

tion of a festival occasion. And such indeed it was — the occasion of the home-coming of Linton Moreland, the master, with a bride he had won in far-off Mississippi.

The contrast that now presented itself would have been pathetic if it had not been amazing. The change that had taken place seemed impossible enough to stagger belief. It had been easier to imagine that some convulsion had swept the Moreland Place from the face of the earth than to believe that in twenty years neglect and decay could work such preposterous ravages. The great house was all but dismantled. One corner of the roof had fallen in. The wide windows were mere holes in the wall. The gable of the porch was twisted and rent — so much so that two of the high pillars had toppled over, while another, following the sinking floor, had parted company with the burden it was intended to support and sustain. The cornices, with their queer ornamentation, had disappeared, and more than one of the chimney-tops had crumbled, leaving a ragged pile of bricks peeping above the edge of the roof. The lawn and avenues leading to it were rankly overgrown with weeds. The grove of