enough he alone had noticed that I was unhappy. I have often thought that he must be a man of unusually delicate feeling."

John waited a moment and his mother murmured. "He is a distinguished gentleman."

"Malvern did not ask me any questions, but what he said was to the point; I have never forgotten it. He leaned forward over his desk and looked at me.

"You must not let obstacles take an important place in your mind. John, he said. 'Remember, they only serve to strengthen a man's determination, and that every time he overcomes one he is the stronger for it. The consciousness of overcoming an obstacle is one of the most invigorating things in a man's career.'

"It wasn't a very brilliant piece of advice, mother, you will say. Just a remark or two from an important man to a subordinate at the time when the young chap needed it,"

John smoked. "I never saw him again, and the first thing I shall do when I see him now will be to thank him. I can at least do that."

It was a curious moment. The mother of the thief listened. After this interview, which he remembered with tenderness, the young man had gone to Richmond, and coolly stolen ten thousand dollars. He could scarcely have told her an incident which would have brought to her eyes more distinctly his wretched past. Her heart rose in her throat. her cheeks flushed, she leaned forward with hands clasped; it was on her lips to say the words that ran through her: "John, John! How you could do it?"

## CHAPTER VI.

ONE morning John found his fields deserted, and only Bob in the stable, a curry brush in hand, remained to give news of his own peo-

"De Niggers done gone on strike, Marse John. Yessir! Dey do low you'se a bery hard marster."

John laughed. In his white flannels and panama, cool and indifferent, he was an object of awe and admiration to Bob, who thought him something of a god.

"What are their grievances, Bob?" "Lawd, Marse John," drawled the Negro, who had no idea what the word meant, "dey ain't got no grimmances. It's de hours an' de wages." "I pay them more than any man in the district."

"Dat's just it, Marse John," said the Negro keenly. "Yo' done ought to pay dem less. Den dey'd have stayed."

John glanced at the summer fields, where the light, palpitating and delicate, hung over the meadows like a golden curtain. Here and there were deep furrows on the old pastures. Along the lower meadows the tossedup earth was rich and brown, indicating the fertile creative heart. It seemed to cry: "Sow me with seed! I will repay." Every hour lost seemed a shocking waste to this ambitious man. Moreover, his time was limited. This summer only would he till and plow and sow. The following year he would return to South Africa.

"They're a pack of idlers," he said. "I'll show them I'm not dependent on a lot of lazy Negroes. Do what you've got to do, my boy," he added sharply to Bob, "and Nolan will lend you a

He made Nolan and Bob harness to a hand plow a pair of splendid horses that Nolan and bought in Richmond, and he haself drove the plow into the earth one of the fallow fields.

During the fiftee sociatio which had seen his battle wi turned his hands to lations. w. he had hings, but

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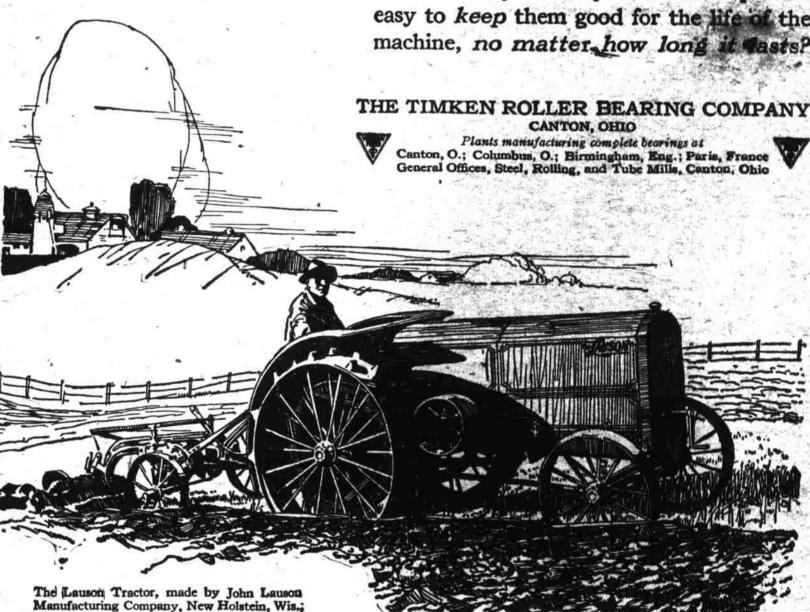
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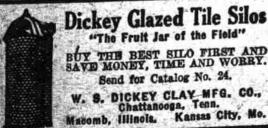
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