

Negro Mystic Lore



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Negro Mystic Lore

BY

MAMIE HUNT SIMS



“Dem dat has must give to dem dat hain’t.”



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Dedication

TO MY BROTHER,
WILLIAM HILL HUNT,
IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION
OF HELP AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN
MY WORK, THIS LITTLE VOLUME
IS LOVINGLY INSCRIBED.

Foreword

In sending out these stories, nearly all of which came from Uncle Jake's lips, the author hopes to show the real kindly feeling existing between the people of the South and the better class of the negroes. That there are cases where this good feeling does not exist she is painfully aware, but these are exceptions and not the rule. Uncle Jake was a reality and not a creature of the imagination. He possessed all the kindliness of heart and philosophic views accredited to him, and while he saw no harm in appropriating some of the things belonging to "de white folks," he was willing to spend and be spent in their service. He took great pride in never having belonged to, or worked for, "poor white folks," and the blue blood of his Marster's family was a source of as much pride to him as the fact that all the horses on the plantation were thoroughbreds. A few of the stories the author has used as readings, and the pleasing reception accorded them not only at the South but also at the North gives rise to the hope that this modest volume will receive as cordial reception as the individual stories have done.

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**MARSE ANDY'S
CARRIAGE**

Negro Mystic Lore

STORY I

Marse Andy's Carriage

Much of Mrs. Bradshaw's childhood was spent in the country and her recollections of Uncle Jake, an old colored man who lived on her mother's plantation, are very vivid. Uncle Jake looked after the horses, drove the carriage and was supposed to work the garden, though as to the latter he was extremely careless. Much of his time was spent recounting to Mrs. Bradshaw and her brother Roy the glories of slavery time. He claimed to have "belonged" to "Marse Andy Jackson, de hero of New Orleans ma'm and presidence of de Unity States." He told with pride of having driven the carriage which bore La Fayette to the Hermitage to visit the Ex-president. Mrs. Bradshaw, or little Helen, as she was at that time, was a great stickler for dates and when Uncle Jake told anything that antedated the century, she would bring him to a halt, not so much that she wished to show him up as a fabricator but in order to have things straight in her mind so that after supper when the family assembled for the delightful evenings in a pleasant home

in the country she could recount Uncle Jake's stories with accuracy. Occasionally when she brought him up he would temporize after this wise: "Lord, Lord, Miss Helen, you shore ought ter lived in slavery time cause nobody couldn't er fooled you, not eben one on de old timers, but is I ever told you about de time I driv Marse Andy's carridge ter Nashville arter Marse Marquis La Fayette?" At such times the little boy and girl would be sorely puzzled, both were truthful but both wanted very much to hear that story again. After a pause so tense as to be felt, one of them would say, "Yes, sir, but tell it again Uncle Jake." And the old man, nothing loath, would recount the story thus: "Well er long time ergo in slavery time I use ter blong to Marse Andy Jackson. He was de greatest man dat ever wore shoe leather,—He was—Little Roy, anxious to air his knowledge of history interrupted with, "He won the battle of New Orleans." "De battle ob New Orleans, why children, he won all de battles worth winnin in the whole Evolutionary war and dem he didn't win himself he pintedly told de other Marse Gen-nels how ter win." "But," said the little boy, "the battle of New Orleans wasn't in the Revolutionary war, it was in the war of 1812." Here Uncle Jake fenced a little. "Chile, is I said

pintedly dat war was in de Evolutionary war? Hunh I say is I? You chillun is too interruptin enny how and ef you all don't hush er interruptin me I gwine hush my mouf and I ain't gwine to tell you nuthin. I did low ter tell you some two or three nannydotes dis mawn-in case hits just naturally too hot ter work dat garden an I mout as well be er erestentin you chillun as gwin ter sleep under dat fig tree. But I tell you right now ef dese interruptions is gwine ter continue I's gwine hush my mouf, cause I knows dese been some two or three battles fit since dat one Cain and Abel fit in the Garden of Eden but I allus disremember de dates and de entillermments of which frum tother." The little boy and girl sudsided and decided to let Uncle Jake mix his dates without further remark. After some preamble he began again: "In eighteen hundred and sumpernuthin, I disremember egzactly when, Marse Andy low, 'Jake, you young rascal, ef I let you drive de carridge ter Nashville ter bring your Marse Marquis La Fayette, is you gwine have dem horses shined up while us is put up at de tavern?' I turned back, I did, 'Yassir, I gwine have dem horses so sleek dat a fly will slip up and break his neck ef he so much as light on em.' I seed Mammy peepin out de kitchen and I went in dare and she lowed, 'Jake, is

Marse Andy lowed you could drive de carridge to Nashville?' I lowed, 'Yessum, he show is said so.' Mammy shake her haid and low, 'You go down ter Sis Dafney's and tell her I say pleace for Gawd's sake ter samin de fermaments and see ef de nights is all right for you ter go fer you is such a Gawd fursaken nigger dat ef de moon don't hang right when she change supen ull shure happen you.' I went on down ter Aunt Dafney's and tole her Mammy said ef she'd read de signs fur me dat she'd give her some vittels out de while folks kitchen. En I went on about my bizness case ef de signs warn't right I shore warn't gwine drive dat carridge ter Nashville." "But, Uncle Jake," asked both the children, "how could you keep from driving it if your Marse Andy told you to?" The old man slowly shook his head. "How was I gwine fum driving it? How both you chillun keep from gwine ter school dem two or three days las week when your Uncle Milton was here?" "But, Uncle Jake, we thought that in slavery time you had to do just right or get punished for it." The old man looked off into vacancy for awhile and then slowly shook his head, "Yes, dats what some folks think but it warent so. I jest can't see why folks can't get de right innards and outards ob a question. Chillun, slavery was jest like being

your Marster's chile. I tuck notice dat little Miss Helen turn over and broke ter smiggens de five-gallon jimmy john aw strained honey week er fore las and didn't get punished, den I see las week she turned over de six-gallon jar uv cream and den wut?" "I got punished," said the little girl hiding her blushing face in her golden curls. "Dar now," resumed Uncle Jake, "hit was dat way in slavery time. Sometimes you got punished and sometimes you didn't, but more oftener you didn't, but I reckon what few niggers had de unfortune ter blong ter po white folks mout er been treated mean, but ef you all interrups me ergin I'se gwine quit talking and go ter pattin my feet and singing, 'Ole Molly Hare, what you doing dare, running cross de cotton patch hard as you can tear?' The little girl subsided and the boy moved up nearer so he could punch her if she tried to interrupt again. "Well Aunt Dafney watched fer signs an every day Mammy fixed a big bucket er white folks vittels and git ter me out de kitchen winder ter take ter her so she keep me inembrance." "O! Uncle Jake," Helen again broke out, "wasn't that stealing?" Vigorous pinch from the little boy brought silence and Uncle Jake continued. "Well, de night befo us wus ter start fum de Hermitage

ter Nashville me an Mammy and daddy went ter Aunt Dafney's ter larn whut de signs wus case Mammy had pintedly told daddy dat ef de signs weren't right I wus gwine ter be sick an he had ter drive de carridge. When us got dare Aunt Dafney ware setting in frunt ob de do eating out uv dat bucket while and singing er song lak dis: 'He did not come in de heat ob de day, he did not come in de morning. He came er lone in de cool uv de evening an wash my sins erway.' Arter she finished singing and put de lid on de bucket an wipe her mouf she lowed, 'Well, you all cum ter find out bout de signs. Night er fore las was de time fur de new moon and time I cum to de door dar she wus er swinging up dare in de Heavens ez bright an sassy as Governor George and not so much ez er chadow twixt me and her. Den next morning whilst I wus washing my dishes I drapped my dish rag three times and dat is er sign a man is comin and coming hongry. So you know, dat man gwine be Marse Marquis La Fayette.' Well wid dat us went home and next morning me an Marse Andy went ter Nashville and brung Marse Marquis La Fayette back wid us ter de Hermitage. An I show did drive cuming home, too. Man sur de way Dick and Rowdy hit Jackson Pike wid der heels wus ernuff ter make your

mouf water. Dere weren't nobody inside der carridge but Marse Andy and Marse Marquis La Fayette and us spun erlong like greased lightenin." "What did General Jackson and Marquis La Fayette talk about, Uncle Jake?" asked Roy. The old man looked his scorn and said, "Honey does you think I was so ill mannered ez ter listen ter two white genelmens expoundin ter one er nother. I promised tel tell you bout driving de carriage an not erbout eavesdropping."

DE PUSSONAL INJURY
MAN

De Pussonal Injury Man

There had been a wreck on the "Southern" between Birmingham and Selma and John Marvin, the husband of Mrs. Bradshaw's cook, Annie, had the misfortune to lose his left foot in the smash-up. The shrewdness and quaint philosophy of the negro race is well illustrated by the incidents which followed the accident. When Annie came back to Mrs. Bradshaw's after an absence of four weeks she was good humored and laughing as usual. "Miss Leila, I didn't want ter stay so long but I jest had ter stay ter pertect John fum de pussonal injury men. When John got ter Selma arter his mashed up foot had been cut off dey wanted ter take him to de hospital but he begged um ter bring him home. De white man what looks arter all the injured folkses fur de "Southern" brung him home in de ambulanch and arter dey got him in bed de man low, "John, de Southern Railroad makes yer dis offer, ef you don't sue de road we'll send you a trained nurse, pay your doctor's bill, your grocery bill and house rent till you are up and as soon as your limb is healed we'll get you a cork foot and give you a life job of flagging de crossing at Mechanic Street in East Selma at forty dollars a month." "But," he said, "ef you sues de road we fight

it out through all de courts and never give you a job again." I lowed, "dat's all right, John ain't studying bout suing de road, but I can nuss him case I know I ken get Sis Clanssey Brown ter cook fer my white folks tell John gets better.' Den he lowed, 'Well, Annie, if you can nuss him we'll pay you twelve dollars a week till his limb heals.' Now, Miss Lelia, who ever heerd tell of dar paying a woman fur nussing her own husband! I lowed den dat de 'Southern' is fair as day, and I said, 'Mister, John Marvin ain't studying bout suing de road.' Wid dat he drawed twelve dollars out uv his pocket and said, 'Annie, dere's twelve dollars fur yer first week's pay fur nussing and I'll settle all your month's bills when dey are due.' Well, us never is had no better time dan what we had dat day. I lowed as de railroad had done made a trained nurse out ev me I'd better dress like dem nusses at de hospital dresses, so I tuck my money and went out and bought me a gray-striped dress and a white apron and cap, and John lowed he didn't much mind losing his foot ef it ware gwine bring us in all dis money. I forgot ter say I bought John er dozen cigars and I lowed I'd fling his old pipe erway, but he lowed he'd keep it and smoke de pipe while dere warn't nobody but us dare and when anybody

come in he'd hide his pipe and light er cigar. We wuz setting dere talking and John wuz smoking his old pipe and lowing dat he was gwine ter ask de railroad ter get his new foot littler dan de one he had before. I told him I didn't blame him case he's got de most ungawdly big foots you ever seed. Just den I looked out uv de window and I seed a white man coming in de gate. I told John and he hid his old pipe and lit a cigar and time he got it to puffing good I opened de door and de man come in, all dressed up in a long black coat and a high silk hat, and I lowed hit was another man de railroad had sent to bring us some more money. But when he took off his hat and bowed ter me and shook hands wid John and called him *Mr. Marvin*, I knowed something ware wrong. Miss Leila, you knows when a white man ups and calls a nigger *Mr.*, something's wrong. He set down and lowed, 'My dear *Mr. Marvin*, I heerd of your pitiful accident and come all de way from Birmingham ter tell you how you could get even wid dat railroad.' I lowed, 'Us is already ahead, case dey done made me a trained nuss and done put John ter smoking fine cigars, and——' 'Oh, yes,' says he, 'dey will promise ter make a trained nuss of you, but they won't.' I lowed, 'Man, dey done already

made me a trained nuss and paid me a week's wages in advance; and dey ain't treat John so pitiful case dey gwin ter give him a cork foot and he'll be de onliest one in our church wid a cork foot.' He lowed, 'Mr. Marvin, ef you'll send dis woman fum de room I'll make you an offer dat will lay in de shade any offer de Southern Railroad will make you.' John low, 'Annie, go in de other room and let de gentleman say what he wants ter say.' I went in and shut de door, but I put my ear to de keyhole and heard de man say, 'I represent a pussonal injury firm of lawyers in Birmingham and ef you will sign dis paper I can get you three thousand dollars from de Southern and you'll have it all except our fee, which will be small.' John leaned over and tuck de pen and wid dat I jumped through de door and lowed, 'You give dat pen back to dat man and don't you dast ter sign no paper dat you don't know nothing erbout. Den de man low, 'Send her fum de room, Mr. Marvin, she advises you wrong.' John looked at me and he seed he done sent me fum de room his last time and he low kinder coaking like he gwine ter get three thousand dollars fer my foot. I said, 'Yes, Lord, like he got five thousand dollars when Sis Jane Clines' husband was kilt and gin her a measly twenty-five dollars and said it tuck de

nine thousand nine hundred and seventy-five dollars ter fight de suit. De pussonal injury man low, 'Sign dis paper and I'll do de rest and you be satisfied wid my work.' I jumped up, I did and lowed, 'John Marvin, you is a born fool ef you signs dat paper.' John lowed, 'Well, I'm gwine ter sign it, and don't you furgit it.' I lowed, 'No, I won't furgit, case ef you signs dat paper I'se gwine ter quit you. I won't live with no man what ain't got sense to know when dey doing well, and how could us be doing any better dan we is. De railroad couldn't do no better dan ter give you a lifetime job. But all I got ter say is dat you got ter choose right now twixt de pussonal injury man an me.' Wid dat John gin de pen back and laid back on de bed and lowed, 'I can't sign it, Mister, case when Annie puts her foot down on a question she means what she says, and I can't give her up even ter get three thousand dollars.' Wid dat de pussonal injury man put on his hat and stamped out de door, but instead of calling John *Mr.* Marvin, he wuz mumbling ter himself something about a damned fool, and we ain't seed him no more. But I'm still drawing twelve dollars a week and us is having all de fun looking over catalogues full ov pictures of cork fooks and de only trouble I has is ter keep John from getting

his cork foot too little. He wears er number 11 and he wants to get his cork foot a number 7. But he says he always did want a foot like a white man, so I spect hit will end by John gettin his cork foot a number 7."

THE VINDICATION OF
VINEY

The Vindication of Viney

"I aint stole nothin. None er us fambly don't steal. Aint you purty near raise me, Miss Helen, an den ax me is I stole a green wais. I aint stole hit and I aint stole nuthin."

This unconditional denial of theft came from the lips of a small ebony-hued daughter of Africa. Viney was quite a character in the household where she was employed. Reverse of fortune had left Mrs. Bradshaw little except a comfortable home, and being responsible for the care of her three children she made a comfortable living by taking boarders.

At the time of Viney's stern denial some ten or eleven boarders gathered around the hospitable board where Mrs. Bradshaw could never bring herself to feel that they were other than invited guests and to be treated with the same courtesy.

At her right hand in the seat of honor sat Miss Lee Alston, a bright cheery maiden lady, a little deaf, and somewhat peculiar but with all an excellent woman. She had evidently seen better days and many of them to judge by the plentiful sprinkling of gray in the golden hair. To appreciate Miss Lee one must know her. She had been born and partly raised before the war.

Though adversity had compelled her to earn her living by clerking in a store, she never lost sight of her Virginia ancestry. She shared one of the comfortable upstairs rooms with a maiden sister of Mrs. Bradshaw. These two had roomed together for years, were inseparable, and usually thought alike and valiantly fought each others battles, when not sparring at each other.

Miss Lee had for several days complained that a green waist trimmed in gray was missing. The dress had seen service for several years and would in all probability never have been worn again by the owner, but when a very superficial search failed to unearth the waist, its usefulness and beauty grew apace. Mrs. Bradshaw suggested several places where it might possibly find a hiding place, but both ladies scorned the idea of anything being misplaced in their apartment, except by actual theft. Viney was the only "Cullud pusson" who ever went up stairs, consequently she was immediately suspected. Miss Lee at supper and in the evenings was genial and social and nothing so insignificant as the loss of a green waist disturbed her or interfered with her singing in a marvelously strong, well-trained voice old beautiful songs such as "Annie Laurie," "Way Down Upon the Suwanee River," "Take Back the Heart," and "We'd Better Bide a Wee."

But in the morning when she came down to breakfast with the gloomy prospect of a long hard day at the store in contrast with "what might have been" she was not so amiable and usually had a grievance of some kind to pour into the patient ears of Mrs. Bradshaw. For several days the green waist trimmed in gray had done service as a bone of discontent and Mrs. Bradshaw, while not exactly taking issue with her, had said what she could in vindication of Viney.

On this particular morning, however, no argument could avail and Miss Lee declared that she would get some man to speak to a policeman, saying: "I know just how it is with you. You are too tender hearted to find out about it. Hateful little thing, I'm going to have her arrested." Just at this juncture Mr. Malvern, another antebellum personage of uncertain age, but very certain kindness of heart, came in to breakfast. Of course his gallantry was aroused by the note of persecution in Miss Lee's voice and he immediately aligned himself on her side. It began to look ominous for the little colored girl and Mrs. Bradshaw determined to try to find out if possible the truth from Viney and if she were guilty to have her confess the theft and throw herself on Miss Lee's mercy.

After breakfast she went to the kitchen and in

a very kindly manner broached the subject to Viney. The result was the lusty denial which might mean innocence or might be intended to cover her guilt. "Ef you know Miss Gertrude Caldwell, you ax her do I steal. She can't tell you I ever stole fum her." "Did you ever work for her, Viney?" "No'm, but my granmammy's niece is her son's caredge driver and my mammy's step-gran-mammy used ter blong ter her uncle's granpa. Does you see anything bout me looks lak a green waist trimmed in gray? I never is seed no green waist in Miss Lee's and Miss Minnie's room. Dey getten too old to wear green, much less trimming it in gray. Lordy, look yonder, yon go Miss Lee now goin down town and old Mr. Malvern walking long wid her. Don't look lak dey studyin bout green waisteses trimmed in gray or blue yit."

The walk up town together, the first they had ever taken—which seemed so funny to Viney—boded no good in Mrs. Bradshaw's opinion. Convinced herself, as nearly as possible that Viney was innocent, she decided to try once more to convince Miss Lee of her innocence, or if possible, divert her mind in some other channel.

About the middle of the morning Mr. Malvern came to the house and sent for Mrs. Bradshaw to come to the parlor. She sought his presence,

eager to learn what had been determined upon. The policeman had told him he could do nothing in the matter unless Miss Lee would come to the police station and make formal charge against her, alleging the theft of the missing garment. And then he added, drawing himself up to his full height. "Of course that is out of the question, and I shall try to persuade her to let it go without any more ado." Mrs. Bradshaw thought this advisable and was about to leave the room when he detained her by asking if she had known Miss Lee long. Mrs. Bradshaw replied, "Years and years, ever since I was a little girl, and she is such a fine woman." Looking up suddenly she surprised a look in his kindly old eyes that convinced her that his interest in Miss Lee was so lively that it must have antedated the waist episode. The matchmaking instinct, so strong in most women, had reached colossal proportions in Mrs. Bradshaw and believing that there is no time like the present began saying all the best things about Miss Lee. He listened with evident pleasure and when Mrs. Bradshaw left the room it was with the pleasing consciousness that she had helped the good work along. All morning Mr. Malvern went about with the air of a man on whom the fate of nations depended. At the noon meal Miss Lee

tried to seem as intent as ever on the recovery of the gray trimmed green waist but ever and anon the light of other days shone in her fine blue eyes, and round about her lips the smiles played hide and seek. At supper time she announced that she and Miss Minnie would attend a revival service being held at a small Baptist church in the neighborhood. Mr. Malvern looked up with a quick smile as though about to ask to accompany them, then a resigned look came over his face and he remembered something about its being lodge night.

At the appointed time the two ladies left for church with no other escort than the young son of Mrs. Bradshaw.

After they were gone and her duties were over, Mrs. Bradshaw hied her up stairs to institute a thorough search for the missing garment. On opening the closet she found the waist reposing peacefully on a shelf with other winter clothes which had been laid away from the moths. Seizing the waist she ran down stairs and there was a general merry making over it. Mrs. St. Julian, a married sister of Mr. Malvern, suggested bringing out the whole dress and fixing up a dummy figure, dressing it in the green dress and having it ready as a surprise for Miss Lee and Miss Minnie.



MAMIE HUNT SIMS

When the two maiden ladies came in some one told Miss Lee that Mrs. Cartwright, an old friend from the country, wished to see her in Mrs. St. Julian's sitting room. Of course the whole household followed at a safe distance to see the fun. In her courteous "before the war" manner Miss Lee went forward and stooped to kiss her old friend, when lo, the face of the dummy met her gaze, then the gray trimmed green waist confronted her and as the joke dawned upon her she laughed good humoredly. The whole household joined in the merry making and the vindication of Viney was complete.

In a little while it was noticed that both Miss Lee and Mr. Malvern had disappeared. One of the children coming in announced the fact that Miss Lee and Mr. Malvern were sitting by the piano "but Miss Lee isn't playing a bit, just listening to Mr. Malvern." In less than an hour Mr. Malvern came in leading Miss Lee by the hand. They walked up to Mrs. Bradshaw and he announced their engagement and asked her blessing. Congratulations followed and mirth reigned supreme.

The next morning when Viney came Mrs. Bradshaw told her of having found the missing garment and the happy ending of it all and added, "And now, Viney, Miss Lee knows you didn't

take the green basque and she won't suspect you any more." With a toss of her head Viney said, "No'm, she aint never spected me, she knowed dat waist warn't gone, she jest done dat to make old Mr. Malvern sorry for her. Mammy say, dat de way wid white folks, if de kin git a white man right down sorry fur em, de'll allays fall in love wid em.

DE METER POND

De Meter Pond

One Saturday morning little Helen told Roy that she wished him to accompany her to the postoffice and also to make a little visit to the Hall children on the way back home. Roy thought he preferred staying at home and suggested that she get an older sister to accompany her, but she confided to him through furtive tears that a beef was to be killed that day and that Uncle Jake had told her that he was to kill Mark, a beautiful yearling and a great pet of the children. "Of course you don't want to see that and Uncle Jake has promised me to have it all over with by the time I get back," said she. The little boy, glad to get away from unpleasantness of any kind, consented to go.

The two children set out hand in hand and were soon happy in the delights of a spring morning in the South. They staid until nearly noon and coming in at the front door saw the family assembled on the back porch listening to Uncle Jake explain something in eloquent tones. "M'arm, I knowed you'd be specting me ter bring dat beef up here and I's pizen sorry I can't fetch it. But you know how skittish dese here young cows is and time I shot dat yearling instead of fallin over dead like dey

generally does he tuck to his heels en lipt de fence and went splittin down de road and shedding uv blood at every step." "O, mamma," sobbed Helen, "let brother and me go with Uncle Jake to find him; he may be suffering." "No'm, no'm, Mistis, don't you let dem chillen go wid me ter dat Duckry pasture case de sight of fresh blood runs cows pretty near mad and dey'll tromple dem chillen scanlous, maybe kill em both."

The little girl began to cry and Roy explained to his mother that he could take care of his sister and they were quickly gotten ready for this errand of mercy, not without some misgivings on the part of the mother and with many admonitions to Uncle Jake to take good care of the children and be sure to put the poor animal out of its suffering in the quickest way possible. Uncle Jake went to saddle Paragon, Helen's black pacer, for the children to ride and a mule for his own mount, and during his absence the children's grandmother said, "Don't cry so, Helen, Mark isn't suffering. I have an idea that while Jake came here to tell this cock and bull story he sent Joe and Beauregard to drive the calf off to some of his neighbors where tonight they will slaughter it and barbecue the most of it to carry to the all-day meeting at their

church tomorrow." Thus reassured and comforted the children started out in better spirits. On gaining the door they were met with the astonishing news that, "'Taint nary creature in dat lot cept only Paragon." "Well," said Helen, "brother and I will ride a while and Uncle Jake walk and then we'll walk while he rides." The old man shook his head with an air of resignation and said, "Miss Helen, if twarent fur you Mr. Roy wouldn't be studyin' bout gwine." The procession finally started and for more than a mile they pursued their way to the Duckry pasture. Looking intently on the ground for a short distance, the old man said, "I see from de tracks Mark ain't been down here." "Why, Uncle Jake, you said you saw him come to the Duckry pasture," said Helen. "Now, Mr. Roy, I kin prove it by you dat I ain't pintedly said I seed him come ter de Duckry pasture. I said I seed him headin dis way." They were obliged to confess that those were about his words, albeit they had been uttered with such an air of conviction that there had been left little room to doubt. "Then," said Roy, in his matter-of-fact way, "if he didn't come here, where did he go?" The old man sat down under a tree to rest and assumed an air of perplexed thought. Then an inspiration came to him and he said, "I know

where he gone and I mout er knowed it at de first. He gone plumb down ter de Brudger swamp." "Why, Uncle Jake, why don't you think he has gone to our own pasture?" "Case, chillen, I'll tell you fur why, he was hurt so bad, dat yearlin was, dat he didn't had sense enough ter know whar he wanted ter go. But you all get off dat horse and walk back home and I'll get on de horse and ride down ter de Budger swamp an put dat po critter outen his misery, ef he ain't already done died, which I know in reason he done time he got dere."

The children were not be thwarted from their purpose and after many arguments the cavalcade started for the Budger swamp some four miles away. After journeying two miles or more of the way the old man again halted, while he rode the horse and the children walked. "Lord, chillen, I know whar dat yearlin gone; he gone straight ter de meter pond." The palmetto pond—a thing of beauty but damp and boggy—lay between them and a corner of their own pasture. Both the children agreed joyfully to going there, but the old man said, "No, no, you can't go, but I'se gwine get off en dis horse and put you all up on her and den I'm gwine pintedly send you all back home ter yer ma, case she'll be oneasy about you and den I know you all is

hongry ennyhow." "No, siree," said little Helen, "we are going with you till we find Mark." But he shook his head and dismounting led Paragon to a fallen log and helped the children mount. "Now," said he, in his most emphatic tones, "you all hatter go back case you can't ride through de meter pond, you can't, you can't." "Well," argued Roy, "we'll walk through." "But," the old man persisted, "you can't walk through the meter pond; you can't, you can't." Both the children declared that in that case they would ride around the pond. "You can't ride round hit, chillen, case de underbrush is so thick hit'll all scrape you offen dat horse." Helen and Roy laughed at the idea of the underbrush unseating them when Paragon was so gentle; she would stop at a moment's notice. As they neared the "meter pond" in their eagerness to watch out for Mark they grew careless of the overhanging boughs, and pretty soon a limb from a white oak scraped them both off and piled them in a heap at Paragon's heels. The faithful animal stopped instantly and the children sprang to their feet unhurt. Uncle Jake, in a tone of triumph, said, "Now, den, hit's a God's mercy you chillun weren't trompled to death en I reckon you all go back now, won't you?" They again refused and leading the horse they fol-

lowed Uncle Jake through the meter pond with very little discomfort. "Uncle Jake," said Helen, "I thought you couldn't walk through the meter pond?" The old man, with more irritation than he usually showed where the children were concerned, said, "I want ter ax you, is you walked through the meter pond yit and us gets bout ter de middle and all on de sides is full er snakes and I looks for one or both uv you chillen ter git bit by an whoppin big snake fore us gets ten steps funder." "What sort of snakes," asked Roy, "poisonous ones, Uncle Jake?" "Pizenous! Lord, Lord, dey sho is pizenous, ef you call rattlesnakes and high land moccasins en coach whups pizenous." The children insisted on a continuance of the journey and finally emerged from the meter pond to find Mark grazing peacefully with the other cattle and with a rope wound around his short horn. Both the children ran to him to look him over and found that he bore not a scratch, and Roy said, "How did he come here, Uncle Jake?" "Why, he comed on his foots, dat's how, he come arter I shot him he comed here." "But," persisted the boy, "he hasn't been shot." "Den, Roy, I must er missed him same like you miss bout half de squirrels en birds you shoots at." "But, Uncle Jake," said Helen, "how could you say he was bleed-

ing at every step when he hasn't any blood about him?" The old man scratched his forehead and took another chew of tobacco in his mouth as he said, "Dat sho do look strange, but ef you all won't rush dem questions at me so fast I can splain it all erway. Marse Andy Jackson allus did say he bleeved I'd go blind when I got old, an Aunt Daffney lowed, she did, dat dere wus blood on de moon when I wus born en ez I git older I'd begin ter see things look bloody when twarn't no blood dere." This explanation satisfied the children and they unwound the rope from Mark's horns and led him home to their anxious mother and grandmother. Their cup of happiness almost ran over when their mother told them that as a reward for their perseverance they should have Mark to drive to their little cart and he shouldn't be killed, ever.

THE GHOST WALKS

The Ghost Walks

“Chillun,” said Uncle Jake, “is I ever told you a ghost story?” “Well,” said Helen, “you told us about your Marse Johnny’s house-party and the ghost that came there.” “Lord, Lord, I axes you, does you endignify dat little nanydote wid de name of ghost story? Ef you does, jest listen whiles I tells you dis one and you will say you never is heerd tell of a ghost story.

“Bout some several weeks ago I was riding along one night talking to Black Jack ’bout all his little cussed ways, such as picking chickens off de roost and other little things dat ain’t zactly sins, and still white folks objects to them. Jest den us mules give a jump, dey did, and started off in a lope. Us wuz so scared us didn’t know what to do, and us looked around and dere settin on a milk-white horse was something er other dressed in shining white robes and wid a crown on its head. We rid faster and de ghost rid faster, and us was skeered to death, pretty nigh, case us knowed us wuz pretty near de Bridges swamp, and hit would be so damp that de spirits could do anything wid us dat dey wanted to. You know, Master Roy, how dark dat swamp was de night you wuz

looking for Paragon, when us thought she was lost, and us found out Black Jack rid her off." The little boy remembered it with a shudder, and Uncle Jake continued: "Well, dat night wuz bright as day by de side of dis one, hit wuz so dark dat you could er scraped de darkness off wid a drawin knife er chopped hit off wid a foot adz. By de time us was skeered to death de ghost laid holt of us hosses and gentlemens, whilst me and Black Jack was trembling so us teeth wuz chatterin (least ways Jack's wuz, and I had stuffed my handkercher in my mouf to keep mine fum chatterin), dat ghost gin us er talk dat beat de beater. O, Lord, I wish you chillun could have heerd what dat sperrit said. Ise heerd talks and talks in my times, but dat was de most expoundin zamification I ever is heerd." "What did the ghost say?" asked Roy. "Did he scold Black Jack for stealing the yellow hen and the pig and the other things?" "Well," said Uncle Jake, "I kin sooner tell you what dat ghost didn't say. But howsomever, it spounded de reason why hit ain't no harm for a nigger ter take a few of de white folks' thing. Hit said white folks have so much dat de Lord expects um ter divide wid cullud folks what ain't got so much. Den I up and axed him 'Did a few

hens and a yearling er two and maybe a pig or two count?’ and he laughed one of dese here long, screechy laughs, and said, ‘Not in de least.’ Den I up and told him about de yellow hen and a few of de white folks pigs Black Jack had ticed off, and den I told him bout my stretchin de truth a little ter get er little measly quart of whiskey when I were as dry ez er chip. I asked him do them things count? Chillun dat ghost laughed de most ungawdly laugh you ever heerd and said dat dem things warent counted in Heaven and dat de lady angels don’t ever mention it when dey has dey sewin society. Den he went on to low dat dem things wuz all right, dat hits expected dat dem dat has must give ter dem dat hain’t, and ef dey fergits ter divide den dem dat hain’t must help deyselves ter what dey want. But it lowed it saves trouble to slip round and get hit when hit’s dark. And he pintedly said ef we knowed any rich white folks what wuz too stingy ter divide ef we would tell der names dat it would hant dere homes nightly.” “Oh, Uncle Jake,” sobbed Helen, “did you tell him we were stingy?” “No, Lord, I didn’t; I told him you all were about the free heartedest chillun I ever is seed, and I just fotch my bucket erlong case I knowed Miss Helen were gwine ter give me some good vittels, and Mr. Roy wuz gwine get me some two or three cigars for ter smoke.”

**BLACK JACK AND THE
YELLOW HEN**

Black Jack and the Yellow Hen

Not long after Helen and Roy had unearthed Mark and led him home in triumph, they went over to spend the day with the Halls, a family in the neighborhood of whom the children were specially fond. They had played base, high spy, chicky-my craney-crow and marbles till late in the afternoon. Tired out, they were sitting on the steps waiting for their uncle to come by for them in the buggy. Mrs. Hall came out to feed the chickens and put them up for the night. While this interesting performance was going on, Helen gave a start and whispered to Roy, "O, brother, there's the yellow hen that has been missing since Monday." Roy gave her a pinch which meant silence but the little girl had no idea of leaving without finding out about the hen. She left the steps and joined Mrs. Hall where the baby chickens crowded around her feet eating the "dough" from the pan she held in her hand, while the mother hens clucked and fumed as they do, in their anxiety to get the chickens in their own coops. Mrs. Hall pointed out the size and beauty of certain broods of chickens but Helen's eyes were fixed on the yellow hen. Noticing it Mrs. Hall said, "Isn't that a pretty hen? I bought it Monday night from such a

good old colored man." Instantly Helen's heart sank. Was Uncle Jake to be caught red-handed in another theft before the month was out? "Was the man low and gray-haired, Mrs. Hall?" she asked. "No, dear, he was tall and thin and very black." A sigh of relief, and Helen said, "O, that was Black Jack." "Why, Helen, do you know anything about the hen?" "Yes, ma'am, she belongs to us. When she was a twenty weenty little chicken she got hurt and grandmother said if brother and I would be good to her and get her well she could be ours. I fed her and brother set her leg where it was broken and she got well." Mrs. Hall at once caught the hen and put it in a basket and wanted the children to take it home with them but Roy thought as she had paid for it, it belonged to her and so refused to take it. As soon as they were in the buggy on the way home, Helen told her uncle about it. He laughed heartily and told Helen if she unearthed any more thefts he would send her to join the Pinkerton Detective force.

Pretty soon after they reached home Black Jack came up with an arm full of pine knots for "ole Miss," as he called the children's grandmother. He was accused of the theft of the chicken but denied it bitterly. But just then a boy brought the hen in sent as present by Mrs. Hall. With

the quickness and cunning of the race he said, "O, yes I members now, dat hen was eatin up all de corn fum de hosses and I knowed twarn't no use to ask dem children to let he be kilt so I thought de easiest way would be jest ter take her clean off de place and sell her. Dem chillen wastes too much time foolin with dat hen enny how. Dem chillen ought to be kep in strict con-finnance ter der books. Fust thing you know dey'll be grown here and won't be graduwated; but I am in a hurry, I just come up here to fetch ole Miss some pine and tell you all how fine my crap is. An here's dat quarter, I wish you'd please send it back to Mrs. Hall, case she might think I aimed to stole her hen."

With that he went to his cabin, nothing daunted by so slight a thing as the theft of a chicken. The next morning Roy and Helen were in the garden where Uncle Jake was weeding a bed of lettuce. They told him the whole story of how Jack had stolen the hen and sold it and omitted no detail, even telling how Jack produced the quarter which he sent back to Mrs. Hall. The old men listened without apparent interest in the story until the last incident. Then he looked up quickly, "And so Jack had to gib up dat quarter, did he?" he asked. "Why yes, Uncle Jake," said Helen, "of course he did. The

quarter didn't belong to him, did it?" The old man mused for awhile and then said, "And dis is what you call freedom. I don't call it freedom when you has to give up a quarter arter you had to cotch a hen and den walk a mile to sell it. "Chillun, dat's de difference twixt slavery and what folks call freedom. Ef it had been slavery time he might have been found out and punished, but he sho wouldn't have had to give up dat quarter. I bet my eyes outen my head, dat Jack wisht right then he could have been back in slavery and kept dat quarter. Jack has done worse things in slavery time den lifting a pesticating ole hen offen de roost and never got cotched up. Is I ever told you all about the time Jack killed his marster's horse?" No, they had never heard it.

"Den I haint tole you de best story I ever did nowe." "O, please tell us, Uncle Jake," asked both children. The old man shook his head with a wary look that always meant gain of some kind and said, "Some day I'll tell you, but not now, while I am so hongry." "O, Uncle Jake," said Helen, "I'll go and bring you a tin bucket full of things to eat if you tell." The little girl ran into the pantry and presently returned with a goodly store. The old man took the bucket and looked in to see biscuits, cold ham, corn

bread, tea cakes and cold pie. "Tell it now," said Roy.

"No, no I made a mistake, when I pintedly said I was hongry. I aint to say hongry so I am gwine ter tek deses here victuals home to Barbara and the chillen, but I jest naturally wants a chaw of tobacco so bad I can fairly taste it." "O, well," said Roy, "I can get you a piece of tobacco as big as my hand." The little boy ran in the house and soon returned with a piece of plug tobacco which was kept in the store-room for the wages hands. "Well, dis'll do. And it jest soots me to set down in the shade of dis umbrelly chiny tree." After the old man had made himself comfortable he began his story.

"Well, arter Marse Andy Jackson died, Miss Lucy Molton she fell heir to me and I come here to Alabama to live. At dat time Jack he were quite grown and he show did love to frolic. There warn't no frolic fum Goose Creek to Shilo dat dat nigger didn't go to. He could dance all night and den be as spry as a cricket next day. Well, one night all de boys and some of de gals was gwine to steal off and go to a dance at Marse Ezra Brown's quarter. De reason us had to steal off was case us white folks didn't neighbor wid de Browns and dey didn't

want us to sociate with dere niggers. Us all was going to put us foot in de road and walk but Jack he laughed, he was going to ride Marse Johnny's fine Kentucky hoss. Well, Marse Johnny warn't none too sober hisself when he got home and his hoss had been rid till he was tired. Jack he waited till Marse Johnny was in bed and then he took and slipped dat blooded hoss out, lipped up on him barebacked, and tuck Dolly what he was courtin up behind him and lit ought for the Brown quarters. Well, law, de fun us had dat night is way back in slavery time and don't come no mo since freedom. Us would have danced till daylight but us had to get back home fore de horn blowed to get up. Time I get down to the dessimon heerd Jack calling, 'Uncle Jake, Uncle Levi, Uncle Andrew, Bob, and de Lord knows who. Us went back us did, and dere was Dolly and dere was Jack, but Gawd help him dere was Marse Johnny's black hoss done dead. Andrew he laughed, 'Now you gwine to cotch it,' and Bob he laughed, 'I tole you not to ride that hoss.' All dis time Jack was unhitching the bridle from the tree, den he took and got down on the ground and put his shoulder to the hoss and low, 'Bob roll him over on my shoulder.' Bob low, 'What you gwine do, Jack?' He low, 'I am going to tote this hoss

home and git him in the stable.' Bob low, 'You can't tote dat hoss home.' Jack laughed, 'Nigger, don't you tell me I can't tote this hoss home, I blegged to tote him home.'" "Did he tote him home, Uncle Jake?" asked Helen. "No Lord, he didn't tote him home, but I tell you what us done. Us got some of the Brown niggers to hitch up a wagon and us all got round and lifted dat hoss onto de wagon and us driv home and put him in de stable and locked it up. And us sneaked in us houses fore daylight." "But, Uncle Jake," said Roy, "what happened when your Marse Johnny got up?" "Well, when Marse came out to de barn it was jest gettin light and Marse Johnny he had turn over in the bed to git his second nap. Us was feeding the mules but us had none of us been to the stalls where the hosses stands. I took a dozen years of corn and started in thar. When I got in there I low, 'Cricket, I never found you layin down in de mornin before.' Marster he laughed, 'It'll sprise me ef you don't cotch him dead sometime de way your Marse Johnny rides him.' I says, 'Fore Gawd, Marster, he done dead now.' Mars-ter come in the stall and look at him and low, 'Dar goes \$800.00 of my good money.' And den low, 'Jack, you go wake dat young cuss up and tell him to come here, I gwine to lay de law

down to dat boy. I learn him to ride a good hoss to death.' Jack run on, he did, and Marster turned and square his shoulders and us know Marse Johnny was gwine to ketch one of the Dutch talkings to. Time Marse Johnny came in the lot, Master low, 'Dis last act of yourn is de straw what breaks the camel's back. I am going to send you off to school, you young rascal.' And he was just whetting up his tongue to say more when he looked in the stable and dar was Marse Johnny down on his knees crying over dat hoss. With dat Master went to him and low, 'Don't take it so hard, my boy, go in and tell your mamma about it, she'll know what to say to you, and I'll buy you another hoss.' "

"But, Uncle Jake," said Helen, "didn't Black Jack feel sorry when he saw his Marse Johnny crying?" "Yes, all on us was sorry de hoss was dead, but Jack was glad he wan't scused of killing him and den he wan't so sorry nuther, cause when Marse Johnny went off to school he took Jack with him and Jack low they had all de fun."

UNCLE JAKE GETS
A DRAM

Uncle Jake gets a Dram

One morning as Helen and Roy were playing croquet they saw Uncle Jake riding in great haste toward the back gate. He quickly dismounted and came to the steps of the porch where the family were sitting and said, "Barbara is mighty sick, she mighty nigh dead and I wouldn't be sprised ef she ain't dead by now." "O," said Helen, (who with Roy had come to learn the cause of Uncle Jake's perturbation) "Mama, let brother and me go to see her before she dies." Their mother said, "Wait a moment," and to Uncle Jake she said, "Go right over to the doctor and ask him to go at once to see Barbara." "Yassum, but I wants ter tell you that when Barbara dies I'se gwine ter move up in de quarters so I can be here handy when you needs any body ter go atter de doctor at night. Yassum I spects to end my days right dere." "But Jake," said the lady, "go on for the doctor, he may be able to save her even yet." "N'om, n'om," said the old man, "nothin can't save her, she's bound fer de promised land but I think ef I had er quart of good whiskey I could give her enough ter make her die easy." The whiskey was quickly given him and he started home at a swinging gallop, followed quickly by Helen and Roy rid-

ing Paragon. The fleet horse soon outran the mule and when the children reached the comfortable double log cabin Aunt Barbara was out under a shade tree ironing "de white folks" clothes, scolding Beauregard to make him keep up the log fire upon which she heated her iron and in a rich full voice sang snatches of camp-meeting songs. "O, Aunt Barbara," said Helen, "do you feel better? We were so afraid you would be dead when we got here and brother and I were so sorry and we were going to put flowers on your grave." "Bless your little hearts, chillun, you's most ez good ez angels but I ain't been sick." "Why," said Roy, "Uncle Jake said you would be dead by the time he got home and he's coming on now with a quart of whiskey mama gave him to save your life." "O, yes, dat de way he's plowing, is it? Beauregard, you go down dare to dat ten-acre lot and tell your daddy I done heerd bout his gwine up dare telling lies bout my being sick and tell him he better send me dat whiskey, en ef he don't I'm gwine ter come down dere arter him."

Pretty soon Beauregard returned with the bottle but most of the whiskey had vanished. "Well," said Aunt Barbara, "sence I come ter think of it, I don't ter say feel right well case I got misery in my head and a quare feeling

round my heart so I'll just make me a little
toddy and drink it an den I'll feel like gwine on
wid my work."

**THE GRAVEYARD
RABBIT**

The Graveyard Rabbit

One morning in April of the year following the vindication of Viney, Mrs. Bradshaw found her in the kitchen with her pocket turned wrong side out, a pin in her mouth and trying to heat the shovel "red hot." "Why, Viney," she said, "what is the matter?" "Lord, Miss Helen, sumpin gwine ter happen quick an sho and hit ain't gwine ter be nuthin good nuther." "Why do you think so, Viney?" "Well, Miss Helen, you know us lives out on de aidge of town and dis mornin when I got up soon so I could get ter my work in time a scrooch owl was er hollerin his best, and I say, 'Dar now, sumpin gwine drap, an den what should up an happen but er whip-po'-will hollered three times an stop. Yessum, he sho did, three times, Miss Helen." "Why not three times as well as more, Viney, or less than three?" "Aw, Miss Helen, ain't you knowed dat hits de wuss kind er luck fer er whip-poor-will to holler three times and stop! You ain't knowed it, Miss Helen, and you white an a grown woman? Why, I knowed dat ever since I was knee high ter er duck. But hit beats de world how white folks can call dereselves eddicated and book larnt and don't know nuthin t'all erbout signs. But here I is solumquizing bout

white folks' ignance and ain't told you about de sign what capped it all. Dis las sign is so skeery. I hates ter talk erbout it, but I gwine tell it all. Ez I come erlong er graveyard rabbit tuck and run across my path. I was so skeered I lip up in de air an hollered loud ez I could an den I put dis pin in de left han corner uv my mouf. When de scrooch owl hollered I turned my pocket wrong side out and now I'm gwine ter keep de shovel red hot all day." Mrs. Bradshaw smiled and realizing that Ephraim is joined to his idols did not attempt to shake Viney's faith in the superstition that had been handed down from savage ancestry. She told Mrs. St. Julian of the evil omens scattered along Viney's path that morning and they both laughed knowing that whatever accident happened to any of the household for a year Viney would say, "I tole you so, Miss Helen." Everything passed off pleasantly throughout the day, but at supper time Mrs. Bradshaw noticed that a young man, a recent addition to the household, looked unhappy. He was a dear boy of nineteen, a native of Tennessee, and he and Mrs. Bradshaw had many friends in common, she having spent the previous summer in the mountains of that state. To the lady there had been a look of impending trouble in the boy's face and a touch of pathos

about the almost girlish mouth appealed to her strongly. After supper Mrs. St. Julian asked her to come in and listen to some music, but to Mrs. Bradshaw's mind Little Willie, as one of the young men had styled the newcomer, needed cheering up. Leaving the group at the piano, she walked out on the front porch to see if she could find him. As she mentally said, she must get in some mother-work, and get it in quickly. The door to the boy's room opened on the porch and was wide open. Mrs. Bradshaw was shocked by what she saw. Before a desk on which was spread writing material sat Little Willie, the picture of despair. His chin resting on his breast and his eyes staring into vacancy with a look that could mean nothing less than contemplated suicide. She looked long and earnestly and felt sure she saw, as she termed it, the Ala River in his eyes. The night was balmy, one of those soft moonlight nights in the South that seem tense with the glory of early Spring. Calling his name softly she saw him pull himself together with a visible effort and slowly he looked into her eyes. Mrs. Bradshaw, full of nervous dread that she could hardly define, exerted her strongest will power to keep from him the knowledge that by some strange occult power she divined his thoughts.

They stood by the carved banister that surrounded the wide porch, and in a voice vibrant with deep feeling, she said:—

“Oh I want to go back to the old home,
Though I know they have gone away,
Who lived and loved in the old time,
But were I there to-day,
I could dream them back to the fireside,
I could see my mother's face
And forget my homesick longing
In the peace of the dear home place.”

At first the boy seemed impatient but before many lines were said his eyes were moist, and when she had finished he looked at her through unshed tears. Not seeming to notice his emotion she began to talk of her childhood home and of the gentle mother who, though long since had entered into rest, lived still in the hearts of her children. She told of her brother far away from the home of his childhood who still clung to the teachings of his mother. Then she spoke to Willie of his mother; asked a few questions and drew him on irresistibly to talk of her. Several times she heard Mrs. St. Julian call her and once her own little boy came out and stood by her, his golden head just reaching the top of the banister, but she talked on as one

inspired. Gradually a change came over Little Willie and when he had, as it were, passed from the shadow of suicide into the determination to live and grapple with his difficulties, she felt it as strongly as she had his other mental attitude. As she told him good night, Little Willie said, "You may never know till the judgment how much your words have helped me, but in the name and for the sake of my mother, I thank you." A few minutes later when Mrs. St. Julian asked Mrs. Bradshaw why she did not come in for the music she said, "I saw the Ala River in Little Willie's eyes and have been talking it out." Mrs. St. Julian laughingly said, "O, I know what is the trouble. Viney's scrooch owl, whip-poor-will and graveyard rabbit have gotten on your nerves and you imagine it." Mrs. Bradshaw smiled, but when she gathered her little ones around her for the family prayers she thanked God that He had made her the instrument of good to the boy.

When Viney came next morning her first question was: "Is anything out uv de way happened while I wuz home, Miss Helen?" Mrs. Bradshaw was about to say no when her experience with Little Willie and the river came to mind, and she said, "Yes, Viney, something unusual occurred but nothing that I can tell you."

“Yassum,” said Viney, “I don’t so perticular want ter know what it wuz, but don’t you think you ought ter give me er little present ter sorter even up an show dat you is willin ter pay fer all de warnings dat I is good enough ter give you?” To Mrs. Bradshaw’s anxious eyes the look of desperation on Little Willie’s face had given place to one of seriousness and indecision. A few days after the talk on the porch a young brother of Mrs. St. Julian told her that he had decided to enter business in Mobile; had good prospects and had persuaded Little Willie to accept a position with him and they would leave at once. After the young men had been gone about ten days Mrs. St. Julian received a letter from her brother saying, “Little Willie left to-day for D—— to marry the girl about whom he had been in trouble. He says he never could have taken this step in his own strength and had determined to end his life and had selected the spot on the Ala River where he would drown himself, but just as he was writing a letter of farewell to his mother Mrs. Bradshaw called him out on the porch and there in the moonlight she talked of home and mother in such a way that suicide was quite impossible. So through Mrs. Bradshaw’s influence he had gone to make reparation to the girl by marrying her.”

AN HONEST MAN

An Honest Man

It was back in the 80's. I was cashier for the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railroad Company. The train had pulled into the station at Selma and while the passengers were alighting one of those unaccountable accidents happened. The train gave a convulsive jump and a passenger, Mr. Young, was thrown down in such a manner that his spine was injured. He was carried to his home where he lived with his three good sisters. He was critically ill for a month and we heard nothing of any damage suit but supposed that they were waiting to find the real extent of the injuries. After a couple of weeks of convalescence, during which we heard nothing, the superintendent told me to write a polite and cordial note asking him to call at my office looking towards an adjustment. The superintendent said, "This thing must be settled out of court, if possible. Try to compromise on three thousand. Don't cavil too long on five thousand, but if he won't take five thousand we'll have to fight it out, I presume." The next day Mr. Young walked into my office and asked what was wanted. I began with my cut-and-dried speech. We wished to consult about the slight accident at the train a short time since. Of course we

were willing to do anything in reason and we feel sure that you will be amenable to reason. The good man tried to straighten himself up but a pain from the still weak back warned him that not yet could he assume the erect carriage which has hitherto been his.

Before he could speak, I said, "Mr. Young, you can tell us the amount you will contend for and if it is reasonable we will settle here and now." "Why," said he, "I won't contend for anything, but if you are perfectly willing you may pay the doctor's bill, which is eighty-seven dollars." Had Heaven suddenly opened its doors and lent to the earth one of its saints? I looked again, and there in flesh and blood sat a man who with a strong case against the railroad company for at least five thousand dollars was offering to compromise on eighty-seven dollars. A man, too, of broad intelligence and fine position. As soon as I could recover myself I thanked him but told him we would not think of letting him pay any of his expenses and wrote out a check for one thousand dollars. He accepted it under protest and feared that he was doing wrong to accept it as he said it was purely accidental.

ROSSELUS

Rosullus

Mrs. Grey, a resident of San Antom, asked her colored washwoman to get her a man who could mow the lawn, look after flowers and make himself generally useful. "La! Miss Ruth, I wish ter Gawd you'd give Rosellus a trial. He my son, but I'm gwine tell yer de trufe bout dat nigger. He jest naturally ain't worth de powder and lead hit would take ter kill im but I hav ter support him an ef you'll take him on trial I'll try ter keep him in strict confinnance ter his duty bound business." "Well," said the lady, "I would rather have more promising help, but to oblige you, Aunt Laura, I'll give him an opportunity to prove his ability." "Yassum, Miss Ruth, he ain't ter say got no ability cept fer hunting jack rabbits and ketchin fish." Forewarned is forearmed, and so Mrs. Grey was not surprised when after two days' absence Rosellus reported that he had "de misery in his head." Mrs. Grey knew better, as the cook had told her privately that Rosellus' uncle had come in from the country on horseback and that Rosellus was riding his horse about town, taking care to keep away from the house and Mr. Grey's office. He came limping up with one eye bandaged and said, "Miss Ruth, is my work been missing me

from round here?" "No," said the lady, "I hired a man yesterday, but why didn't you come?" "Miss Ruth," said he, "I been sick. I shore is been sick and ef any nigger tole you I was riding round town he sho told a story on me." "O, yes, Rosellus," said the lady, "Mr. Grey felt sure you must be ill so he has some medicine to give you now." Just then Mr. Grey came out with a cupful of strong looking, loud smelling concoction and in a very solemn manner offered it to Rosellus. The boy began backing off and making excuses for not taking it, but Mr. Grey followed closely and succeeded in pouring it down him. It was a harmless but very nauseous dose and Rosellus forgot to limp and soon lost the bandage from his eye. He became very steady and industrious and came regularly for about ten days and then missed one day. The next morning when he appeared Mrs. Grey said, "Well, Rosellus, we supposed you were sick yesterday, so Mr. Grey is preparing some medicine for you." "No'm, Miss Ruth, I warn't sick, but mamma was sick and I had ter stay home ter cook for papa and milk de cow and ten der de chillun and go arter de doctor an get mamma some medicine, and—" "Oh," said Mrs. Grey, "you were busy and if you had all that to do I don't blame you for

staying away." Just then Mr. Grey came out with the medicine and in spite of Rosellus' protests, poured the medicine down him. Things moved quietly along for two months; in the meantime Rosellus seemed to be growing quite steady and capable. Then one fine morning he failed to show up and Mrs. Grey supposed some relatives had come to visit them. A few days later his mother came to the house and said, "Miss Ruth, is you gwine be prepared to hear de news I got ter tell you bout Rosellus?" "Well," said the lady, "I hardly think I'll be surprised at anything he does." "Well, ma'am, tother day when he tole you that lawn mower was dull and hatter be sharpened and lowed hit needed some other fixments which in all would cost a dollar and you gib it to him, what you think he done? He brung dat lawn mower to my house and lef it under de bed and tuk and let a dollar of mine take up with him and runned away with Brer George and Sis Lizzie Brown's gal Cindy and got married. De license cost er dollar and a half and dey had fifty cents ter buy um some dinner and dey went to my brother's out in de country and staid till dis morning an den dey happen up at my house." "Well," said Mrs. Grey, "are you going to forgive him?" "Yas-sum, I'll forgive um ef he can find any work

ter do, case I can let Cindy help me wid de washing." "Well," said the lady, "you can forgive him then as I will take him back to work." "Well, Miss Ruth, thank Gawd for that case I sho wouldn't forgive him ef he had ter loaf round home."

THE WITCHES' RIDE

The Witches' Ride

One night as Uncle Jake left the house to go to his log cabin he went singing along carrying a tin bucket of cold food which had been saved for him by Helen and Roy. He had not gone far when he was overtaken by Black Jack, who carried in his hands a large red rooster belonging to Roy. It was dark but the old man carried a torch and by its light he could see the rooster. "Ah, ha!" said the old man, "I see you got Roy's rooster. What you gwine to do when de chile begin ter cry bout it and de white folks begin ter search all us yards fur red rooster fedders?" "Ah Lord, dey can sarch an sarch, but dey'll never find um at my house case I'se gwine ter burn dem time I picks dis chicken." "Nigger," said Uncle Jake, "when you goes ter take up wid one of de white folks chickens er pigs er cows what makes you always pick out de ones what belongs to de chillen? You know dey gwine ter miss um and Lord knows little Miss Helen mighty nigh ez quick ter find out anything ez ole Miss. You know ole Miss knows what you thinking erbout fore you knows it yerself, and I spects de ghosts tells her, don't you?" "Uncle Jake, I don't know nothing bout ghosts and morn dat I wisht

ter Gawd you'd hush talking bout um whilst us is passing through dere woods." "Lord, Jack, is I ever tole you bout de time I was riding home one' dark night? I hadn't, ter say, stole no mule, but I had borrowed one onbeknown to de white folks an jest as I come by here I heerd er sound like de whirlin of wings an de air got cold, it did, an a scrooch owl scrooched an a whip-poor-will hollowed, an way off in de distance a sheep bleat and still farder off a cow lowed and hit thundered, but hit didn't lightin, and I heerd er horse neigh an all de time dat whirring of wings all bout my ears. Dat horse stopped stock still an all my kickin and spur-ring didn't 'vail ter make him go. I lowed, 'Please, Marster Spirit, let me go; I'se a mis-sable sinner but I'll do better, I sho will.' De whirrin of wings kept up an den I lowed, 'I streches de trufe,' den something tole me to myself I better slip off dat horse and make tracks. I slipped off, I did, and run fer home, and when I got dere Barbara knowed for I told her I'd seed a spirit." "But what come of de horse?" asked Black Jack. "Well, next mornin when I went up ter de barn to feed de hosses dar was Marster Roy and Miss Helen lowed Paragon got out of her stable and dey heerd her neighing and come out and found her at de gate.

Jack, I looked at dat horse and I knowed twas witches was arter me dat night, and arter I slipped off and run home they must er rid dat horse pretty nigh er hundred miles, case she was covered wid dry lather like er horse dat had been rid pretty near ter death and her mane an tail was tied in regular witch knots. An arter dat I heerd of witches being over in de Shiloh neighborhood dat same night an sum of um was riding a black horse dat I knowed was Paragon, which you knows dey generally rides er white horse."

**AUNT HANNAH
EXPOUNDS SCRIPTURES**

Aunt Hannah Expounds the Scriptures

One Sunday Helen and Roy went into the kitchen where Aunt Hannah, the cook, sat resting, smoking and nodding. They had just asked her to tell them a story, a real nice story about slavery time and how good her master and mistress had been to her, when Uncle Jake burst into the room with: "Sis Hannah, is you heerd de news?" "Oh Lord!" said that dignitary, "I is an I ain't. Some er de news I'se heerd an some of it I ain't heerd, but I kin see you is bustin ter tell some." "O, Uncle Jake," said both the children, "do tell us about it." Uncle Jake struck an attitude of great importance and said, "Well, a man an a woman been killed in broad daylight, right in de big road some two er three miles dis side of Shiloh." "Umph," grunted Aunt Hannah, "who dat been killed?" "Why," said Uncle Jake, "early dis mornin Bob Fisher tuk and stole Brer Jack Bridges' gal Laura, an dey runned away ter git married. Dey had jest been gone bout an hour when Brer Bridges found it out an saddled dat big bay mule of his'n and shouldered his shotgun and rid forth fer ter ketch em and he lowed when he did cotch em he was gwine ter kill em both widout so much ez lowing em ter say dere pray-

ers, and now dey lying dere welterin in dere gore." Helen began to sob, but Roy realizing that Uncle Jake's sensations were not always authentic, asked, "Did you see them after he shot them, Uncle Jake?" "No, I ain't zactly seen um but I know dey are lyin dere dead case I seen Brer Bridges when he was loping arter um wid his gun on his shoulder and blood in his eye. Den Barbara lowed dere was blood on de moon dis quarter and I knowed dat was it." "Ah, ha!" said Aunt Hannah, "dat mought all er cum true ef it hadn't er been for me! But ez Brer Bridges rid by our gate dis mornin one of de Lawd's handmaidens was dere and turned him outen de way." "How is dat, Sis Hannah?" asked Uncle Jake. "Well, soon in de mornin I seen dem young things gwine by on dat pacin mule of Sis Leah's an I spicioned what was de matter and I turned de time of day wid dem and axed em where dey gwine. Dey up and says as I was a mother in de church dey didn't mind tellin me, and dat dey was running away ter git married. Dey lowed dey was going ter Shiloh where Brer George Essex was holdin a distracted meeting. I knowed ef dey went dere dey'd shore be cotched up wid and I said, "Chillun, you all is my chillun in de sight of Gawd case I'm a mother in de church an I kin tell

you a better way dan dat. You all turn off from de big road and go over to old Marster's and ax him, I say, ter please, for Gawd's sake, to inform de ceremony fer you case ef you have to go ter Shiloh Brer Bridges gwine shore cotch up wid you and think he hatter kill you both case he's made sech er fool of hisself trying ter keep you from gettin married.' Wid dat dey struck off through de brushes and went to ole Marster's and I knowed he was dere case de Lord done flicted him wid rheumatism and he is bleegeed ter keep by de fire. Well, I sauntered on down de road singing—

'Roll, Jordan, roll,
Roll, Jordan, roll,
Lord bless my soul,
Roll, Jordan, roll.'

Den I sung—

'Mazin grace, how sweet de sound,
To save a wretch lak me.'

And I was jest gettin ready ter kneel down on de side of de road and pray for dem poor chil-lun when I heerd something go 'blockety, blockety, blady go,' and I looked down de road and here come Brer Bridges ridin dat ole big mule er his'n wid whip and spur and holdin his gun

jest as careless ez er white man. I beckoned to him, I did, and he stopped and low, 'Sis Hannah, is you seed my gal?' I said, 'Yes, I is and I'm gwine ter tell you de Gawd's trufe, dey is gone in a gallop ter Shiloh whare Brer George Essex is holdin a distracted meetin and dey lowed dey warent gwine ter stop till dey got dere.' Wid dat he said, 'Gawd bless you, Sis Hannah, fer tellin me de trufe,' and den he loped on towards Shiloh."

"O, Aunt Hannah," said Helen, "how could you tell such a story? Aren't you afraid God will punish you for it?" "No, chile, dat I ain't. De Bible says, 'Blessed am he dat tells er lie ter squash a fus.' Shiloh is eighteen miles and Brer Jack can't get back fore sundown, and by dat time dey'll be married and back home where Sis Mandy kin pertect dem chillun an Brer Jack won't dast ter tetch em arter Sis Mandy done forgives em."

BLACK JACK AND
THE PIG

Black Jack and the Pig

"Chillun," said Uncle Jake, "is I ever told you about de time Black Jack had de pig in his basket?" No, they had not heard about it and asked when it could have happened without their hearing of it.

"Does you all member when you went wid your mamma ter spend a while in Mobile?" Did they remember it! Could they ever forget the delights of that trip! Ah! Ah! "I knowed you'd member de time. Well, you know you all rid ter de river in the de carridge and Black Jack driv. Well, Black Jack ought er got back fore sundown, but he made it just about fust dark when he come back wid de carridge. He on-hitched de hosses out dere by de carridge house and sent em to de stable by Beauregard. I war out dere in de peach orchard feedin de pigs. I spicioned sumpen war wrong when I seed Jack climb over de fence and come up ter where I war settin on a stump feedin de pigs, so I warent sprized when I seed Black Jack sidling up ter dat little black and white pig what Miss Helen pet so much dat he gentler dan er dog. Fust thing I knowed dere warent no white pig on de ground. Den I seed Jack slipping off wid sumpin in his basket dat might er been er pig." "Oh,

Uncle Jake," cried Helen, "did you let him slip off with my dear little white pig?" How did I knowed hit was in his basket. I couldn't see much, hit war getting so late. Howsumever, I axed ef he had er pig in dat basket and he low he might and he mightn't, but ef he did have one he was going ter take it home and kill it and have Mary ter cook it and take it ter de all-day meeting next day. I laughed ter myself case I knowed he'd be slicker dan er eel ef he could get by ole Miss wid dat pig. I clum over de fence and looked and in de dim light I seed ole Miss settin on de front porch wid her hands folded in her lap and lookin like she war prayin, but I reckon she must have been watchin, which de Scriptures commands us ter do de same ez ter pray. Well, Jack seed her, too, and he slipped erlong like er eel slippin in de water, but just fore he rounded de corner ole Miss riz up, she did, and say, 'Put dat basket here on de porch, I want ter see which one er dem pigs you got in dat basket.' Jack knowed dere warent no use ter say nuthin, and he put de basket down. Ole Miss opened it and seed de little white pig and she low, 'Ef you had to steal one you might er got one of the others and let Helen's pet pig alone.' Jack he stuttered and mumbled and arter a while he lowed he was just taking it to show

to his chillun. Ole Miss laughed and say, 'Well, you go put it back and don't you dast to steal de one what dem chillun all cry about.' Wid dat Jack went and put de white pig back." "And did he steal another one?" asked both the children. "Ah Lord, chillun, ef I is free, I ain't fall so low as ter tell tales ter de white folks on my own color. And yet," he added, "at the all-day meeting de next day I et some mighty nice tender young pig, but I don't pintedly say it come out er Black Jack's basket."

UNCLE NELSE

Uncle Nelse

It was just after the war was over and the Rev. Mr. Caldwell had returned home and was taking stock of his assets. There was the dear, noble wife who had cared for her three little children with no help except Aunt Martha, the faithful cook, who had stayed on even when told she was "free." Aunt Martha was the wife of Uncle Nelse, who went to the war with Mr. Caldwell, who entered as Chaplain but soon shouldered a musket and came out with a Captain's epaulets. Aunt Martha tended a patch of corn, looked after the cows and helped in many ways with the support of the family. Uncle Nelse looked after Mars Wes' comfort in a thousand ways and often when the army was living on parched corn he would call Mr. Caldwell out into a secluded place and give him a broiled chicken or duck and often other delicacies unknown to the other soldiers. At first Mr. Caldwell remonstrated with him and finally said, "Nelse, you must have stolen these things, and if you did I ought not to eat them," but the faithful servant said, "Mars Wes, you eat dat vitles and quit axin questions, for your stomach's sake. When Miss Occie saunt us out here ter preach

de gospel ter dese here soldiers she lowed, 'Nelse, look atter your Mars Wes fer my sake and see dat he gets enough ter eat.' Of course Miss Occie didn't spect de commissary ter run so low, but neither did she spec you ter shut up your Bible and go to fightin, but you did, and I never called you ter count for it, neither must you call me ter count for getting a few old chickens and garden truck." After that the delicacies were eaten without comment. On his return home Mr. Caldwell found that everything, even the bare necessities of life, were at a low ebb. Their conference would give him a circuit on which to preach, but he could not hope to collect more than two hundred dollars, and as his circuit was large he would be obliged to have a horse to ride, and it would take most of that for his traveling expenses. Just at this time he received a letter from a schoolmate offering him the presidency of a college in Massachusetts. It came at a time when he was almost despairing, and he read the letter to his wife and said, "Occie, I hate to give up my life work, but I don't see how I can support my family on the pittance my churches can give me. We just can't live on it, that is all." Before anyone could speak Uncle Nelse came in and said,

“Mars Wes, is God called you fer ter preach de gospel er ter get rich?” “Why,” said the minister, “to preach the gospel.” Den you go on an preach it and show sinners de way of life. You needn’t worry bout Miss Occie and de children, cose ef me and Martha can’t support dem we aint wuth killing.” “But, Nelse,” said the minister, “you and Martha are free and you don’t have to stay and work for us.” “Humph, you must think me and Martha is just common poor folks niggers. Waren’t Miss Occie’s father a bishop and want your ma kin to a president, and don’t you think us ain’t got no more pride dan ter let you show your want uv faith in God by throwin up de church and gwine off way up North ter be a President uv a College? No sirree, you keep ter your preachin and I’ll keep ter de corn and cotton patch and me and Martha will take care uv Miss Occie and de children till de folks gets so dey can pay you for your preachin like dey did before de war.” The minister yielded and for three or four years the crops that Nelse made were sold and the proceeds went to care for “Miss Occie and de children.” As times grew better the minister went from circuit to district, from district to the pastorate of the finest city churches

within his conference, but Uncle Nelse and Aunt Martha always accompanied them and were made comfortable and happy. Uncle Nelse was always given the position of sexton and took great pride in the discharge of his duties. Years have passed, Mars Wes has entered into rest, Uncle Nelse is old and has long since ceased to take thought of his support for little Miss Occie and young Mars Wes look after him with the same thought and care that he gave to look after things in the years succeeding the war.

**MARSE JOHNNIE'S
CHRISTMAS**

Marse Johnnie's Christmas.

"Chillun, is I ever tole you bout de ghostes what hanted de house what marster lived in when I fust come to Alabama?" "No, Uncle Jake, you never have really and truly told us," said little Helen. "Sometimes you speak of it and shake your head, but you haven't told us." "So I shakes my head, does I? Well, time I gets through wid it you chillun gwine shake your head and your foots, too. You'll be so scared you'll think Judgment done here. Miss Helen, you better git up close to Marster Roy, case I know good and well your teeth will be chatterin fore I gets half through." Thus admonished, the little girl moved nearer her brother and put her hand in his and the story began.

"Well, on Mars Leon place dere was a house dat weren't as big as de big house nor so little as some houses I's seed white folks live in since de surrender. Hit was built for ole Marster, fore Mars Leon was born, and den when Mars Leon was a widower fur de first time he built de big house. Atter dat de homestead was jes used when de big house wouldn't hold all de company. Well, us niggers hadn't ter say seen no real live ghostes

but us had seen and heard de spirits groan on several occasions. Well, dis whut I'm gwine tell happened de first X-Mass atter Mars Johnnie went ter Tuscaloosa ter school and tuck Black Jack wid him atter Black Jack killed Mars Johnnie horse, you know, I tole you dat story de day Miss Helen was so good ez ter give me dat bucket er good vittles.

All de Fall of de year us didn't get many letters fum Mars Johnnie, but de ones us did get he wus always asking fur money ter buy more books er a new uniform. Miss Sarah lowed dat she knowed Mars Johnnie had quit his wild ways and wus studying mighty hard, case he never had time ter write home 'cept when he needed money ter buy more books. But Marster shake his head case bit was always easier fur Mars Johnnie ter fool his Ma den it wus his Pa, fur I spec Mars Leon had been ter College hisself. Anyhow, towards X-Mas old Miss wrote Mars Johnnie ter bring ez many uv his friends home wid him fur X-Mas as he wanted and den she lowed de dear boy has studied so hard he has hardly had time to write home, except when he needed money fur more books. Mars Johnnie turned de answer back dat he would bring twelve friends wid him, and fur his Marster

ax about dat many girls ter spend de whole two weeks' vacation." "Oh!" said Helen, "they were going to have a house party, weren't they, Uncle Jake?" "I jes knowed Miss Helen ud find some new fangled name fur it, but us jes called it having company fur Mars Johnnie's vacation. Well, de day before Christmas us took de carriages and de double buggy and de top buggy and all de wagons and went ter Clifton ter meet de company. Cose all de young ladies was dar de day before. Miss Sarah tuck some in de carriage wid her and some in de other vehicles and went ter meet de boys. Mars Johnnie had on his uniform, which wus gray, wid brass buttons, and he had straps on his shoulders, and de young gentlemen what wus wid him called him Lieutenant. I ax Jack is dey been ter war and Jack low no, but dey getting ready for it, case dey drills every day. Most all de young men brung dere body servants wid dem, so dey was bout as many culled folks as de wus white. Lord, de dinner dey had when us got home. I can shet my eyes now twenty-five years atter freedom and taste dat pig, roasted whole wid de apple in his mouf, and dem turkeys and chickens and cakes and pies, and God knows what. Yes, sir, I et and et and listened ter

Black Jack till I went ter sleep and bout all de fun dey had up dere. An den I knowed dat all de money Mars Leon saunt up dere hadn't been used ter buy books er either uniforms. Well, de white folks had a dance dat night and all de quality fur miles and miles wus dere. Hit wus purty near day when dey broke up and all de young men went ter de old homestead inde corner uv de yard ter sleep. Dere had been a-plenty er wine and other sech drinks dat night, and I guess dey must all have slept pretty sound, case I never heard nothing bout ghostes next morning, but I knowed suppen nuther was gwine ter happen, cose all de signs panted dat way. In de fust place, de moon she swung like she done suppen wrong and wus shamed uv it. Den dere wus jus even thirteen boys, which is de odd number and always brings bad luck." "O, no, Uncle Jake," said Helen, "I was born on the thirteenth and I'm not bad luck, because Mamma says I'm her sunshine." "Sunshine, is you, well I don't know bout dat, cose sometimes when you gets your feelings hurt you minds me uv a storm, but howsomever us looked fur trouble and hit come. Well, every morning some uv de young men would tell at de breakfast table bout hearing strange noises, and in de young ladies'

room in de big house dey'd hear strange sounds and dey'd all laugh bout it cept de prettiest girl in de whole bunch, and she'd just turn pale in de face and look skered. On a Saturday night Miss Sarah lowed dey was all gwine to go ter dere rooms and prepare fur de Sabbath, caseus white folks wus Presbyterians, and no matter what happen in de week de Sabbath day wus always observed. Barbara slept in de little room joinin de big room whar de young ladies slept, and Barbara lowed dey wus all asleep when suppen tutchted her on de furhead and lowed 'wake up and follow me.' Barbara lowed she started fur ter scream, but de ghost laid hits finger on hits lips and den Barbara low she couldn't speak, much less scream. De ghost low, 'Wake de young ladies, 'semble in de next room.' Wid dat Barbara went in de next room and begun ter scream. En scream she did till all de young ladies wus up and in de room, and Barbara lowed de ghost done come, and I believe hits ole Mistis. Jus den in de doorway riz up de ghost as white as snow, and shinin wid radiance. Most all de young ladies screamed, dey did, but unmindful of dat de ghost walked up and laid its hand on de prettiest girl's head, which wus Miss Sallie, and lowed 'I selects you to take my place when

Leon and Sarah have passed away.' Wid dat she gathered up her robes and vanished, de Lord knows whar. Just den de fire on de hearth blazed up, and all de young ladies wus crying and wringing dey hands, cept Miss Sallie, and she wus laying lifeless on de floor." "O, Uncle Jake, was she dead," sobbed Helen. "No, she wasn't dead, jest fainted away, and time Miss Sarah and Mars Leon got dere dey put water on her and she come to. And dere was much rejoicing mong de niggers next day, case we knowed Mars John would do his best to marry Miss Sallie, en Gawd knows we all wanted him to, case all Miss Sallie lacked uv being er angel wus wings." "But, Uncle Jake," pursued Helen, "how did the ghost get in the window?" "Miss Helen," said the old man with emphasis, "I done tole you long ergo dat I didn't try ter find out nothing bout de on-natural which happen. Hit come, hit went, and dats all dere is erbout it."

THE AFFINITIES

The Affinities

Mrs. Bradshaw went to her country home during the past summer to rest and renew old acquaintances. She had only just entered the house when Susan told her that "de cullud foks" wanted to see her as there was a big "disturbment" going on. She ran out to the back porch and found an array of colored people. Some of them she recognized as the old servants, but some were new to her. It was easy to recognize "Black Jack," although his hair had grown white. He was in a towering rage and seemed about to chastise a young colored man who was evidently not keen to lock horns with him and was trying to explain something to him. Seeing "Miss Helen" looking on, "Black Jack" sprang forward and seizing the man by the collar began to shake him and almost screamed out: "Fore I let you go, niggah, yo got to eat yo words. Yes, Lord, yo got to swar cros yo hart that yo'll take 'em back from the pullypit." "Black Jack, I take them all back, but I think it's better not to refer to the subject again from the pulpit." At that Jack still retained his hold on his victim, snatched a paling from the fence and seemed about to belabor him with it when Mrs. Bradshaw said,

“Jack, let him alone at once. Take your hands off him and give the man a chance to explain his position.” He gradually let go, but said, “Lord, Lord, Miss Helen, he ain’t no man, he’s jest a boy what growed up on the plantation heah. He’s Uncle Jake’s gran’son and he ought to know bettah, an ef he don’t I gwine larn him bettah.”

“What has he done that is so awful?” “Done! Miss Helen, dis niggah needs all I gwine giv him, and den some. When he was a boy he was always zortin round, and us was proud to think dat one of us boys was called to preach. And he sho *could* preach too! But atter he got about eighteen he tuk a crazy notion to go off ter col-laige, I calls it, but he calls it a ‘vinity school.”

Miss Helen looked puzzled and the minister, whom she now recognized as Beauregard II, said, “Divinity school, ma’am.” Black Jack continued: “And that jes ruined him. We pays him to preach the gawspel, sted a dat he reads the noospapers and preaches about dis and dat new-fangled notion what comes along. I stood it longs I gwine to, and dis yeah las sarment hab done de work. What yo think, Miss Helen, yisterday us went to church to heah de gawspel and him crucifide and stid er dat dis heah good-fer-nuthin niggah was preachin bout ‘finnitis.’ Finnities!

Now who evah heahd of such a thing. Fus thing us knows he be tellin' some ouh wives dat he's their 'finnity' and he'll up an run away wid em." At this he seemed to have a return of anger, and in spite of Miss Helen's presence he grabbed the preacher by the hair and reached for the paling. But the scion of the Divinity school gave up his fads and yelled out, "Brother Jack, I takes it all back." "Will yo take it back from the pullypit?" "Yes, sah, I sho will." "Does yo promise to confine yo sarments to the gawspel an him crucifide?" "Yes, Lord." "Is yo gwine to let dem newspapers alone and study yo Bible?" "Yes, Lord." Then the old man relaxed his hold with the utmost composure, and began asking, "Miss Helen" about "Master Roy" and bragging about the good "craps" he had, and a few moments later "Miss Helen" heard him invite the minister to dine with him the following Sunday.

THREE SHORT STORIES

A Christmas Turkey

About two months after "Black Jack" had been caught red-handed in the theft of the yellow hen a large turkey gobbler "came up missing." It required very little guessing to find that it had found its way into "Black Jack's" larder. About two weeks later he came up to the "big house" and announced that he would be absent from his work for a week on a "zortin" tour to take the place of a colored minister in another town. "But, Black Jack," said little Helen, "how can you preach to other people when you have just stolen the turkey gobbler?" And with the utmost composure he said, "Lord, Miss Helen, does yo think I'm gwine to give up my blessed Jesus jest for one old turkey gobbler?"

Too Honest for a Lawyer

After little Roy grew up he came into possession of a large plantation which had belonged to some branch of the family for generations. To the negroes, "Cap'n, as they called him, was the embodiment of wisdom and goodness. Sol came to him early one morning wearing rather a furtive manner and said, "Cap'n, I'se in a leetle trouble. The constable he lowed I'd been shootin craps, en he's lookin for me." "Well," asked the Captain, "have you?" "No, sir, I ain't seen no craps, cept mah cottin en co'n. En I ben workin dem early en late, but he scuses me of it en I'll hatter give bond or go to jail." "Well," said the Captain, "go to Colonel Elbertson's office and ask him to fix up your bond and send it to me and I'll sign it." Sol started off but turned and said, "Cap'n, will it the same to you if I goes to old man Sam Williams?" "Very well," said the Captain, "go to him if you prefer him, but Colonel Elbertson is a fine man." "Yes, sah, I knows dat," said Sol, "but he's jes nacherly too honest for a lawyer."

Susan Backslides

Susan, the colored housemaid who looked after little Helen's room, confided to her that she was very much in love with "Brer John Duckery," the new colored minister. All at once she quit talking about religion and "Brer Jawn" and seemed interested in dancing and other worldly amusements. Helen and Roy asked Uncle Jake if he knew why she had changed so quickly. The old man laughed his low mirthful laugh and said, "Lord, chillun, if yo all had been down to us church Sunday fo las, yo wouldn't hatter ask dat question. Susan got ter shoutin dat day an es de other gals went ter hol her, she hollered out loud in church, 'Take one ter hol me and one can't hold. Take two ter hol me en two can't hol me. Take a rope en tie me and de rope can't hol. I want my sweetheart Jawn ter hol me.' Brer Jawn nevah paid no tention to her, but went on zortin sinners. Den she up an squeal out in church jes as loud as she kin holler, 'Brer Jawn, the Lord sez fer yo ter marry me,' and den Brer Jawn low, 'Yo go back en tell de Lord I ain't gwine ter do it.' And, chillun, dat how come Susan fell from grace and went ter dancin."

HELPIN' ERLONG OF OLE
MISS EANES

The Helpin' Erlong of Ole Miss Eanes

"Mirandy! Come here, where have you been? You don't stay at home half the time." "Yas-sum I does, Miss Leila, I does all I kin to keep dis here place in ordiment all de mawnin' but atter dinner I goes over ter help ole Miss Eanes erlong. She aint got nobody ter turn er hand ter help her and here you is jest you and Mr. Horace and your Uncle Milton and dat jest makes three white folks and you got three culled pussuns to wait on you. Dat all comes of havin' niggers what uster blong ter your fambly—Ole Miss Eanes aint no po white trash if she do do her own work. Ef she wus I wouldn't fool wid her fur nothing. When us left Montgomery ter come down here ter this onlikely place Granmammy tole me ter be mighty perticular whar I goes—But you know, Miss Leila, I aint been uster see white folks work and ole Miss Eanes sho do work an her hands is jest as soft and white as yourn, an she is one fine white lady. How come you don't go ter see her, Miss Leila?" "Solely because she has never been to see me, Mirandy, and as I have so recently moved here it is Miss Eanes' place to call first." "Yes-sum, I spec' yous right but Lordy, I's jest hon-gry fur de time ter come ter go back ter Mont-

gomery, I sho caint stan dese here little wil-lages. I can't see why us come down here yit—Don't look lak Mr. Horace and your Uncle Milton is sick ernuff ter zile us down here all de Summer. Dey eats deir rations three times er day. But you know yourself, Miss Leila, men folks us jest born fer ter be troublesome.”

I had been writing and had let Mirandy talk on or rather quarrel on, for Mirandy always had a grievance against some one. Her mother at her death bed had given her to me, and ever since she took her abode at our house I had really belonged to her, though Mirandy thought she belonged to me. She was very fond of me and in a way very faithful to me. Though scarcely more than a child, she looked after my comfort in a thousand ways; and another thing—she was always on hand, at least she had been until we came to this dear little nest of a home for quiet and rest.

My husband and Uncle Milton Lawrence were law partners in Montgomery and after a winter of very hard work the doctor recommended this out-of-the-way place and absolute rest. It was a very pretty farm house just in the edge of the sleepy little village of Ridgeway. We had been here two or three weeks and so far our next door neighbor had not called. I regretted this

very much as I had fallen quite in love with her from meeting her at church. Any attempt to describe Miss Eanes is simply beyond me. She was of another generation; of the civilization that peopled the "Old South," that is so affectionately described by writers of consequence. She might have been any age between forty and fifty. Her form, face and bearing had a delicacy that spoke of refinement rather than ill health; and yet you never thought of her as a very robust person. Through the soft brown eyes one caught a glimpse of soul and the waves of soft brown hair only slightly tinged with gray were the crowning glory of a very lovely person. In going alone to church—Horace and Uncle Milton had insisted the doctor's prescription meant absolute rest, hence absence from church—I had by accident gotten in Miss Eanes' pew. By accident the first Sunday—by choice afterward. On Sunday afternoons and all day Monday Horace and Uncle Milton declared they heard nothing but Miss Eanes, and with some truth too, for I had never been more strongly drawn to a person than to her.

One day Horace said, "Miss Eanes evidently doesn't think as highly of you as you and Mirandy do of her or she would come to see you." I

hardly knew what answer to make as I had often wondered why she did not come and often wished that she would. Miss Eanes, when we met, was so cordial and kind that I simply yearned for her sweet companionship. I love men, they are dear creatures but occasionally every woman's heart cries out for womankind. I ought to have been accustomed to Uncle Milton Lawrence for he had raised me. My father who was his younger brother had died when I was ten years old, my sweet mother had died a year later. Uncle Milton was a bachelor and he and my Aunt Susie, a maiden lady and an older sister of his, had had exclusive care of me during my bringing up. Horace Ransom was a ward of Uncle Milton and had lived in the same house, so we had been raised together. We had grown up loving each other. I had spent so much of my life in the company of these two men that they wondered that I could care for other companionship than theirs.

Uncle Milton deserves more than a passing comment. His life had been filled with good works, and while a touch of pathos about the mouth bore unmistakable witness that he had a history, none could question the purity and beauty of his life. In a vague, indistinct way I remember mamma having told me something of a

disappointment in love, but I could recall so little of it and I would not question Aunt Susie as it looked like treason to try to pry into the affairs of my noble Uncle. To me he had taken the place of father and mother, friend and companion, so I accepted him as he was and devoutly thanked heaven that he was just as I knew him, for I would not have had him changed.

The next day after I had given Mirandy the scolding recorded above, I wanted her, and as usual she was over at Miss Eanes. About five o'clock she came up to my room bringing me a cluster of beautiful white roses. "Miss Leila, I heard you call me, but I knowed if you needed me de cook could wait on you. Lord know I sho does wait on you all de mawnings and in de atternoons I takes the fence and goes over and help ole Miss Eanes erlong." "What do you do to help her along, Mirandy?" "De Lord Miss Leila I does a plenty things over dar dat I wouldn't nigh do over here. Now you know I never scrubs over here case I tells de cook she hatter do de scrubbing case it hurts me. But I meant it hurts my feelings, fer hit show don't hurt my knees. You ought ter see me down on my knees scrubbing dat little kitchen out next door. Lordy, Miss Leila, is ole Miss Eanes any kin ter you?" "How ridiculous, Mi-

randy” I said. I never even heard of her till I came here this summer. But what makes you think she is kin to me?” “Case I’ll tell you but don’t you tell her nothin bout it. Well hits dis er way. I seed some two or three diffunt times dat she wus wearing a locket and chain round her neck. He, he, he, Miss Leila, you knows dat was enough to cite anybody’s curiosity to see es old er lady as ole Miss Eanes wearing of a locket, so I been doing my dead level best ter get a peep at dat ar locket. Well dis evening when she went in de bath room I was scrubbing out by de door and I lowed shed lef dat locket in de house, so time she got in and locked de door I hollowed out “Mam? I’m coming, cook,” den I struck out ter quarrelin bout yo ought ter make dat triflin cook wait on you. Stead er comin home I tuck round ter side de house and slipped in her room and sho nuff dar was de locket exposing peacefully on the bed so. I snatched it up, I did, and opened it and what you reckon I seed, the picter of de purtiest young man and, Miss Leila, he very spit of you. Ef he us settin dar by you now I wouldn’t know which wus you en which wus him, scusin you wear dresses and he wears pants.” I sought to be very severe towards Miran-

da's prying proclivities, but woman-like my indignation was almost swallowed up by my own curiosity about the young man who "Looked lak me." I resolved to tell Uncle Milton and Horace about it at supper but all thought of it was banished from my mind when a few moments later Horace came bounding up the stairs, three steps at a bound, to tell me that he and Uncle Milton had just received a telegram stating that interests of one of their clients demanded their immediate presence. What could I do? He thought I'd better go too, but Uncle Milton thought it would be best for me to see if I could spend my nights with my next door neighbor and my days at home. I seized upon the latter suggestion and telling Miranda to pack both the men's grips I ran over to see if the arrangement would suit Miss Eanes. Of course she would be delighted to have me and I came home to drive Horace and Uncle Milton to the station and bid them good-bye. It had been so seldom in my life that I had been separated from Horace and Uncle Milton at the same time that I felt very tearful at parting, and I had been brought up with the belief that tears were legitimate provided they were shed at parting from Horace or my dear old foster father.

Returning from the station I stopped at the gate and directing Miranda to take my belongings over to Miss Eanes I drove over and asked her to come with me for a drive. She was pleased to go and as we drove out over the quiet country roads I noticed that Miss Eanes spoke to every one we met, and each one greeted her with a smile and expression of affectionate recognition. My heart warmed toward her and she seemed equally drawn toward me, and we planned little pleasures to fill in the time of waiting till the men folks should return. There the plans all stopped, I couldn't get her to plan a day's fun after they should return. "No," she would say, "you will be taken up with them and I will have to take up my work which I expect to slight dreadfully while I have you with me." I was struck by the evident sincerity of her speech and nestled close to her in the carriage. Surprising a very tender look in her sweet brown eyes she said while she gently pressed my hand: "You are the beautiful image of some one I knew and loved in the long ago." Immediately the locket incident came to my mind and I was about to ask whom it was I resembled but from the look on her face I knew she regretted having said so much. I found that she was deeply interested in the charities of Ridgeway, in fact,

about all such work devolved on her, as the plain folk thereabout had little time for doing the Master's work. She had a kindergarten class out at the factory where the little ones could be cared for for three hours in the morning to let the busy mothers get their morning's work over. She did this herself, gave three hours of every morning without remuneration to the care of these children. She had the class of young men at Sunday School, a Mother's Meeting at three every Sunday afternoon, a meeting of the Young People's Society at her cottage at six on Sunday afternoons, a class of boys she taught from eight to nine on Monday and Thursday evenings, and other smaller duties. To all of these things she gave of her time and limited means. Oh! what a rebuke her busy and useful life was to mine. To be able to meet these demands she denied herself the comfort of a servant and cheerfully found time in her busy life to do her small housekeeping.

When we returned to the wee cottage we found Miranda busy putting things in order and I realized what she meant by "helping along." How shall I describe that sweet time spent with Miss Eanes? Every morning I drove her out to her kindergarten class and returned for her at midday. It was an inspiration to be near her.

I told her of my admiration for her life of sacrifice and she seemed pleased; in fact, I went about with the pleasing consciousness that Miss Eanes approved of me. Not that she was very effusive but by her quiet gentle way I knew that she cared for me. Horace's daily letters with an occasional note from Uncle Milton were bright spots in the day and I felt I was learning much by my sojourn with Miss Eanes. She was so frank and candid about her present life that I longed to know something of her past, but she kept it sealed from me, and when three weeks had passed and the men folks were coming home I still did not even know her Christian name. One morning over at my house Miranda said: "Miss Leila, is Ole Miss Eanes got a fergiven name?" I laughed uncontrollably at this for I knew just what dire straits Miss Eanes must have been driven to in her efforts at concealment, for Miranda boasted in the kitchen that she could "Fine" out anything from anybody. After a hearty laugh I was obliged to confess that I was as much in "de dark" as Miranda. She seemed pleased that I did not know what she had failed to fathom and she began quarreling in her most approved style somewhat after this wise—"Miss Leila, what make white folks do dat er way? How ud it hurt her ter let

us know what she name? I don't reckon hits any namer den ennybody else's name. I believe she kin ter us white folks anyhow, case dat man whats in dat locket round her neck sho is kin ter you, case he sho is de livin image on you. I done seed his picter and I know he boun ter be kin ter you, caze he looks just lak you does when you smiles and look lak you aint fool enuff ter tell all you knows."

On Tuesday my letter from Horace said, "Come to the station to meet us Wednesday and bring your paragon of excellence, Miss Eanes, with you." I joyfully read the letter to Miss Eanes and added my entreaties to Horace's invitation, but she shook her head in her gentle, determined way and said she could not think of intruding on a family reunion. After driving her over to her class room I went to the station to meet Horace and Uncle Milton. I was overjoyed to see them and in the delight of being with them I wondered how I could have been so contented with Miss Eanes and without them. A little before noon I wrote her a sweet insistent note asking that she come to us for the midday meal. I gave it to John and ordered him to drive the carriage out to Miss Eanes class room to bring her to us. I busied myself with putting the men folk's clothes away, hoping it would

not be long before we would wend our way back to civilization. Horace and Uncle Milton looked so well I began to feel very much as Miranda did about them, or that they wanted rather than needed this intense quiet. Pretty soon the boy came back saying he had left Miss Eanes at her home. The note was a sweet one of regret at not being "able" to come, and signed, "Hastily, Miss Eanes." I felt provoked with her. I felt she had not treated me cordially and at dinner said nothing about her except that she declined my invitation, and encouraged Horace and Uncle Milton to tell of their trip. Soon after dinner Miranda came in with a grievance. "Miss Leila, is you said you wus tired er my helping ole Miss Eanes erlong? I aint believed you said it, kaze I notice you wus mighty willin ter stay long wid her while Mr. Horace and Mr. Milton wus gond. Granmammy tole me when us wus getting ready ter come down here dat I warn't ter let dat nigger 'Oman run over me. I ain't gwine to do it nuther, and ef she fool long wid me I'm gwine tell you bout her slipping all dat good vittels every day and savin it up fer dat nigger man what comes ter see her." This last struck consternation to my heart. Suppose Miranda raised a disturbance and the cook left me here with no one to come

to the rescue. Ever since my marriage I had nominally been at the head of the house. If anything went wrong Aunt Susie was there to set things right. I knew but two ways to appease the wrath of the cook, one was to forbid Miranda going to help Miss Eanes "erlong," the other, and I chose the latter, was to make the cook a present of one of my summer dresses, that she very much wanted. Miranda left declaring she was going to find out ole Miss Eanes "Fergiven" name.

All the afternoon different little courtesies Miss Eanes had shown me bore silent if powerful witness to the fact that I was censuring her without a hearing. As night came on I had forgotten my displeasure and at supper I talked unceasingly of her courtesy to me and her charities to the poor people of the community. I told them of the locket incident of how Miranda had stolen in to see the locket and found that I bore a striking resemblance to the "picter of a man in de locket." Uncle Milton was an intent though silent listener, but Horace was as interested and as curious as I was. After we had each of us supposed many improbable solutions to the mystery Horace turned to Uncle Milton and said: "Col. Lawrence, do you know of any answer to this problem that threatens

the peace and serenity of the house of Ransom?" We were both startled by his extreme pallor, and without answering the question Uncle Milton excused himself and left the table. Horace and I sat at the table for a long time in the sheer delight of being together once more, selfishly forgetting Uncle Milton. I rang for the cook and when she answered I was about to bid her send Miranda to me when that undisciplined, but thoroughly good natured servant burst into the room clapping her hands and almost shouting, "He over dere, he over dere, he settin in de parlor on de sofy long side er ole Miss Eanes and she name Mabel and its his picter in de locket. Didn't I know she wus sho nuf white folks?" I waited to hear no more but literally ran over to Miss Eanes, closely followed by Horace. We found them just as Miranda had said. Over Uncle Milton's countenance joy unspeakable sat enthroned and in Miss Eanes beautiful eyes shone the light of other days. Their explanation was simple. Twenty-six years before they had been engaged and a misunderstanding had parted them in anger. He would not allow her to return the locket containing his picture and for all these years the gentle Mabel Eanes had worn the miniature and loved the original. He had not suspected her identity, but she, with woman's

quick intuition recognized Uncle Milton at once, and for that reason had kept away from the house. I was so delighted at their happiness that I felt grateful for having been buried in the sleepy little village and above all for consenting to the "helping erlong of ole Miss Eanes."

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