



C H A P T E R 2

MY UNCLE WAS ALSO A FARMER, AND HIS PLACE WAS IN THE COUNTRY four miles from Florida. I have not come across a better man than he was. I was his guest for two or three months every year, from the fourth year after we removed to Hannibal until I was eleven or twelve years old.

It was a heavenly place for a boy, that farm. The house was a double log one, with a spacious floor (roofed in) connecting it with the kitchen. In the summer the table was set in the middle of that shady and breezy floor, and the wonderful meals—well, it makes me cry to think of them.

The farmhouse stood in the middle of a very large yard and the yard was fenced on three sides; against these stood the smoke-house; beyond were the fruit trees and beyond them the **Negro** quarters and the tobacco fields. Down a way from the house stood a little log cabin against the fence, and there the woody hill fell sharply away to a brook which sang along over its stony bed and curved in and out and here and there in the deep shade of overhanging greenery—a divine place for going in barefoot, and it had swimming pools, too, which were forbidden to us and therefore much frequented by us. For we were little Christian children and had early been taught the value of forbidden fruit.

In the little log cabin lived a bedridden white-headed slave woman whom we visited daily and looked upon with wonder, for we believed she was upward of a thousand years old and had talked with Moses. We called her "Aunt" Hannah. Like the other Negroes, she was deeply religious.

All the Negroes were friends of ours. We had a faithful good friend in "Uncle Dan'l," a middle-aged slave whose head was the best one in the quarter, whose sympathies were wide and warm and whose heart was honest and simple. I have not seen him for more than half a century and yet spiritually I have had his welcome company a good part of that time. It was on the farm that I got my strong liking for his race and my appreciation of certain of its fine qualities. This feeling and this estimate have stood the test of sixty years and more.