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DOROTHY LEE

(Continued from last week)

THE day that I got the letter, Master Gates, a gentleman that lives on the next plan-

tation to ours, was taking dinner with us, and I read the letter out aloud. Angry I have often seen father, but I had never before beheld him in such a passion, for while I was reading he grew white and red of turns, and he breathed loud and hard, and when I had finished he rose up and began pacing the room, making the air blue with his "damns," and other sinful words, that I would shudder to put down.

He called Lord H—'s cousin "a wealthy whipper-snapper" and the Reverend Nathan Birdsey "a snivel-nosed parson," and when he seemed not to be able to find anything more abusive to say upon the subject in question, he flew out of the room followed by Mister Gates, and I did not see or hear from him again until supper time, and then no turtle dove could have been milder.

Of his own accord, father then re-opened the subject. He said: "Dorothy, your mother and I have decided to make for your sake a great personal sacrifice. We have noticed that since our arrival in Virginia, you have lost much of your bloom, and we see that there is a lack of elasticity in your steps. Your former buoyancy is gone. A

restore you to a proper mental and physical condition, so daughter, we think you had best write without more delay and accept Mister Birdsey's offer."

There was a mirror over the mantel shelf, and as father was speaking I lifted up my eyes and looked into it, and as though compelled by some invisible mentor, father looked into it, too. In the mirror I smiled knowingly at father, and in the mirror father looked shamefacedly at me, but in our talk we maintained the proper attitude of sacrificial parent and resigned and submissive child.

After this the days flew by, and before we were fully aware of it, the parting time had come. I think, away down in her heart, mother was loth to let me go, because now, that I had grown to be a woman, we were very close to one another. Thus, the fearing that she as silently grieving made my heart so heavy, and even to the last moment I told mother, with my arms about her neck, that "if she needed me (either for her comfort or her pleasure) I would unpack my boxes and remain in Virginia," but on every occasion father always answered, for her, saying, "No, indeed! the idea was absurd!" while mother—dear, patient little mother—echoed a faint "No, indeed! no indeed!" trying (but not quite succeeding) in keeping the "stay with me" out of her voice.

And now let me hasten on to my journey, for I am all too anxious to get over this prelude and begin my journal. I feel for all the world as uneasy as a play manager must, when he has to keep his audience waiting for the curtain to rise.

The journey from Virginia to Connecticut lasted

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through many autumn days, mostly bright and sunny ones, followed by star-lit nights, but now and again there were cold storms of wind and rain.

We stopped of nights and over Sabbath days (that is, from six of the clock on Saturday night to six of the clock on Sabbath night) at inns. Sometimes these places were mere cabins set up in clearings, with poor fare and miserable beds; but when we tarried at populous villages or ambitious towns (some even presuming to speak of themselves as cities, such in sooth is American audacity) we found excellent entertainment.

Indeed, I could see little difference in the ways of mine host and his good wife from those of the same profession at home, and why should this not be so? when they are transplanted English men and English women, doing exactly in America what they had done before in the mother country.

So, for the most part, we rested at goodly houses furnished with all the ordinary comforts of refined life.

A smiling welcome awaited us, a table already spread and ready to be served with well prepared food was at our service, we had good wood fires

the flowers whereon they had been bleached.

The incident of the journey that impressed me most was the excited condition of the people all along the way, the universal and all absorbing protest on every side that England should cease to grind and oppress her own loyal sons.

The question, "What shall we do about it?" seemed to be well-nigh settled. What they were asking one another was, "How much longer shall we wait before we challenge John Bull to meet us on open field and in fair fight?"

Of course, this thought was not a new one to me, for at home in Virginia father, Mister Gates and all the other gentlemen that came to our house, were forever discussing politics; but I had supposed it to be then only a local agitation and was surprised to find how universal the theme had become.

In due time I became aware that I was close to my journey's end. It had been arranged that I was to leave the coach at Armenia and from thence go by private conveyance to Sharon. It was toward four of the clock in the afternoon when we reached Armenia, which was a small hamlet settled by a religious sect to which, they say, the woman of Samaria that reasoned with the Master belonged. I had gathered up my handbox and bundles and had reached the door of the coach when, chancing to glance up (before my foot had fairly touched the step), I saw looking intently at me, and with the most perplexed expression possible, a tall, well-built gentleman of say some thirty years of age. He was dressed all in black from top to toe, save for a sug-

gestion of a ruffle at breast and wrist, and a high, smoothly folded white neck band. His three-cornered hat being in his hand,

I saw that the heavy brown hair was brushed back without powder and that his queue was tied by a narrow black lute-string ribband. He had large, dark eyes and as they looked into mine he made me feel that he was a searcher of souls. He had a good, commanding, manly face, and I may confess as well here as elsewhere that the moment our eyes met, all my contrariness (and I have a goodly share) awoke.

I stopped, with one foot poised to take the step. "Sir," I said, looking him calmly in the face, "I am, if you please, Mistress Lee, from Virginia."

"And I," he made answer, bowing low, "am Nathan Birdsey."

Dear me! but the creature might have been a Quaker, he was so devoid of *Mistering*, so absurdly simple. Still there was nothing for me to do but to follow suit (as they say in Bassett), so I said: "How do you do, Nathan Birdsey, and I trust that William Leytown is well. Will you be pleased to take my hand-box? Balancing on a stage step is not comfortable, nor is keeping back the other passengers an evidence of gentility."

Then, having made my speech, I laid my hand on my handbox and bundle, jumped nimbly to the ground, and, my arms being full, I could not in all reason, offer him my hand, so I dropped him a curtsey.

He smiled broadly. If he had been a shade less self-contained or proper; I know that he would have laughed outright, and it was evident to me, in that moment, that whatever else I might be doing, I was not inspiring my patron with awe, and there passed through my mind the question: "Now, am I his ideal of what a learned woman should be?"

But my queries were cut short by his taking my bundles and escorting me into the inn and into a parlor, where a table was laid for two. There was a broad fire-place in the room, and the wood coals were ruddy, even the freshest log on the andirons, burning merrily and sending out such a genial warmth that (Oh! my unregenerate heart! Oh! my wayward tongue!) I burst forth with: "What a more than pity, my good sir, it is that I am not in sooth the *love* of your life! If you had just succeeded in carrying me off will-i-nill-i (even amid shrieks and *repoaches*) at the sight of such *cosy comfort* and good *cheer*, I should have fallen madly enamored of you, not caring for any rhyme or reason, not I! Oh, what an ending for a third volume!"

I turned to appeal to him, but he had fled, and in his place stood a small, white-mobbed, white-bibbed-and-tuckered maid, who, after going through the "making of her manners," said, "And please could she be of any service to my lady, while the parson had gone to look after the luggage?" Then,