

ror that slanted forward from the wall, and made a pretty mouth at herself — “unless he’s the right person.” Then she ran away, laughing.

Preparations for the Christmas festival went forward rapidly, and when the day came a goodly company had assembled to do honor to the hearty hospitality of Colonel Rivers. As Miss Lou had foreseen, the yard fairly swarmed with dogs. Harvey Dennis brought seven, Matt Kilpatrick ten, Tom Collingsworth twelve, Jack Casswell eight, and Bill Hearn fourteen — about fifty hounds in all. Colston and Preston had arrived the night before. Colston had dogs, but he left them at home. He knew the prejudices of Mary’s mother. Preston was not a planter and had no dogs, but he was very fond of cross-country riding, and never lost an opportunity to engage in the sport.

The colonel was in ecstasies. The wide fireplace in the sitting-room was piled high with half-seasoned hickory wood, and those who sat around it had to form a very wide half-circle indeed, for the flaring logs and glowing embers sent forth a warmth that penetrated to all parts of the room, big as it was.