, but soon left for New Orleans to accept a prominent position.

Charles has a good business in his home town.

Cora will graduate with honors at the next commencement.

Narrington served his church in Tennessee two years. While there he visited Nina quite often and she wished very much that he would continue to serve this church.

But one day he came to the city and told Nina that he had been called to a church in the West, and that he was then on his way to try the West for awhile; and if he didn't like the West he would return to his old Kentucky home.

After he had been there a while, he wrote Nina that he liked his new home and work fine, and he supposed he would make the West his home.

Every letter he wrote he seemed to be better satisfied. And finally he wrote Nina that he had found a girl whom he knew he could love, and

wanted Nina's opinion about his getting married.

Nina wrote him that she would be glad if he would marry some sweet lady whom he could love and be happy with, but she couldn't help but laugh at the idea of Narlington getting married.

When James came home that evening she said: "Narlington writes like he is in earnest about getting married, but I won't believe it until he is married. It seems funny to me to think of him getting married, for he has always been such a pet at home. I hope if he should marry he will marry a good woman who will pet and humor him as mother did. You know, James, mother called him her baby after he was six feet tall. I don't expect his wife to do this, of course, but I hope the lady he marries will pet him some and not wait for him to do all the petting, like lots of women I know."

James said: "I think Narlington is getting old enough not to want much petting now."

"Oh, I don't believe he ever will be so old that he will not want to be humored and petted."

"When did he say he was going to get married?"

"He didn't name the date, but from the way he wrote I think it will take place very soon, and the funniest thing to me is that she is a widow lady."

James said: "I guess she is a young widow like you were before I married you."

"Yes, James, I know I was a widow and you were a widower. I think it is all right for widowers and widows to marry each other. But you know Narlington has never been married."

The next letter Nina received from Narlington he named the date of his wedding, and he stated

that he and his bride were coming to Kentucky to make Nina a visit soon after they were married. as his wife was very anxious to visit Kentucky. She had often heard that it was the best State in the Union.

The morning Narlington was married Nina told Louise and Elizabeth that this was their uncle's wedding day and that he was going to bring their new aunt to see them soon.

They clapped their little hands and said: "Oh, mother, we just can't wait to see them."

Then both seemed to be in a deep study; then Louise spoke up and said, "Mother, do you suppose uncle will love us as much as he used to before he married?"

"I don't see why he shouldn't," replied Nina.

Then Elizabeth turned her bright eyes and looked into her mother's face and said: "Mother, do you suppose he will give us nickels like he used to?"

"Why, yes, of course he will, baby."

Narlington telegraphed Nina that he would come on the evening train; the train was late, but Louise and Elizabeth could not be persuaded to go to bed. At last they heard the train whistle and Narlington and his wife were soon ushered into the room, where they were met by four bright eyes.

The children sprang forward and clung around their uncle's neck. They then welcomed their new aunt with kisses.

After Narlington and his wife had spent a month with Nina they returned to their Western home.

One day, about five years after the death of

Mr. and Mrs. Hilt, Nina told James that her heart yearned to go back and see her father and mother's grave, the home of her childhood and also the dear old village, and said, "I would like to have you go with me."

James was always ready to do anything he could for Nina's pleasure, so he agreed to accompany her.

So Nina and James set off on their visit. When they came to the village they found that Dr. Boyd had moved to the city of C——, and Mrs. Belle had died and a family of negroes were living in her beautiful home of long ago. And the dear old church that Nina had loved so much had been torn down and moved away. And all of Nina's friends had gone and the village is now inhabited by negroes. After she had gone to all parts of the village, she said, "James, let's go to Hilt Home. I hope it will look natural to me. I never saw any place change as much and go to rack like the village has."

So they went on their way to Hilt Home, and when they stopped at the lawn gate Nina regretted very much that she had come, for she could hardly recognize that to be Hilt Home.

All the beautiful forest trees and evergreens had been cut down and the front lawn looked like a little field with the hot sun beaming down on it. The house had changed equally as much as the lawn.

Nina then led the way to the little graveyard where her father and mothers and brother Lee rested. Lee had died when quite a child. She knelt beside her father's grave and said, "Oh, James, if father could only see the great changes

of the home he loved so well, what would he think? But father has gone to the world where there are no changes."

Nina went home feeling that she never cared to see Hilt Home again, as it didn't have the least resemblance to the Hilt Home of old.

Nina and James' family has gotten very much smaller. Louise is eleven and Nina nine years old, and both are bright and lovable children. They are the pride of their mother and the pets of their father. When Nina looks at them she often thinks and knows that God intended that her life thus far had been spent just as He intended it should be, and that these two girls had been given her to love and comfort her in her old age.

She is now living a happy life with James and her children in her beautiful home in the city. And when she looks back over the many dangers and trials she has endured these verses of a dear old hymn she had often heard her father sing in days gone by pass through her mind and she says they just suit her life exactly:

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

THE END.







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