A BATTLE WITH DESTINY

By CLARENCE REESE SCROGGS

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ed and her step was as lithe and graceful as that of a fawn. Her eyes were bright and sparkling and her glance would not reveal the sordid heart and degraded ambitions that lurked within. But she occupied a high position in the community among the members of her own race and their upholding of her conduct might have had something to do with her life. A strange woman was his mother, where so much of evil associated itself with so much of innocence in seeming harmony. But her disposition, unlike her physical countenance, was like her heart and moulded by the immoral environment in which she had her being, and this accounted for her cruel treatment of her son early in life. But poor lad, he did not understand—he thought that blows and harsh words were the natural outcome of earthly existence.

"Sport's" first recollections of his trqubles dated back to his early childhood for it had been a stormy one and the first imprint on his infantile mind had been made ineradicable. Many were the times that he could remember when his mother had tied him in a little chair before he could barely walk with difficulty while she was out at night and when she would come home in an intoxicated condition and vent her wickedness on her son and many were the times that he made the air ring with his cries as the ropes ate into his tender flesh or his mother became more than ordinarily cruel. And then, when he got older, she would send him out to pick up bottles to exchange for whiskey and she would then take him up the street and he would see her put a bottle in her pocket and he would go home with her circling ever and anon around her and trying, child that he was to keep away from her. His childish mind did not know what the bottle contained, but he learned to know that it meant suffering to him. When she would call him, he would come slinking up fearfully and then retreat in fear of the expected blow. But in spite of the neglect and abuse heaped upon him, the little fellow waxed strong and as he began to grow into lusty childhood and his countenance began to assume the looks of his mother so much, she began to love her son and dreams of reform entered her mind.

When "Sport" passed his sixth birthday, he had developed into an almost perfect specimen of childhood. He resembled his mother in his features; his complexion was of a golden color, and his hair auburn and curly. His eyes were light blue and his forehead was broad and intellectual. His mother's grace and animal beauty was seen again in the singular physical beauty of the son and in the unconscious grace of his carriage. Thus even in the ascendant lustrum of his childhood, "Sport" had become a picture of health and grace.

And then the shame of the mother's life dawned upon her and the dreams of reform became more and more insistent until she could not put them by. At last, the mother's instinct became uppermost and as in all cases mother love triumphed, as it will whether the persons be high or low, rich or poor, or wise or foolish. She would leave the old life and sacrifice herself for her son and teach him to grow up a useful and moral citizen. But she must get away from the immoral environment that she had inherited from her parents and which she had almost given her son. She remembered her own hard life in her infancy and vainly hoped that it might be different. That was impossible, but she could at least save her son. And thus she moved away to a city fifty miles away and began working in a factory to sustain herself and her son. The work was irksome to one accustomed to live in idleness but she was amply repaid in knowing that she was doing it for her son.

There was a young mulatto minister in the city, and she went often to him for advice. He was one of the younger generation of negroes and had had college training and was conscientiously striving to uplift the members of his race. He was peculiarly attracted by the woman who came to him and thought that she must have a past but he could never fathom the mystery and she never intimated anything of her past history. Often, he went to her home and was impressed with her love for her son, but "Sport" did not understand the sudden change in his mother's treatment of him, but he was grateful for it nevertheless. The friendship grew into love, and the minister declared his love for her, for the woman was comely and intelligent, but she answered him nay, although her love shone in her eyes and he read it aright. He insisted and she told him all, but he remembered Magdelene and insisted still and she accepted and they parted happily.

But the morning following the consummation of her hopes was followed by a tragedy that blasted her life and threw her son upon the tender mercies of a world that is not over-fond of outcasts. One of her erstwhile companions in crime drifted into the city in one of his periods of debauchery and found her home and called and would call her back to the old life of crime, but she resisted him and when he took her and tried to force her to do his bidding, she drew a revolver and shot him down.

"Sport" had gone away that morning to spend the day in the country, and when he returned, no one ran to meet him when he reached the door and all was dark within. He did not know that his mother was in prison, awaiting trial for murder. He laid down on the floor in front of the door and wept bitterly and ever and anon a flash of lighting or the rustlings of the trees would frighten him and he would cower on the floor. And just as day began to dawn, he wandered away and found an empty boxcar into which he crept and his tired little body found refuge in the peaceful arms of Morpheus. And when he awoke, he was in a new city, and here begins the opening of his fight with destiny.

Here, "Sport" lived for six years, and at the beginning of our narrative, he had reached the age of twelve years. The six years spent in his new home was years filled with interesting experiences that took him through all the events in the lives of the negroes, social, amusement, and criminal. He reached the summit of their joys and sank to the depth of their debaucheries. He did as the people about him did only he was a little happier and more wicked than the others. But his acts were not thought of by him. His hours were all happy and he found fun in doing evil as well as in doing good for the fine distinctions between morality and immorality were unknown to him. The uninspiring and sometimes degraded environment in which he lived had an effect on him but so merry and intelligent was he that he was loved and admired by the better class of negroes as well as by the lowliest, and he was as welcome at the dances given by the clubs as at the lowest functions. "Sport" was known and loved by all of his people who thought not of his actions, but loved him for his sincere heart. He did not know that he was drifting away for conscience he had not. He was a child of the world and was willing to be one always. His little intellect could not grasp the idea of the soul's leaping from planet to planet and learning new lessons in each of them. He did not know of a soul. He belonged to mother earth.

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One summer morning, just as the first rays of light began to tinge the eastern horizon, when day's mighty resources were at work marshalling its forces against the gloom and after a stubborn resistance, the darkness was dispersed by the dawn, we see the figure of a little lad about twelve years of age, arising from a box car near the smoke-stack of a large factory and slowly rubbing his eyes. He chose this as his lodging place for two reasons; firstly, because the smoke-stack furnished him heat in the winter, and secondly, because there was a huge whistle on the engine and it awoke him before any of the officers could come to him and run him away. The fireman knew that he occupied the "smoke-stack suite" as he jokingly called it, but he did not care as the lad would frequently sit up with him at night and keep him company, and "Sport" managed to pass his nights comfortably here. The youth stood arranging his clothes for a few minutes, glancing languidly about the city.

The world awakes and mankind stands in the arena of activity to battle valiantly for existence. Activity is not only a virtue but a necessity. Nothing of excellence is obtainable without an expenditure of energy. We are placed into a world full of opportunities for work and we must labor whether we will or not. Our material bodies crave the chemical elements necessary to their life and without which the body becomes as starved and useless as an acre of wornout soil, and man must obey this law and labor to obtain food. The floods come and man must have shelter, and the cold waves cause him to seek heat, and the torrid heat forces him to seek methods for cooling himself. Activity is the struggle of man to adapt himself to nature and by the struggle for that adaptation, he lives.

And thus it was with our hero, although he did not understand the laws that made him wish for his breakfast. He stood and drew his belt tighter, smoothed his hair, and then took from his pocket his little French harp given him by his mother whom he had almost forgotten by this time save for a hazy memory of her, and began to softly play, "Home, Sweet Home," as he walked down the street in majesty. "Sport" was going to get his breakfast, but he did not know where he was going to get it.

At this time, he was a well-developed lad of twelve years, and was as lithe and supple as a deer, and wore the same happy smile that never deserted him. He was dressed in a suit of blue, with a blue flannel shirt with the collar attached and a tie slightly disarranged by his sleep in his box. His step was muscular and rhythmic and his head was thrown back as he wooed the melody from his instrument, making many useless and extravagant motions with the hands at the same time. Frequently, he took the instrument from his mouth to answer the friendly greetings called to him by his friends as they went hurrying on to their work in the early morning. But "Sport" was not going to work, he was only looking for his breakfast.

Finally, he reached the business district of the city and at once went back to the rear of saloons and picked up such bottles as he could find, into every trash can he would investigate and would find many apples and bananas and other kinds of fruits that had slightly decayed, but these he considered great delicacies, and would put them in his pockets to give to his feminine acquaintances. And when he had picked up all the bottles he could find, he would sell these to the saloon keeper and would then go out and pick up bones and old iron to sell to the junk dealer, playing his harp all the time, for he was a lover of music. And when these labors were completed, he would go to a store and buy five cents worth of sardines and crackers or, perhaps, would get a little cheese to relieve the monotony and when particularly hungry he would purchase a real ham sandwich at the restaurant conducted by "Sugar Foot" Smith on the outer edge of "Monkey Bottom." "Sport" finished his crackers and his box of sardines while sitting on the curbstone and his duty to the inner man had been satisfied now and his sole object now was amusement.

He wandered down the street until he came to the ancestral cabin of "Aunt Nancy," an old colored woman about sixty years of age, who was noted in the community for her pronounced garrulous propensities and who had the tongue of men and of angels, plus her share as a woman. "Sport" entered the house and spoke to her and listened to her "chin music" as he called it, for an unbearable period, but his eyes were fastened upon a double-barrelled shotgun on the wall and this was what he desired more than anything else in the world, as he could then go out hunting when he pleased and he was waiting for an opportunity to secure possession of it. Presently the old woman went out of the house for a minute and "Sport" took advantage of the opportunity and slipped the gun from its fastenings on the wall and in his own language, he "highballed" down the street. He spent his last few cents for several shells and went out hunting, but did not succeed in bagging any game and obtained nothing but a few terrible invitations to stay off of the farmers' lands, and our hero became disgusted with the sport and went to a pawn shop to get rid of the incumbrance, for he knew the value of these shops, child though he was.

But the lad had not reckoned on "Aunt Nancy." Any one who had such a remarkable talent for talking could not be anything but active and she was looking for the lad and her own experience told her that the pawn shop was the place to go in search of him and just as he walked into the place, she came and met him. He started to run, but she caught him and marched him down the street, holding him by the ear.

She was about six feet high and two feet wide and was attired in a three-gore calico wrapper taken in at the waist by a strip of sheeting. As she walked, her skirts rustled ominously, her mouth opened widely, her eyes glared angrily, and her hands held lovingly the double-barreled shotgun she had come so near losing, as she conducted the lad through the street in spite of his remonstrances at being publicly disgraced. But the stately general made him run the gauntlet formed by the pedestrians on the street at the same time lashing him with her sharp tongue. "Sport" marched slightly in front of her and ever and anon would glance back to remonstrate, but one glance at the determined face of his captor blotted out all hope and he would continue his march with a resignation full of curses. But when she got him to her home, she did not punish him as he expected, but took him on her lap and told him he was doing wrong and that he must stop. The old woman loved him she said but the lesson was lost on "Sport" for he did not know anything of ethics or morality, but he cried as he was grateful to the old woman for not punishing him and she thought that the lesson had been a good one.

"Sport" walked up the street and in ten minutes he had entirely forgotten the episode. He passed a knitting factory on the way and the foreman called to him and asked him if he wanted a job. The lad thought long and seriously on this question, for work had always been one of his keenest aversions, but he thought of the little yellow girl he loved so well and had dreams of wealth for a minute and he accepted the place. He was given a job tailing the knapper, which consisted of taking the long rolls of knit cloth from the knapper and pulling it on a long pipe and turning it so that the fleeced side would come on the inside of the garments as it should be. The work was arduous to one unaccustomed to toil and "Sport" soon tired of it.

He saw the whirling shafting overhead and climbed to it and began to climb over it hand over hand. His restlessness increased and he sang snatches of songs that he had learned from others and then he pulled out his harp and began to play softly. Then one of his companions passed on the street and "Sport" raised the window and hailed him and talked for several minutes. There was a large apple tree across the street and "Sport" let down a string and his companion tied several apples to it and the lad drew them up for he was terribly hungry. The belt on the knapper came off and the operator dared the youth to put it on and he tried to put it on with his bare hands and was thrown against the building with such force that he said he knocked three brick out. Then he tired of the job and fell asleep and the foreman called him and told him to stop work and get out and the lad was only too glad to do this for he considered work a failure, and he drew an apple from his pocket and left the factory and almost ran to keep the thought of his experience there from his mind.

Presently he ran past the house of a woman familiarly known as Miss "Pork Chops,"—her real name was unknown to anyone save herself, and as he passed, she called him and extended him an invitation to a "dope sniffing" party at her home which was about to begin. This is the term applied by the negroes in the South to the habit of snuffing cocaine up the nostrils and in some sections the practice has come into wide usage among the more ignorant colored people.

"Sport" promptly accepted the invitation and went into the house. The room where the so-called party was held was a prototype of hundreds of other negro cabins. It was the only rom in the house and contained a bed, a table and all of the other rude furniture absolutely necessary to existence and in one corner there was a washtub and ironing board that told of the tenant's vocation.

When the lad entered the rom, the dining table had been moved to the center of the room and around this a large number of chairs, stools, and boxes had been placed. The table was bare and there was nothing on it except a saucer filled with cocaine in the centre of the table. The negroes, both men and women, although the women predominated as they were neighbors of the hostess and had hastily gathered at her home by invitation when they heard that she had secured some cocaine, sat down at the table and the party began.

The guests reached over and took pinches of the anesthetic with the tips of their fingers and sniffed it up their nostrils. There was nothing visible for a few minutes as the powerful brain stimulant did not begin to work for some time. But finally the negroes' eyes began to assume a glassy appearance, the drug began to work, and their brains became active. The women put the drug on their tongues and presently all the demons in hell could not have equalled their discourses. They became fools, fanatics, fiends. Never before nor since have women talked so incessantly and unintelligibly.

The effect became stronger and stronger and from a set of peaceable men and women, the crowd passed into the lowest depths of debauchery. No one will ever fully realize the abandonment of people influenced by this drug. The men and women had long ago become accustomed to the habit but "Sport" had only recently acquired it and he wanted to get out and walk, walk anywhere, but he must walk. He passed out of the cabin and away and walked and walked. He had no particular destination, but his mind told him to walk and he blindly obeyed. And when the effects of the drug finally began to wear away, he found himself in the outskirts of the town about three o'clock in the afternoon and he hastily retraced his steps to the business section of the city as the suburbs were not promising for a man of his profession.

He reached the business section of the city in about an hour, and just as he passed over the ventilator in front of a store, he saw a five-cent piece shining down on the ground under the iron bars. The lad looked at it for a long time, for he needed it. He was just thinking of where his supper was coming from and the coin meant physical comfort to him. But how was he to get it? The coin lay down fully five feet from the sidewalk and he couldn't possibly reach it. But he had lived on the street and had learned the secret of life. He darted around to the rear of the store and got a long stick and took some tar off of the axle of a wagon and put the tar on the end of the stick and went back and put the stick down through the ventilator, the coin adhered to the tar, and he drew it up with a light of triumph in his blue eyes.

But he was doomed to disappointment for an examination showed that there was a hole in the coin and it was worthless. He could not hide his discomfiture and walked slowly down the street and finally came to a chewing gum slot. "Sport" looked at this for a long time for it contained a statue of an important personage. Then an idea struck him. He tied a string through the hole in the coin and poked it in the machine. A block of chewing gum rolled out and with the string, he pulled the coin out again and repeated the operation, and so on until the machine was exhausted. Then he filled the hole in the coin with chewing gum and passed it off on a Dago for a bottle of ale.

"Sport" was satisfied with his supper of chewing gum and ale, especialaying" as they call it! Were the newhile drinking the ale, and he wandered down the street in the dusk looking for other worlds of amusement.

The lights of the dance hall over a saloon attracted him and he longed to go within but he did not have a single penny, but he hid near the door and presently slipped in when he thought no one was looking. The manager saw him, but did not say anything as "Sport" was quite a personage in the dance hall and was about the best dancer of every description the town possessed and he picked up many stray dimes and quarters for his prowess in th's line and in the hall he never failed to find partners.

The hall was situated over a saloon, as stated before, and was decorated with red, white and blue ribbons suspended from the ceiling and got its name from these, for a negro will name everything, generally from its most noticeable feature, and they called this the "Red, White and Blue Dance Hall."

One corner was fenced off in front where one could secure sandwiches and counterfeit beer for a nominal sum and in the middle of the room, the personage who called the figures sat in dignity on an upturned keg eating an enormous sandwich and drinking a bottle of "mighty-near beer" as the counterfeit is sometimes called. He called the figures in an impressive tone and was a man of prominence among the dancers. Fortunate, indeed, was that colored damsel whom he honored with a dance for his profession occupied most of his time.

At the rear of the hall, there was a piano played by a dreamy-eyed negro who played a little by ear and a great deal by faith, and was aided and abetted by a trap-drummer. But the music was a secondary consideration. It did not necessarily have to be in time as the negroes did not think of that.

And the dances! They would make the "Merry Widow" pale into insignificance. There is no name for it exactly but 'tis a conglomeration of every dance known to man. There are elements of the square dance, the waltz, the two-step, the buck and wing dances, and in fact it contains elements of every dance imaginable. And of all the motions they go through. Never before has such activity been seen. Such side-stepping and "sashsaying" as they call it! Were the negroes to put as much activity in their work as they do in their dancing, they would become kings in the financial arena. And they would also waltz and they had a peculiar dance they called the "three-step." The old-fashioned cakewalk was not seen, however, as it has about passed out of style and we no longer see the fat old colored woman waddling about in the cake-walk—she has been superseded by a gingercake colored belle who prances about in the giddy whirl of the "three-step" and yells lustily for beer and pretzels.

The dance was in full swing when our hero entered the hall and the belle of the ball deserted her partner, possibly because she wished to arouse jealousy in him and also because she loved the lad, and at once ran to him. Without a moment's delay they were off over the floor in perfect unison. She questioned him about his experiences and fascinated him by her interest in him, for he loved the girl and loved her little sister even more—for even the pauper has the right to love and when he does, he is no longer a pauper, and love is the unqualified privilege of all men. And then he danced with others and his time was occupied for he was popular with his people and was a character well known and well loved.

The dance was open to the public and anyone who would might come and partake of its fascinations and pleasures and the immoral were as welcome as the pure in heart and there were as many shady individuals present as there were law-abiding citizens, and it was a standing joke that there were enough concealed weapons in the hall every night to quell a rebellion in Venezuela.

But all joys, no matter how intense, must have their ending and finally the closing hour arrived and the guests departed. The lad left immediately and was about to repair to his apartments when down near the steps he spied a bottle of whiskey that had been more than half consumed. He had never begun this habit, but his incontrollable curiosity would not let him refuse to drink the liquid. It was strong and had been thrown away by the owner and it did not take long for it to act. His head became dizzy, and his legs reeled from side to side, and he took off his coat and went marching up the road in the business section of the city cursing at the top of his voice at every step. The curbing soon became lined with people who had remained out late at night, and the lad continued his march unchecked, cursing at the top of his voice with the crowd laughing on each side of the curbing. But finally he came to grief, for a policeman took him in charge, taking him to the one place he feared—the calaboose. But his cursing was not diminished through the night and neither pleading nor punishment could make him stop and when he was brought before the court next morning he had lost his voice temporarily from his long talk, and the authorities released him because of his age, and people still talk about the experience with laughter in the little city to this day.

"Sport" walked out of the court room a free man. It was the first time he had ever been before the court but it was because he had never been caught before and not because he did not deserve to be. He did not understand any of the proceedings, but he was free to go where he pleased and that was all he wished.

The lad repaired to his sleeping apartments and secured his "shoe-shine" box and went in quest of business. He had the box slung over his shoulder and there was a happy smile on his face once more, for freedom was as necessary to his life as to a bird's for he had grown up on the streets.

But on the way, he passed a number of other boys on a side street indulging in the one-card game that is a passion with the negroes and is the Ethiopian equivalent of poker. It is known as "skin" and consists of turning over the cards and betting which card will be turned up. "Sport" was invited to take part in the game and he was too much of a sportsman to refuse even if he didn't have but four pennies in his pocket as a working capital, but the bets were only a penny at a time. The boys played for about thirty minutes under the eaves of an old house, afraid of being interrupted by the officers, but their fears being more than overbalanced by their passion for the game, and when the game was ended "Sport" had broken the crowd, and had twenty-one cents in his pocket where before he had only four, and he crowded over his crestfallen brethren in glee and departed from the place with the regal air of a victor.

Once more he slung his box on his shoulder and departed in search of employment.

Just as he passed one of the tobacco warehouses in the city, he met a farmer from the back country who was slightly under the influence of liquor and the farmer asked him where he could get a good meal. The lad thought for a few minutes and a twinkle came into his eyes as he told the farmer he could take him to a place where he could get the best meal in town for twenty-five cents, and the farmer, made weak by drink, consented to follow him.

The lad led him down the street by the hand until he came to a side street and then he took him into a negro restaurant under the ground. The farmer sat down and was served and the lad waited on him. "Sport" looked at the farmer for a long time and saw that he had a brilliant red mustache and black hair, and he told the farmer that he ought to have his mustache blacked up in style to match his hair. He assured him that it was the correct thing to do in the city and offered to perform the service for the small sum of twenty-five cents.

The farmer was a poor man and finally told him he didn't care if he did have his mustache blacked and the lad led him into a back room of the restaurant and gave him a chair and pulled his shoe-polish from its place in the box. He poured some of the liquid on a tooth brush and rubbed it on the brilliant whiskers of the farmer, who looked pleased and contented, while "Sport" was nearly dying with suppressed laughter. When he rubbed some of the paste on the mustache and took his rag and shined the mustache in excellent style, and when the job was completed, his face, as well as his mustache, was blackened. Then "Sport" cautiously slipped his hand in the farmer's pocket and drew out a large roll of money that he had received for his tobacco crop, and darted away; nor did he stop until he reached the suburbs of the city.

The farmer was a poorman and the money received for the tobacco represented his earnings for the past season and he thought of his family at home and of the things he had promised to carry back and he wept bitterly. He searched for the lad and the proprietor knew "Sport" and his haunts, and finally located him and on threats from the farmer, the lad dug the money from a hole in the ground and returned it to the owner.

Our hero came back to town very much discomfited over his failure to secure the money for it would have lasted him several months, spendthrift though he was. It was seldom that he got caught in his tricks and he began to fear that he was not a competent man at the business and the thought wounded his pride.

But on the street, he saw a blind man, poorly clad and holding a tin cup in front of him begging for small gifts of money, and "Sport" passed by and dropped a penny in the cup, for he was not always hard-hearted. The man took the lad's hand and found that he was small and of his own race and he offered him a position leading him around the street. As there was nothing else in sight, and for the novelty of the thing, he accepted the position although he was to receive only twenty cents a day and his board and lodging. But the other boys would envy his position, he thought, as he went down the street leading a blind man, and he was glad to accept the place. And thus for the first time in six years, he was to leave his bed by the smokestack and lie in one in a real house.

"Sport" continued his duties untiringly for an hour or more but finally the man sat down and felt asleep and he ran around behind the stores in search of anything of value he could find. He looked in the trash barrels and then, when he reached the rear of one of the larger tailoring establishments, he saw a coat, vest and hat, lying on the ground, and a wonderful coat and vest it was, too. The coat had long tails to it that pleased his fancy and the vest was cut by a curious pattern. He had seen clothes like these at the opera house and had longed for them, but never before had they been thrust in his possession. He wrapped them up in a paper and hurried back to the old man who had now awoke from his sleep, and the two then went to the blind man's home.

And now we come to the temptation and fall of our hero, for he did finally take money from a member of his own race and one who was as poor as he, and this accounts for his death.

When he went home, he saw the old man take a bag of money from his pocket and put it under his pillow before he laid down to take a nap. "Sport" watched him carefully but the old man did not know this, of course, as he could not see. Our hero intended to take the money, for he was thinking of his new clothes and of the little yellow girl he loved so well. He would take her out and give her a good time even as white people did, and no one should say that he could not play the part of a cavalier if he wished. He waited in the room patiently until the old man was asleep and then he carefully took the money from under the pillow. He ran from the house and when, far away, he counted the money and found that he had a small fortune consisting of eighteen silver dollars and some smaller change, and this would be sufficient to give his girl the best time she ever experienced.

"Sport" first went to one of the numerous "hair-straightening" houses in the city, where the occupants by a patented process, take the kinks out of the hair of the negroes and make it as straight as a white person's. There are many of these houses in the South and their patronage is large, as there is a great demand among certain classes of negroes for "straight" hair.

And when his hair had been straightened at a cost of one dollar, the lad carried his dress suit to a stable and donned it there, and when he emerged from the building decked in his new finery, few of his friends would have recognized him. The tails of his coat dangled to his heels and his vest was much too large but he cared nothing for that, for was he not dressed in style? He wore his same blue trousers for they were all he had, and his blue flannel shirt with the collar attached showed through the vest. His high hat towered above his head and gave him an air of distinction and he longed for a glimpse of himself in a mirror. His shoes were old and ragged, however, and had many holes in them, but he did not let that worry him. He walked in majesty to a cigar store and purchased a real cigar, no stubs for him on this occasion, and his toilet was completed, and he marched away to a negro section known as "Cramp Alley" to escort his girl to "New Africa," and his experiences there constituted the grand symphony of his life. The people watched him with interest as he marched down the street and there were repeated peals of laughter when he passed but "Sport" marched placidly on with the utmost composure, cognizant of the interest he was creating and confident that he was making a profound impression.

"New Africa" was the latest negro colony founded in the city and it might be said that it grew in a single night. The colony was built around an itinerant merry-go-round and the place soon became the cynosure of the negroes' ambitions and pleasures, and it occupied the same place among the negroes that the saloons did among the French aristocracy. It was lovingly termed "New Africa" by its devotees who attended the place in legions.

In the evening, smoke begins to boil from the engine and the fiery steeds are set in motion. Geminy Christmas! What a happy time in Ethiopia! A procession begins to boil in from "Happy Hill," "Dog Trot," "Rag Shake," and all the other negro sections and after a hard day's work, the negroes drown the sorrows of life in one exhilarating, intoxicating revolution on the "circle whizzer," as they call it. How they enjoy the game! The boys ride forward and backward with difficulty pretending their steeds are war horses; the girls sit sideways and try to look dignified but the light in their eyes show that they enjoy the game even more than the boys; and the old men ride their horses in a loose, listless manner, pretending that their steeds are thirty years old and blind in both eyes. The old people and those who have no money stand around and watch the young folks enjoy themselves, and the youngsters run around through the crowd playing tag to the detriment of sundry corns and bunions belonging to the assembled multitude.

Who can fathom the depths of mystery and account for the fantastic fascinations of this place? They are appealing and powerful. Negroes who have escaped from the county road force and who have been living the lives of hunted men, secreting themselves from the eyes of people, and enduring hunger rather than come to the city and be caught, surrender to the fascinations that this place holds out to them, and after one breath of this social atmosphere and one "buzz on the whizzer," they cheerfully surrender themselves to the officer who sees them and finish their term on the roads with a song on their lips.

The reason, though, after all, is plain. The object of the gathering is pleasure after labor. All have come together for a similar purpose and in a happy mood. The hearts of the negroes are in sympathetic vibration with each other, and they are in happy, unconstrained, forgiving and loving fellowship with each other and a widespread fraternal spirit is the result. It is this mutual sympathy that draws them—for sympathy rules the world, and the negroes actually lose their personal identity in the pleasures of the evening.

And while the glorious full moon rains its silvery shafts upon the colony, the negroes laugh, talk, sing, dance and whistle, and the strange sounds may be heard for blocks away. The sounds are curious when heard from a distance and the place might be taken for a colony on the sun-baked plains of darkest Africa, after the inhabitants had returned from a successful depredation and were making merry.

This was the place to which our hero had determined to bring his girl. There was a home-made merry-go-round to one side of the real one, built by taking the wheel off the axle of a wagon and driving the end in the ground, leaving the other wheel at the top and here "Sport" generally took his rides, but to-night he was to enjoy the real sport, although he had often jumped on the merry-go-round and rode short distances while the owner was not looking.

Presently, he appeared in sight, decked in all of his new finery, and smoking his cigar as he proudly marched his girl through the crowd. He was conscious of, and pleased by, the attention he was attracting and frequently he would hear people say, "Lordy, look at dat nigger," as he passed, and his pride would swell and he would try to look important. He was also carrying a paper sack filled with bananas which he had bought for his girl and they had also stopped up street and had some ice cream at the drug store.

He helped his girl on the car and when the conductor came around, he called for $12 worth of tickets, for he intended to give her the time of her life. And not once during the night did they get off the merry-go-round, and he talked to her and told her that some day they would be married and she would answer in her childish way. Every one looked at them and knew them, but no one knew their names and no one cared. They were merely two little children that had been left to take care of themselves in the world and they managed to do this in some miraculous way. "Sport" did not even know his own name. He had known it in time, but had long since forgotten it.

The lad was so engrossed in his pleasures that he forgot about the old blind man and his duty to him. But in the meantime, the old man had awakened as usual and felt under his pillow to see if his money was there; for although the amount was not large it represented his savings for years, and when he felt under the pillow it was gone. He hobbled up the street with difficulty and found a policeman, and told him of his trouble; the officer muttered something about its being some of "Sport's" work.

And while the lad was still riding on the merry-go-round oblivious to everything except the pleasure in the revolving sensation and talking to his girl and showing his new clothes, the officer appeared and took him in charge, and pulled a great stack of tickets from his pocket that had not been used, and led him to the station where he was accused by the old man and then locked up to await trial the next morning. He did not fully realize what they were doing to him but talked to his girl, who accompanied him to jail, holding him by the hand.

He spent the night in jail and was awake most of the night, and the next morning, he was arraigned before the court. He was asked whether he was