

At this moment Tuck reappeared on the scene. Seeing his young master, he stopped still and looked at him, and then broke out into loud complaints.

“Marse Dave Henry, whar de nam er goodness you been? You better come read dish yer letter what yo’ ma writ you. I’m gwine tell mistiss she come mighty nigh losin’ a likely nigger, an’ she ’ll rake you over de coals, mon.”

“Why, howdy, Tuck,” exclaimed Lieutenant Clopton. “Ain’t you glad to see me?”

“Yasser, I speck I is.” The negro spoke in a querulous and somewhat doubtful tone, as he produced a letter from the lining of his hat. “But I’d ’a’ been a heap gladder ef I had n’t mighty nigh traipsed all de gladness out ’n me.”

Young Clopton took the letter and read it with a smile on his lips and a dimness in his eyes. The negro, left to himself, had his attention attracted by the coffee and tobacco lying exposed on the ground. He looked at the display, scratching his head.

“Boss, is dat sho nuff coffee?”

“It is that same,” said O’Halloran.

“De ginnywine ole-time coffee?” insisted the negro.