

Carefully unrolling the long strip of cloth, which the colonel immediately recognized as part of a dress his mother used to wear, Uncle Shade presently came to a yellow letter. This he handed to the colonel, who examined it curiously. Though the paper was yellow with age and creased, the ink had not faded.

"What is this?" the colonel asked mechanically, although he had no difficulty in recognizing the writing as that of his mother, — the stiff, uncompromising, perpendicular strokes of the pen could not be mistaken. "What is this?" he repeated.

"Letter fer you, suh," said Uncle Shade.

"Where did you get it?" the colonel inquired.

"I tuck it right out 'n mistiss' han', suh," Uncle Shade replied.

The colonel put on his spectacles and spread the letter out carefully. This is what he read: —

MY DEAR SON: I write this letter to commend the negro Shade to your special care and protection. He will need your protection most when it comes into your hand. I have told him that in the hour when you