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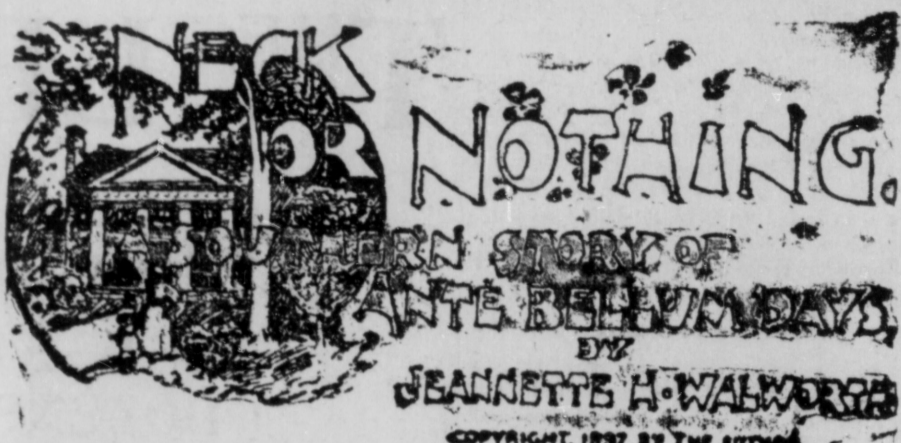
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CHAPTER XII.
"Strong in" scarcely what one would call an outsider," said the professor in mild rebuke. "We were drawn very closely to one another in the three years we fought side by side, and many a long, hot march we have tramped together, sharing one canteen between us. The old man was all in all to me when I was shot in the leg, my daughter, and later, when I had camp fever, and if there is any human being above another to whom you and I do owe a deep debt of gratitude it is to that grand old man at Sans Souci."

"Yes, father. If ever I can pay it I will. And he hasn't forgotten that it is chess day, after all. See!"

From where she sat she could only see that a vehicle had stopped in front of the house. The two craps myrtles that guarded the gate on either side hid the upper part of the vehicle and its occupants from view. The professor lifted his head briskly.

"He is not alone, Mary, my dear. Judge Martin is helping him from the buggy. He is coming in. No, he has got back into the buggy. Strong is coming in by himself. He is walking unusually fast. Something out of the ordinary must be the matter. Meet him at the door, at least, my daughter."

Mamie moved forward reluctantly. Why should she go joyously to meet this old man who had just helped to put an affront upon her? Was it not almost as if he had rebuked her for her obstinacy by driving to her very door with Strong Martin by his side? But her lagging feet carried her to the door in ample time to open it for the governor, who walked slowly, leaning upon his staff heavily as he came. He nodded to her when their eyes met.

"Where is Ambrose? Ah, there! His hat, Mamie. Fling those shavings off your vest, old comrade. Here, your crutches. Now, then, by order of the queen no one is to work today. Sans Souci proclaims it a holiday. You are wanted at the house, Ambrose, and I'm under bonds to see that you get there in good time for your dinner. Martin is waiting out there to drive you out."

"Yes, but"—
The prospect of a drive through the sweet smelling woods and a whole afternoon spent on the broad, shady veranda at Sans Souci in luxurious idleness brought a delicate flush of

pleasure to the old man's withered cheeks. He turned his eyes wistfully on Mamie. She stood rigidly unresponsive, only by the nervous twisting of her fingers in and out of each other betraying her knowledge of what was going on. The professor's delight vanished before her sullen silence. "Yes, but—my daughter. She!"

The governor brought his stick violently down upon the floor, so near Mamie's feet that she started involuntarily. "Your daughter is an obstinate young simpleton who is about to do this entire neighborhood an irreparable injury. I have come here to tell her so. I expect to consume every minute of the time that it will take Strong Martin to drive you from here to my house and to come back for me in an effort to convince her of her own silliness. If I fail, it will not be because the silliness does not exist, but because her egotism and her obstinacy will not let her be convinced. There, miss, did ever a man, young or old, dare to address you in the language of truth before?"

"Martin is waiting for you, Ambrose. He is a patient man. No one knows better than your daughter how patient he is, but his beasts, not being infatuated with an obstinate girl, are not nearly so patient. Your place is waiting you at the Sans Souci table today, old comrade. Here. There now, we're coming, Martin; coming just as fast as two battered old war hulks can be navigated."

Side by side the two old men passed from her presence, leaving her standing there motionless in her stony resolution not to yield to the outside pressure that was once more being brought to bear upon her view of Strong Martin's war record.

She heard the slow, even thud of her father's crutches on the brick walk that stretched between the house and the gate. Could he forgive him? She recalled the red anger that had swelled the saber cut across the governor's left temple. And he! Of what childish, unstable stuff those two old men must be made. Only she was firm, consistent, right.

She stooped and carefully gathered the black shavings from the matted floor. Such a tiny little house! Every particle of litter showed so conspicuously. She hung the velvet skullcap that the governor had impetuously removed from her father's head with his own hands on the back of the chair. She was glad they had come for him, glad he was going to have a pleasant, work free day among the Strongs and the Chamblisses.

With what gusto her father and the governor would tell their war stories. Already their war experiences were beginning to be staple yarns for company entertainment. And Randal—he, too, would have something to contribute. And Liza was so proud of him, so inordinately, foolishly fond of her husband, who had fought on the losing side. She alone would not be there. She must have got a grain of sawdust in her eye when she was putting the scroll saw away for the day, for when the governor stalked back into the little room she was rubbing her eyes vigorously with her pocket handkerchief.

"Mary Colyer, come here."
The governor must have mistaken that one small, trembling young woman for a whole regiment of evildoers, his voice and his face were so solemnly severe.

She came and sat down by himself on the hard carpet recliner which constituted the most luxurious article of furniture in the cottage. He opened fire on her abruptly:

"Are you prepared to arrogate to yourself all the virtue, good sense, sound patriotism, consistency and justice that ought by rights to be divided among all the white adults of this entire section?"

Mamie looked at him with wide eyed resentment:
"No, sir, you know I am not. I don't know why you should come here with such strange questions."

"Are you prepared to say that you have suffered one tithe of what every woman with whom you were most intimately associated during those four terrible years of the war suffered? Look at my granddaughter-in-law. I bow my head in reverence to her heroism. She gave her only begotten son that her country might be saved. She cast her all upon that one die, and—lost. But she can forgive. Look at Eben Martin's widow, bereaved, her home shattered, her heart almost rent in twain. She forgives. Look at that patient old hero who has just hobbled from your presence on his wooden pegs. He can afford to forget and forgive. What have you lost? Come, let us have it out honestly for once. What have you lost besides your temper? And I'm here to give you a first class opportunity to lose that afresh."



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Silk dress laces worth	10c, now 2c
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worth double what we ask for them,	
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W. D. MACKAY

one turned on him mercely.
"Is it nothing, then, to be a traitor, to lift one's hand against one's own father and brother, to be false to every tradition of one's youth?"
She was trembling with impotent rage. If this had been a younger man, she could have ordered him from her presence. As it was, she must bear in mind that this arrogant old man, with his barbed questions that rankled in her memory like so many sharp arrows, was the man who had stood by her father in the hour of his peril, was the man of all others to whom she owed her deepest debt of gratitude.
The governor smiled upon her indulgently. How inexpressibly young and insignificant that smile made her feel.
"My dear, ours was a family quarrel; remember that. It is easily possible for brothers to take opposite sides in a domestic dispute and yet finally come together again in full and unalloyed harmony. I do not say that I have done this yet—not quite—but for an outsider that would have been forever impossible."
"I marvel at you. I marvel to hear"—
"Pardon the rudeness of an interruption, my dear, but we are not getting down to the solid business of the hour as rapidly as I could wish. You marvel to hear me talk so leniently of the tragic episode in which I was a pronounced sufferer."
(To be Continued.)

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