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It was a hot southern summer
afternoon, upon a lonely country road.
The ~~the~~ fierce "three o'clock sun" beat
fierce and hot upon the ^{half worn} ~~steady~~ track
which ran up hill and down, now
showing red with dashes of white
quartz, upon some ~~was~~ washed
slope, then grey and soft in some
little bottom where a spring stream
purred and rippled over the wave
lines of the latest freshet, and
now peaceful and still over
the dull white of sandy levels with
the sun ^{lighter} slanting in under the
overhanging branches despite
the ^{guardianship of} ~~guardianship~~ Spanish Oaks, which
grew upon the barren ~~and~~ ^{erect} ~~and~~ ^{erect}
blacksacks which ^{crowded} ~~crowded~~ ^{impure} ~~impure~~

clently ~~into~~ almost into the track itself;
 of the gumly post = oaks which had defi-
 the ~~scabby~~ ^{scabby} pine, the cullid and scabby pines
 and broad-based, fresh-leaved gums,
 which scrumpled ~~mechanically~~ ^{quickly} into
 the places left vacant by the scath
 of fire or wind or woodman's
 ax. ~~It~~ ^{are} The umbel-headed dog-
 wood and the sullen hickory

showed solitary here and there, while
 almost within the station in which the Law's banner
 grow and then, almost in the ~~darkness~~
 clump ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ summer a clustering colony
 track a colony of green shiny, heavy
 of pink young ~~spores~~ ^{spores} shells displayed
~~leaved~~ ^{leaved} ~~hollows~~ ^{hollows} ~~above~~ ^{above} ~~green~~ ^{green} ~~with~~ ^{with}
~~honey-leaved~~ ^{honey-leaved} ~~under~~ ^{under} ~~them~~ ^{them} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~dark~~ ^{dark}
~~beats~~ ^{beats} their prickly, polished leaves
 half hid with dust which the first
 rain will wash away and leave them
 black and bristling landmarks
 by the roadside — evergreen milestones

which a century's growth would not increase beyond the compass of a hedgerow bush.

It was one of those southern country roads which seem like eternity in being without beginning or end; which seem to begin nowhere, wind about among the plantations without purpose or direction and finally disappear with a like absence of motive just where one would never have expected it to go or having reached that point at least to have extended a little further. Crossed and joined at all sorts of angles by other roads, little travelled, shunned by the planters' homes which cluster at favored spots on the plantations with little regard for egress or ingress to and from the world without.

The sand glistened in the sunshine. The leaves were still for not a breath of air was moving. From far off the sound of labor faintly came. The cicada changed his steady note among the branches. The swifts dodged to and fro with scrambling and unnecessary haste. Travellers were at all seasons few - a fact which the condition of the road might well both attest and excuse. One might well believe it one of those ancient pathways of which the law makes great account of which no man knoweth the beginning, and its might also be added that few know of the existence.

Along this highway rode a colored man upon a mule. The animal moved at a ^{quiet} ~~pace~~ entirely harmonious

with its surroundings. It was down
 and its great ears flapped back and
 forth in endless irregularity at each
 summing step it took along the sandy
 road. It was done crunched well-
 fed and evidently a well conditioned
 mule, but enjoying a siesta as it moved laz-
 ily along. The rider was a colored man,
 though evidently in no haste, — no ^{horruman} rider would
 be ⁱⁿ under that scorching ~~three~~ velvet heat —
 he was far from being asleep. Dressed in
 what was evidently his best, his coat of gray
 jeans tucked across his saddle and his
 wide-brimmed hat yet unsworn into
 slouch or crumple, and his clean white
 shirt, all showed that it was no
 work day errand on which he
 was travelling.

He was a tall strong man, not
 much below six feet, with broad shoul-

ders, a well rounded chest. ~~Each~~
~~Strick~~ as an arrow with a round strong
 neck on which rested a well balanced
 head so densely covered with close clipped
 hair of the exact hue of the sooty rind
 that it was difficult at a little distance
 to mark the dividing line.

His face though of the most unmistakable
 African hue was far from that distorted
 type which the ~~the~~ orientalist loves
 to take for his model whether on the
 stage, in fiction or upon canvas. The eyes were
 wide apart, the forehead low but broad
 the nose nearly straight the mouth full
 but firm. The sweat stood in
 beads over his face, ^{and} run down
~~the~~ his neck. The white collar which
 showed ^{sweetly} patches here and there.
 The ~~side~~ he was evidently oblivious

Of his surroundings and unconscious
of discomfort, his body swayed back
and forth with the mule's steps, showing
the ease and grace of an accomplished
horseman. After a time, he took from the
side pocket of the coat which lay before
him on the saddle a paper which was
evidently folded and stamped, ^{and endorsed} with
official formality. He opened it and
spread it out on the coat folded before
him on the saddle horn and examined
it with close attention. He was not aud-
ing it. It was evident that he could
not since it mattered not which
side up he held it. The mule bridged
sleepily on flapping her ears and occa-
sionally swishing her round, close-
clipped tail at the flies that gathered
on her flanks.

The rider pored upon his parchment,

He thinking only of its contents or of the circumstances connected with it. It was evidently a matter of great moment to him. At all at once something very ludicrous seemed suddenly to occur to him and he burst into a loud laugh.

Startled from her doze the mule awoke true to the traditions of her hybrid nature with such ^a reversal of normal relations as after a moment's scuffle left her rider ^{stretched} sitting in the hot sand, his ~~grimed shirt showing that he has been~~ ~~in a more extended posture,~~ his tub half way up a gum tree by the roadside his coat under the mule's fore feet while her hind ones are engaged in vain attempts to get a foothold in the flying stirrups.

Despite the suddenness of the movement the man does not seem at all discomfited. His left hand ^{while the other pulls and jerks the lurching, stumbling mule} still clutches the long riding rein, ~~and~~ drawing himself to a sitting posture with this, ^{the man} he gives a few ~~strong~~ vigorous jerks which, with a cry of

"Dar now! Look at um!"

which might have been heard half a mile away, ^{had the effect to trans-} ~~transformed~~ form the fisky, vicious animal at the other end, into a trembling, frightened brute with head erect and ears ~~close~~ straight pointing toward the skies, with restless limbs gathered close under her and close trimmed tail hidden between her round hanches.

"Whoa dar now! Look at um!"
as with another powerful jerk he brings

the frightened animal still nearer to him and reduces it at once to its ordinary subjection. It is evident that he is master of his beast, seeing that the animal has no present intention to escape, he continues his soliloquy half angrily as he proceeds to remove the sand from his hair and eyes. It has mixed with the sweat upon his brow face, whitened one side of his head, grimed his white shirt and evidently found its way beneath his eye lids.

What den debble yer ever' ter do dat for ole gal? Ain't yer never quine ter learn no sense? What

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Yer even' ter be shyin' at muffin' fer?
Jes coz yer's a mule, dat's all. Dan's
a hass now must a' tek seeh a no-
tion when he cooz a spring-chicken like
but not afterwards, 'less twas sunthin'
slightly ~~particular~~ particular. But a
dod-blamed mule nebbeh gih no
sense nohow."

He now and began to brush the
dust from his clothes while he looked
around for his scattered belongings.
~~He ~~then~~ ~~removed~~ his coat about~~

It's jes' seeh doins, "he said shak-
ing his fist at the beast "dat makes me
say what I does about a mule. Eef
hit had been sumythin' ter skur
at I would it have minded, but
ter bruce off sideings like yer's

been shot out of a gun, right by
in de big road widout eben a black
snake envolin long side yers ^{is}
~~too big for~~ jis' a little too

much for bar. Hyer I see ben a ridin dis Pass
mule, eber seen de adender, and dat's grim
on - gummy see - true gear, and nether same so
Dye hear now' he adhed as he

bestowed a kick and a cuff on the
frightened animal, she turned the rein
back over her head hung it on the
saddle bow and turned away to
gather up his scattered belongings. He
was not surprised very greatly at the
trick she had served him but he
would have been amazed had she
forgotten her training and moved off
without his leave

efore, Swor to ^{Christopher, his master}
me mad, his do.

gathered up his scattered personality. Having brushed his hat and shaken out his coat, he carefully examined the pockets of the latter to see if anything ~~was~~^{remained} was lost. The accident seemed to have banished all thought of the document he was inspecting when it occurred until he noted its absence from the pocket.

At the same instant too, he spied it fluttering on the roadside.

"Dar now, I reckon her los' dat too, all for dat mule's foolishness, an' den what would I done, I dunno. I no business ter her had it in my han, ~~rather~~, outer

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Party fix I'd been in ef dat an' I been
~~lost~~, ~~wouldn't I know?~~
~~how~~ der big soul ^{nohow} hyer. But aikes,
a nigger don't know how ter
keep what he's got nohow, ^{no}
matter how hard he work for it.
Dat's whur de white folks git de own-
tays of ob him all de time.

I'll low yer don't catch me
doin' dat en ^{way} no more. "he con-
tinued as he refolded the ^{document} paper, re-
stored it to ^{the} ~~a~~ ^{was} piece of newspaper
in ~~which it had been~~ ^{carefully}
~~crumpled~~, and put it again in
his pocket. Then he gathered his rein
put his foot in the low swinging stir-
rup and prepared to remount. Instead
of doing so, however, he panned
with one hand on the wooden army-

Saddle and the other on the neck
of his mule and fell into a brown
study which found vent at length
in words.

I swear 'tis quare though. Hyer
erow I was twenty, odd year
workin' fer ole Mars an' nobody
~~to~~ neber thought eb offerin' me
sech a ting as a las' name; but
now sence freedom cum deys
jes' fo'ced on me til I can't
tell which from tumber. Durned
ef I can't quare, an' I don't rightly

see wher hit's quite ter end.
I wouldn't ha blamed ole Mars fer shym'
nuther. I spee's it's jes' purk eb
ef chid a knowed wher twas I was a las' in
freedom though; sigger hadnt
ah. Jus a little while ago I didn't ha no us'
no use fer em an' a freeman
name den dis ole fool made her self an' now
I jes' can't keep 'em offen me.

counts a heap of names if he hadn't
 got nuffin' else. "Reckon dat's
 so," Hyer, you Puss!" he exclaimed
^{while,} as if satisfied with this expla-
 nation, he swung himself into the
 saddle and rode briskly on, ~~the~~
 the mule ~~at~~ swishing her roached
 tail and keeping up her jerky
 canter until the fear of scourging
 past, it sank into its usual amble
 in the distance.

The problem question which puzzled
 the rider's mind was only a part of
 the ^{as rightly} great problem which the Great Master
 took more than two hundred years, ~~fully~~ to
 inscribe on the brass-board of ^{our} ~~the~~
^{nations} history but which some believe ^{to have}
^{fully} been solved and assumed in ^{less than} a score.