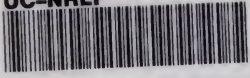


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UNC' EDINBURG .

IN UNIFORM STYLE

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MARSE CHAN. A Tale of Old Virginia. Illustrated by W. T. Smedley.

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*Each, small quarto, \$1.50*







*"I seen he eye light on her as she came down the steps smilin'."*

✧ ✧ UNC' EDINBURG

A PLANTATION ECHO ✧ ✧

BY THOMAS NELSON PAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY B. WEST CLINEDINST



CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

NEW YORK, 1895 ♪ ♪ ♪

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“WELL, suh, dat’s a fac—dat’s what Marse George al’ays said. ’Tis hard to spile Christmas anyways.”

The speaker was “Unc’ Edinburg,” the driver from Werrowcoke, where I was going to spend Christmas; the time was Christmas Eve, and the place the muddiest road in eastern Virginia—a measure which, I feel sure, will, to those who have any experience, establish its claim to distinction.

A half-hour before he had met me at the station, the queerest-looking, raggedest old darkey conceivable, brandishing a cedar-staffed whip of enormous proportions in one hand, and clutching in the other a calico letter-bag with a twisted string; and with the excep-

tion of a brief interval of temporary suspicion on his part, due to the unfortunate fact that my luggage consisted of only a hand-satchel instead of a trunk, we had been steadily progressing in mutual esteem.

“Dee’s a boy standin’ by my mules; I got de ker’idge heah for you,” had been his first remark on my making myself known to him. “Mistis say as how you might bring a trunk.”

I at once saw my danger, and muttered something about “a short visit,” but this only made matters worse.

“Dee don’ nobody niver pay short visits dyah,” he said, decisively, and I fell to other tactics.

“You couldn’ spile Christmas den noways,” he repeated, reflectingly, while his little mules trudged knee-deep through the mud. “Twuz Christmas den, sho’ ’nough,” he added, the fires of memory smouldering, and then, as they blazed into sudden flame, he asserted, positively: “Dese heah free-issue niggers don’ know what Christmas is. Hawg meat an’ pop crackers don’ meck Christmas. Hit tecks ole times to meck a sho’-’nough, tyahin’-down Christmas. Gord! I’s seen ’em! But de wuss Christmas I ever seen tunned out de best in de een,” he added, with sudden warmth, “an’ dat wuz de Christmas me an’



Marse George an’ Reveller all got drownded down at Braxton’s Creek. You’s hearn ’bout dat ?”

As he was sitting beside me in solid flesh and blood, and looked as little ethereal in his old hat and patched clothes as an old oak stump would have done, and as Colonel Staunton had made a world-wide reputation when he led his regiment through the Chickahominy thickets against McClellan’s intrenchments, I was forced to confess that I had never been so favored, but would like to hear about it now ; and with a hitch of the lap blanket under his outside knee, and a supererogatory jerk of the reins, he began :

“ Well, you know, Marse George was jes’ eighteen when he went to college. I went wid him, ’cause me an’ him wuz de same age ; I was born like on a Sat’d day in de Christmas, an’ he wuz born in de new year on a Chuesday, an’ my mammy nussed us bofe at one breast. Dat’s de reason maybe huccome we took so to one nurr. He sutney set a heap o’ sto’ by me ; an’ I ain’ niver see nobody yit wuz good to me as Marse George.”

The old fellow, after a short reverie, went on :

“ Well, we growed up togerr, jes as to say two stalks in one hill. We cotch ole hyahs togerr, an’ we hunted ’possums togerr, an’ ’coons. Lord ! he wuz a

climber! I ’member a fight he had one night up in de ve’y top of a big poplar tree wid a coon, whar he done gone up after, an’ he flung he hat over he head; an’ do’ de varmint leetle mo’ tyah him all to pieces, he fotch him down dat tree ’live; an’ me an’ him had him at Christmas. ’Coon meat mighty good when dee fat, you know?”

As this was a direct request for my judgment, I did not have the moral courage to raise an issue, although my views on the subject of ’coon meat are well known to my family; so I grunted something which I doubt not he took for assent, and he proceeded:

“Dee warn’ nuttin he didn’ lead de row in; he wuz de bes’ swimmer I ever see, an’ he handled a skiff same as a fish handle heself. An’ I wuz wid him constant; wharever you see Marse George, dyah Edinburg sho’, jes’ like he shadow. So twuz, when he went to de university; ’twarn’ nuttin would do but I got to go too. Marster he didn’ teck much to de notion, but Marse George wouldn’ have it no urr way, an’ co’s’e mistis she teck he side. So I went ’long as he body-servant to teck keer on him an’ help meck him a gent’man. An’ he wuz, too. From time he got dyah tell he cum ’way he wuz de head man.

“Dee warn’ but one man dyah didn’ compliment

him, an’ dat wuz Mr. Darker. But he warn’ nuttin! not dat he didn’ come o’ right good fambly—’cep’ dee politics; but he wuz sutney pitted, jes’ like sometimes you see a weevly runty pig in a right good litter. Well, Mr. Darker he al’ays ’ginst Marse George; he hate me and him bofe, an’ he sutney act mischeevous todes us; ’cause he know he warn’ as we all. De Stauntons dee wuz de popularitiest folks in Virginia; an’ dee wuz high-larnt besides. So when Marse George run for de medal, an’ wuz to meck he gret speech, Mr. Darker he speak ’ginst him. Dat’s what Marse George whip him ’bout. ’Ain’ nobody nuver told you ’bout dat?”

I again avowed my misfortune; and although it manifestly aroused new doubts, he worked it off on the mules, and once more took up his story:

“Well, you know, dee had been speakin’ ’ginst one nurr ev’y Sat’dy night; and ev’ybody knowed Marse George wuz de bes’ speaker, but dee give him one mo’ sho’, an’ dee was bofe gwine spread deeselves, an’ dee wuz two urr gent’mens also gwine speak. An’ dat night when Mr. Darker got up he meck sich a fine speech ev’ybody wuz s’prised; an’ some on ’em say Mr. Darker done beat Marse George. But, shuh! I know better’n dat; an’ Marse George face look so

curious ; but, suh, when he riz I knowed der wuz somen gwine happen—I wuz leanin’ in de winder. He jes step out in front an’ throwed up he head like a horse wid a rank kyurb on him, and den he begin ; an’ twuz jes like de river when hit gits out he bank. He swep’ ev’ything. When he fust open he mouf I knowed twuz comin’ ; he face wuz pale, an’ he wuds tremble like a fiddle-string, but he eyes wuz blazin’, an’ in a minute he wuz jes reshin’. He voice soun’ like a bell ; an’ he jes wallered dat turr man, an’ wared him out ; an’ when he set down dee all yelled an’ hollered so you couldn’ heah you’ ears. Gent’mans, twuz royal !

“Den dee tuck de vote, an’ Marse George got it unanimous, an’ dee all hollered agin, all ’cep’ a few o’ Mr. Darker’s friends. An’ Mr. Darker he wuz de second. An’ den dee broke up. An’ jes den Marse George walked thoo de crowd straight up to him, an’ lookin’ him right in de eyes, says to him, ‘You stole dat speech you made to-night.’ Well, suh, you ought to ’a hearn ’em ; hit soun’ like a mill-dam. You couldn’ heah nuttin ’cep’ roarin’, an’ you couldn’ see nuttin ’cep’ shovin’. But, big as he wuz, Marse George beat him ; an’ when dee pull him off, do’ he face wuz mighty pale, he stan’ out befo’ ’em all,

dem whar wuz ’ginst him, an’ all, jes as straight as an arrow, an’ say: ‘Dat speech wuz written an’ printed years ago by somebody or nurr in Congress, an’ this man stole it; had he beat me only, I should not have said one word; but as he has beaten others, I shall show him up!’ Gord, suh, he voice wuz clear as a game rooster. I sutney wuz proud on him.

“He did show him up, too, but Mr. Darker ain’ wait to see it; he lef’ dat night. An’ Marse George he wuz de popularitiest gent’man at dat university. He could handle dem students dyah same as a man handle a hoe.

“Well, twuz de next Christmas we meet Miss Charlotte an’ Nancy. Mr. Braxton invite we all to go down to spen’ Christmas wid him at he home. An’ sich a time as we had!

“We got dyah Christmas Eve night—dis very night—jes befo’ supper, an’ jes natchelly froze to death,” he pursued, dealing in his wonted hyperbole, “an’ we jes had time to git a apple toddy or two when supper was ready, an’ wud come dat dee wuz waitin’ in de hall. I had done fix Marse George up gorgeousome, I tell you; an when he walk down dem stairs in dat swaller-tail coat, an’ dem paten’-leather pumps on, dee warn nay one dyah could tetch

him; he looked like he own ’em all. I jes rest my mind. I seen him when he shake hands wid ’em all roun’, an’ I say, ‘Um-m-m! he got ’em.’

“But he ain’ teck noticement o’ none much tell Miss Charlotte come. She didn’ live dyah, had jes come over de river dat evenin’ from her home, ’bout ten miles off, to spen’ Christmas like we all, an’ she come down de stairs jes as Marse George finish shakin’ hands. I seen he eye light on her as she come down de steps smilin’, wid her dim blue dress trainin’ behind her, an’ her little blue foots peepin’ out so pretty, an’ holdin’ a little hankcher, lookin’ like a spider-web, in one hand, an’ a gret blue fan in turr, spread out like a peacock tail, an’ jes her roun’ arms an’ th’oat white, an’ her gret dark eyes lightin’ up her face. I say, ‘Dyah ’tis!’ and when de ole Cun’l stan’ aside an’ interduce ’em, and Marse George step for’ard an’ meck he grand bow, an’ she sort o’ swing back an’ gin her curtchy, wid her dress sort o’ dammed up ’ginst her, an’ her arms so white, an’ her face sort o’ sunsetty, I say, ‘Yes, Lord! Edinburg, dyah you mistis.’ Marse George look like he think she done come down right from de top o’ de blue sky an’ bring piece on it wid her. He ain’ nuver took he eyes from her dat night. Dee glued to her, mun! an’ she

—well, do’ she mighty rosy, an’ look mighty uncon-sarned, she sutney ain’ hender him. Hit look like kyarn nobody else tote dat fan an’ pick up dat hanker skusin o’ him; an’ after supper, when dee all playin’ blind-man’s-buff in de hall—I don’ know how twuz—but do’ she jes as nimble as a filly, an’ her ankle jes as clean, an’ she kin git up her dress an’ dodge out o’ de way o’ ev’ybody else, somehow or nurr she kyarn help him ketchin’ her to save her life; he al’ays got her corndered; an’ when dee’d git fur apart, dat ain’ nuttin, dee jes as sure to come togerr agin as water is whar you done run you hand thoo. An’ do’ he kiss ev’ybody else under de mistletow, ’cause dee be sort o’ cousins, he ain’ niver kiss her, nor nobody else ain’t nurr, ’cep’ de ole Cun’l. I wuz standin’ down at de een de hall wid de black folks, an’ I notice it ’tic’lar, ’cause I done meck de ’quaintance o’ Nancy; she wuz Miss Charlotte’s maid; a mighty likely young gal she wuz den, an’ jes as impident as a fly. She see it too, do’ she ain’ ’low it.

“Fust thing I know I seen a mighty likely light-skinned gal standin’ dyah by me, wid her hyah mos’ straight as white folks, an’ a mighty good frock on, an’ a clean apron, an’ her hand mos’ like a lady, only it brown, an’ she keep on ’vidin’ her eyes twix me an’

Miss Charlotte; when I watchin' Miss Charlotte she watchin' me, an' when I steal my eye 'roun' on her she noticin' Miss Charlotte; an' presney I sort o' sidle 'longside her, an' I say, 'Lady, you mighty sprightly to-night.' An' she say she 'bleeged to be sprightly, her mistis look so good; an' I ax her which one twuz, an' she tell me, 'Dat queen one over dyah,' an' I tell her dee's a king dyah too, she got her eye set for; an' when I say her mistis tryin' to set her cap for Marse George, she fly up, an' say she an' her mistis don' have to set dee cap for nobody; *dee* got to set dee cap an' all dee clo'es for dem, an' den dee ain' gwine cotch 'em cause dee ain' studyin' 'bout no up-country folks whar dee ain' nobody know nuttin' 'bout.

"Well, dat oudaciousness so aggrivate me, I lite into dat nigger right dyah. I tell her she ain' been nowhar 'tall ef she don' know we all; dat we wuz de bes' of quality, de ve'y top de pot; an' den I tell her 'bout how gret we wuz; how de ker'idges wuz al'ays hitched up night an' day, an' niggers jes thick as weeds; an' how Unc' Torm he wared he swaller-tail ev'y day when he wait on de table; and Marse George he won' wyah a coat mo'n once or twice any-ways, to save you life. Oh! I sutney 'stonish dat



nigger, 'cause I wuz teckin up for de fambly, an' I meck out like dee use gold up home like urr folks use wood, an' sow silver like urr folks sow wheat; an' when I got thoo dee wuz all on 'em listenin', an' she 'lowed dat Marse George he were ve'y good, sho 'nough, 'ef twarn for he nigger; but I ain' tarrifyin' myself none 'bout dat, 'cause I know she jes projickin, an' she couldn' help bein' impident ef you wuz to whup de frock off her back.

“Jes den dee struck up de dance. Dee had wheel de pianer out in de hall, an' somebody say Jack Forster had come cross de river, an' all on 'em say dee mus' git Jack; an' presney he come in wid he fiddle, grinnin' and scrapin', 'cause he wuz a notable fiddler, do' I don' think he wuz equal to we all's Tubal, an' I know he couldn' tech Marse George, 'cause Marse George wuz a natchel fiddler, jes like 'coons is natchel pacers, an' mules an' womens is natchel kickers. Howsomever, he sutney jucked a jig sweet, an' when he shake dat bow you couldn' help you foot switchin' a leetle—not ef you wuz a member of de chutch. He wuz a mighty sinful man, Jack wuz, an' dat fiddle had done drawed many souls to torment.

“Well, in a minute dee wuz all flyin', an' Jack he wuz rockin' like boat rockin' on de water, an' he face

right shiny, an’ he teef look like ear o’ corn he got in he mouf, an’ he big foot set way out keepin’ time, an’ Marse George he was in de lead row dyah too; ev’y chance he git he tunned Miss Charlotte—’petchel motion, right hand across, an’ cauliflower, an’ croquette—dee croquette plenty o’ urrs, but I notice dee ain’ nuver fail to tun one nurr, an’ ev’y tun he gin she wrappin’ de chain roun’ him. Once when dee wuz ‘prominadin—all’ down we all’s een o’ de hall, as he tunned her somebody step on her dress an’ to’ it. I heah de screech o’ de silk, an’ Nancy say, ‘O Lord!’ den she say, ‘Nem mine! now I’ll git it!’ an’ dee stop for a minute for Marse George to pin ’t up, while turrers went on, an’ Marse George wuz down on he knee, an’ she look down on him mighty sweet out her eyes, an’ say, ‘Hit don’ meck no difference,’ an’ he glance up an’ cotch her eye, an’, jes ’dout a wud, he tyah a gret piece right out de silk an’ slipt it in he bosom, an’ when he got up, he say, right low, lookin’ in her eyes real deep, ‘I gwine wyah dis at my weddin’,’ an’ she jes look sweet as candy; an’ ef Nancy ever wyah dat frock I ain’ see it.

“Den presney dee wuz talkin’ ’bout stoppin’. De ole Cun’l say hit time to have prars, an’ dee wuz beggin’ him to wait a leetle while; an’ Jack Forester lay

he fiddle down nigh Marse George, an’ he picked ’t up an’ drawed de bow ’cross it jes to try it, an’ den jes projickin’ he struck dat chune ’bout ‘You’ll er-member me.’ He hadn’ mo’n tech de string when you couldn’ heah a pin drap. Marse George he warn noticin’, an’ he jes lay he face on de fiddle, wid he eyes sort o’ half shet, an’ drawed her out like he’d do some nights at home in dee moonlight on de gret porch, tell on a sudden he looked up an’ cotch Miss Charlotte eye leanin’ for’ards so earnest, an’ all on ’em list’nin’, an’ he stopt, an’ dee all clapt dee hands, an’ he sudney drapt into a jig. Jack Forester ain’ had to play no mo’ dat night. Even de ole Cun’l ketched de fever, an’ he stept out in de flo’ in he long-tail coat an’ high collar, an’ knocked ’em off de ‘Snowbud on de Ash-bank,’ an’ ‘Chicken in de Bread-tray,’ right natchel.

“Oh, he could jes plank ’em down!”

“Oh, dat wuz a Christmas like you been read ’bout! An’ twuz hard to tell which gittin cotch most, Marse George or me; ’cause dat nigger she jes as confusin’ as Miss Charlotte. An’ she sutney wuz sp’ilt dem days; ev’y nigger on dat place got he eye on her, an’ she jes az oudacious an’ aggravatin as jes womens kin be.

“Dees monsus ’ceivin critters, womens is, jes as on-reliable as de hind-leg of a mule; a man got to watch ’em all de time; you kyarn break ’em like you kin horses.

“Now dat off mule dyah” (indicating, by a lazy but not light lash of his whip the one selected for his illustration), “dee ain’ no countin’ on her at all; she go ’long all day, or maybe a week, jes dat easy an’ soci-able, an’ fust thing you know you ain’ know nuttin she done knock you brains out; dee ain’ no ’pendence to be placed in ’em ’tall, suh; she jes as sweet as a kiss one minute, an’ next time she come out de house she got her head up in de air, an’ her ears backed, an’ goin’ long switchin’ herself like I ain’ good ’nough for her to walk on.

“‘Fox-huntin’s?’ oh, yes, suh, ev’y day mos’; an’ when Marse George didn’t git de tail, twuz ’cause twuz a bob-tail fox—you heah me! He play de fid-dle for he pastime, but he fotched up in de saddle—dat he cradle!

“De fust day dee went out I heah Nancy quoilin ’bout de tail layin’ on Miss Charlotte dressin’-table gittin’ hyahs over ev’ything.

“One day de ladies went out too, Miss Charlotte ’mongst ’em, on Miss Lucy’ gray myah Switchity,

an’ Marse George he rid Mr. Braxton’s chestnut Willful.

“Well, suh, he stick so close to dat gray myah, he leetle mo’ los’ dat fox; but, Lord! he know what he ’bout—he monsus ’ceivin’ ’bout dat—he know de way de fox gwine jes as well as he know heself; an’ all de time he leadin’ Miss Charlotte whar she kin heah de music, but he watchin’ him too, jes as narrow as a ole hound. So, when de fox tun de head o’ de creek, Marse George had Miss Charlotte on de aidge o’ de flat, an’ he de fust man see de fox tun down on turr side wid de hounds right rank after him. Dat sort o’ set him back, ’cause by rights de fox ought to a’ double an’ come back dis side: he kyarn git out dat way; an’ two or three gent’mens dee had see it too, an’ wuz jes layin de horses to de groun’ to git roun’ fust, ’cause de creek wuz heap too wide to jump, an’ wuz ’way over you head, an hit cold as Christmas, sho ’nough; well, suh, when dee tunned, Mr. Clarke he wuz in de lead (he wuz ridin’ for Miss Charlotte too), an’ hit fyah set Marse George on fire; he ain’ said but one wud, ‘Wait,’ an’ jes set de chestnut’s head straight for de creek, whar de fox comin’ wid he hyah up on he back, an’ de dogs ravlin mos’ on him.

“De ladies screamed, an’ some de gent’mens hol-

lered for him to come back, but he ain’ mind; he went ’cross dat flat like a wild-duck; an’ when he retch de water he horse tried to flinch, but dat hand on de bridle, an’ dem rowels in he side, an’ he ’bleeged to teck it.

“Lord! suh, sich a screech as dee set up! But he wuz swimmin’ for life, an’ he wuz up de bank an’ in de middle o’ de dogs time dee tetched ole Gray Jacket; an’ when Mr. Clarke got dyah Marse George wuz stan’in’ wid ice on him, holdin’ up de tail for Miss Charlotte to see, turr side de creek, an’ de hounds wuz wallerin’ all over de body, an’ I don’ think Mr. Clarke done got up wid ’em yit.

“He cotch de fox, an’ he cotch some’n else besides, is my ’pinion, ’cause when de ladies went upstairs dat night Miss Charlotte had to wait on de steps for a glass o’ water, an’ couldn’ nobody git it but Marse George; an’ den when she tell him good-night over de banisters, he couldn’ say it good enough; he got to kiss her hand; an’ she ain’ do nuttin but jes peep upstairs ef anybody dyah lookin’; an’ when I come thoo de do’ she juck her hand ’way an’ run upstairs jes as farst as she could. Marse George look at me sort o’ laughin’, an’ say: ‘Confound you! Nancy couldn’ been very good to you.’ An’ I say, ‘She le’



*"We come 'way next mornin'."*





me squench my thirst a leetle kissin’ her hand;’ an’ he sort o’ laugh an’ tell me to keep my mouf shet.

“But dat ain’ de on’y time I come on ’em. Dee al’ays gittin’ corndered; an’ de evenin’ befo’ we come ’way I wuz gwine in thoo de conservity, an’ dyah dee wuz sort o’ hide ’way. Miss Charlotte she wuz settin’ down, an’ Marse George he wuz leanin’ over her, got her hand to he face, talkin’ right low an’ lookin’ right sweet, an’ she ain’ say nuttin; an’ presney he drapt on one knee by her, an’ slip he arm roun’ her, an’ try to look in her eyes, an’ she so ’shamed to look at him she got to hide her face on he shoulder, an’ I slipt out.

“We come ’way next mornin’. When marster heah ’bout it he didn’ teck to de notion at all, ’cause her pa—dat is, he warn’ her own pa, ’cause he had married her ma when she wuz a widder after Miss Charlotte pa died—an’ he politics warn’ same as ourn. ‘Why, you kin never stand him, suh,’ he said to Marse George. ‘We won’t mix any mo’n fire and water; you ought to have found that out at college; dat fellow Darker is his son.’

“Marse George he say he know dat; but he on’y de step-brurr of de young lady, an’ ain’ got a drap o’ her blood in he veins, an’ he didn’ know it when he meet her, an’ anyhow hit wouldn’ meck any diffence;

an, when de mistis see how sot Marse George is on it she teck he side, an’ dat fix it; ’cause when ole mistis warn marster to do a thing, hit jes good as done. I don’ keer how much he rar roun’ an’ say he ain’ gwine do it, you jes well go ’long an’ put on you hat; you gwine see him presney doin’ it jes peaceable as a lamb. She tun him jes like she got bline-bridle on him, an’ he ain’ nuver know it.

“So she got him jes straight as a string. An’ when de time come for Marse George to go, marster he mo’ consarned ’bout it ’n Marse George; he ain’ say nuttin’ ’bout it befo’; but now he walkin’ roun’ an’ roun’ axin mistis mo’ questions ’bout he cloes an’ he horse an’ all; an’ dat mornin’ he gi’ him he two Sunday razors, an’ gi’ me a pyah o’ boots an’ a beaver hat, ’cause I wuz gwine wid him to kyar he portmanteau, an’ git he shavin’ water, sence marster say ef he wuz gwine marry a Locofoco, he at least must go like a gent’man; an’ me an’ Marse George had done settle it ’twixt us, cause we al’ays set bofe we traps on de same hyah parf.

“Well, we got ’em. When I ax dat gal out on de wood-pile dat night, she say bein’ as her mistis gwine own me, an’ we bofe got to be in de same estate, she reckon she ain’ nuver gwine to be able to git

shet o’ me; an’ den I clamp her. Oh, she wuz a beauty!”

A gesture and guffaw completed the recital of his conquest.

“Yes, suh, we got ’em sho!” he said, presently. “Dee couldn’ persist us; we crowd ’em into de fence an’ run ’em off dee fouts.

“Den come de ’gagement; an’ ev’ything wuz smooth as silk. Marse George an’ me wuz ridin’ over dyah constant, on’y we nuver did git over bein’ skeered when we wuz ridin’ up dat turpentine road facin’ all dem winders. Hit ’pears like ev’ybody in de wull ’mos’ wuz lookin’ at us.

“One evenin’ Marse George say, ‘Edinburg, d’you ever see as many winders p’intin’ one way in you’ life? When I git a house,’ he say, ‘I gwine have all de winders lookin’ turr way.’

“But dat evenin’ when I see Miss Charlotte come walkin’ out de gret parlor wid her hyah sort o’ rumpled over her face, an’ some yaller roses on her bres, an’ her gret eyes so soft an’ sweet, an’ Marse George walkin’ ’long hinst her, so peaceable, like she got chain ’roun’ him, I say, ‘Or—or, winders ain’ nuttin.’

“Oh, twuz jes like holiday all de time! An’ den Miss Charlotte come over to see mistis, an’ of co’se

she bring her maid wid her, 'cause she 'bleeged to have her maid, you know, an' dat wuz de bes' of all.

“Dat evenin', bout sunset, dee come drivin' up in de big ker'idge, wid de gret hyah trunk stropped on de seat behind, an' Nancy she settin' by Billy, an' Marse George settin' inside by he rose-bud, 'cause he had done gone down to bring her up; an' marster he done been drest in he blue coat an' yallow westket ever sence dinner, an' walkin' roun', watchin' up de road all de time, an' tellin' de mistis he reckon dee ain' comin', an ole mistis she try to pacify him, an' she come out presney drest, an' rustlin' in her stiff black silk an' all; an' when de ker'idge come in sight, ev'ybody wuz runnin'; an' when dee draw up to de do', Marse George he help her out an' in'duce her to marster an' ole mistis; an' marster he start to meck her a gret bow, an' she jes put up her mouf like a little gal to be kissed, an' dat got him. An' mistis teck her right in her arms an' kiss her twice, an' de servants dee wuz all peepin' an' grinnin'.

“Ev'ywhar you tun you see a nigger teef, 'cause dee all warn see de young mistis whar good 'nough for Marse George.

“Dee ain' gwine be married tell de next fall, 'count o' Miss Charlotte bein' so young; but she jes



*"Marse George lead her out on de porch."*



good as b’longst to we all now; an’ ole marster an’ mistis dee jes as much in love wid her as Marse George. Hi! dee warn pull de house down an’ buil’ it over for her! An’ ev’y han’ on de place he peepin’ to try to git a look at he young mistis whar he gwine b’longst to. One evenin’ dee all on ’em come roun’ de porch an’ send for Marse George, an’ when he come out, Charley Brown (he al’ays de speaker, ’cause he got so much mouf, kin’ talk pretty as white folks), he say dee warn interduce to de young mistis, an’ pay dee respects to her; an’ presney Marse George lead her out on de porch laughin’ at her, wid her face jes rosy as a wine-sop apple, an’ she meck ’em a beautiful bow’ an’ speak to ’em ev’y one, Marse George namin’ de names; an’ Charley Brown he meck her a pretty speech, an’ tell her we mighty proud to own her; an’ one o’ dem impident gals ax her to gin her dat white frock when she git married; an’ when she say, ‘Well, what am I goin’ wear?’ Sally say, ‘Lord, honey, Marse George gwine dress you in pure gol’!’ an’ she look up at him wid sparks flashin’ out her eyes, while he look like dat ain’ good ’nough for her. An’ so twuz, when she went ’way, Sally Marshall got dat frock, an’ proud on it I tell you.

“Oh, yes; he sutney mindin’ her tender. Hi!



when she go to ride in evenin’ wid him, de ain’ no horse-block good ’nough for her! Marse George got to have her step in he hand; an’ when dee out walkin’ he got de umbrellar holdin’ ’t over her all de time, he so feared de sun’ll kiss her; an’ dee walk so slow down dem walks in de shade you got to sight ’em by a tree to tell ef dee movin’ ’tall. She use’ to look like she used to it too, I tell you, ’cause she wuz quality, one de white-skinned ones; an’ she’d set in dem big cheers, wid her little foots on de cricket whar Marse George al’ays set for her, he so feared dee’d tech de groun’, jes like she on her throne; an’ ole marster he’d watch her ’mos’ admirin as Marse George; an’ when she went ’way hit sutney wuz lonesome. Hit look like daylight gone wid her. I don’ know which I miss mos’, Miss Charlotte or Nancy.

“Den Marse George wuz ’lected to de Legislature, an’ ole Jedge Darker run for de Senator, an’ Marse George vote gin him and beat him. An’ dat commence de fuss; an’ den dat man gi’ me de whuppin, an’ dat breck ’tup and breck he heart.

“You see, after Marse George wuz ’lected (’lections wuz ’lections dem days; dee warn’ no baitgode ’lections, wid e’vy sort o’ wurrms squirmin’ up ’ginst one nurr, wid piece o’ paper d’ ain’ know what on,



drappin’ in a chink ; didn’ nuttin but gent’mens vote den, an’ dee took dee dram, an’ vote out loud, like gent’mens)—well, arter Marse George was ’lected, de parties wuz jes as even balanced as stilyuds, an’ wen dee ax Marse George who wuz to be de Senator, he vote for de Whig, ’ginst de old jedge, an’ dat beat him, of co’s’e. An’ dee ain’ got sense to know he ’bleeged to vote wid he politics. Dat he sprinciple ; he kyarn vote for Locofoco, I don’ keer ef he is Miss Charlotte pa, much less her step-pa. Of co’s’e de ole jedge ain’ speak to him arter dat, nur is Marse George ax him to. But who dat g’wine s’pose women-folks got to put dee mouf in too ? Miss Charlotte she write Marse George a letter dat pester him mightily ; he set up all night answerin’ dat letter, an’ he mighty solemn, I tell you. An’ I wuz gettin’ right grewjousome myself, ’cause I studyin’ ’bout dat gal down dyah whar I done gi’ my wud to, an’ when dee ain’ no letters come torectly hit hard to tell which one de anxiouser, me or Marse George. Den presney I so ’straughted ’long o’ it I ax Aunt Haly ’bouten it : (She know all sich things, ’cause she ’mos’ a hunderd years ole, an’ seed evil speerits, an’ got skoripins up her chimley, an’ knowed conjure) ; an’ she ax me what wuz de signication, an’ I tell her I ain’ able nuther to

eat nor to sleep, an’ dat gal come foolin’ ’long me when I sleep jes as natchel as ef I see her sho’ ’nough. An’ she say I done conjured; dat de gal done tricked me.

“Oh, Gord! dat skeered me!

“You white folks, marster, don’ b’lieve nuttin like dat; y’ all got too much sense, ’cause y’ all kin read; but niggers dee ain’ know no better, an’ I sutney wuz skeered, ’cause Aunt Haly say my coffin done seasoned, de planks up de chimley.

“Well, I got so bad Marse George ax me ’bout it, an’ he sort o’ laugh an’ sort o’ cuss, an’ he tell Aunt Haly ef she don’ stop dat foolishness skeerin’ me he’ll sell her an’ tyah her ole skoripin house down. Well, co’s e he jes talkin’, an’ he ax me next day how’d I like to go an’ see my sweetheart. Gord! suh, I got well torectly. So I set off next evenin’, feelin’ jes big as ole marster, wid my pass in my pocket, which I warn’ to show nobody ’douten I ’bleeged to, ’cause Marse George didn’t warn nobody to know he le’ me go. An’ den dat rascallion teck de shut off my back. But ef Marse George didn’ pay him de wuth o’ it!

“I done git ’long so good, too.

“When Nancy see me she sutney wuz ’stonished. She come roun’ de cornder in de back yard whar I

settin’ in Nat’s do’ (he wuz de gardener), wid her hyah all done ontwist, an’ breshed out mighty fine, an’ a clean ap’on wid fringe on it, meckin’ out she so s’prised to see me (whar wuz all a lie, ’cause some on ’em done notify her I dyah), an’ she say, ‘Hi! what dis black nigger doin’ heah?’

“An’ I say, ‘Who you callin’ nigger, you impident, kercumber-faced thing, you?’ Den we shake hands, an’ I tell her Marse George done set me free—dat I done buy myself; dat’s de lie I done lay off to tell her.

“An’ when I tole her dat, she bust out laughin’, an’ say, well, I better go ’long ’way, den, dat she don’ warn no free nigger to be comp’ny for her.’ Dat sort o’ set me back, an’ I tell her she kickin’ ’fo’ she spurred, dat I ain’ got her in my mine; I got a nurr gal at home whar grievin’ ’bout me dat ve’y minute. An’ after I tell her all sich lies as dat presney she ax me ain’ I hongry; an’ ef dat nigger didn’ git her mammy to gi’ me de bes’ supter! Umm-m! I kin mos’ tas’e it now. Wheat bread off de table, an’ zerves, an’ fat bacon, tell I couldn’ put a nurr moufful nowhar sep’n I’d teck my hat. Dat night I tote Nancy water for her, an’ I tell her all ’bout ev’ything, an’ she jes sweet as honey. Next mornin’, do’, she done sort o’

tunned some, an’ ain’ so sweet. You know how milk gits sort o’ bonny-clabberish? An’ when she see me she ’gin to ’buse me — say I jes’ tryin’ to fool her, an’ all de time got nurr wife at home, or gittin’ ready to git one, for all she know, an’ she ain’ know wherr Marse George ain’ jes’ ’ceivin’ as I is; an’ nem mine, she got plenty warn marry her; an’ as to Miss Charlotte, she got de whole wull; Mr. Darker he ain’ got nobody in he way now, dat he deah all de time, an’ ain’ gwine West no mo’. Well, dat aggrivate me so I tell her ef she say dat ’bout Marse George I gwine knock her; an’ wid dat she got so oudacious I meck out I gwine ’way, an’ lef’ her, an’ went up todes de barn; an’ up dyah, fust thing I know, I come across dat ar man Mr. Darker. Soon as he see me he begin to cuss me, an’ he ax me what I doin’ on dat land, an’ I tell him ‘Nuttin.’ An’ he say, well, he gwine gi’ me some’n; he gwine teach me to come prowlin’ round gent’men’s houses. An’ he meck me go in de barn an’ teck off my shut, an’ he beat me wid he whup tell de blood run out my back. He sutney did beat me scandalous, ’cause he done hate me an’ Marse George ever since we wuz at college togurr. An’ den he say: ‘Now you git right off dis land. Ef either you or you marster ever put you foot on it, you’ll git de

same thing agin.’ An’ I tell you, Edinburg he come way, ’cause he sutney had worry me. I ain’ stop to see Nancy or nobody; I jes come ’long, shakin’ de dust, I tell you. An’ as I come ’long de road I pass Miss Charlotte walkin’ on de lawn by herself, an’ she call me: ‘Why, hi! ain’ dat Edinburg?’

“She look so sweet, an’ her voice soun’ so cool, I say, ‘Yes’m; how you do, missis?’ An’ she say, she ve’y well, an’ how I been, an’ whar I gwine? I tell her I ain’ feelin’ so well, dat I gwine home. ‘Hi!’ she say, ‘is anybody treat you bad?’ An’ I tell her, ‘Yes’m’. An’ she say, ‘Oh! Nancy don’ mean nuttin by dat; dat you mus’n mine what womens say, an’ do, ’cause dee feel sorry for it next minute; an’ sometimes dee kyarn help it, or maybe hit you fault; an’ anyhow, you ought to be willin’ to overlook it; an’ I better go back an’ wait till to-morrow — ef — ef I ain’ ’bleeged to git home to-day.’

“She got mighty mixed up in de een part o’ dat, an’ she looked mighty anxious ’bout me an’ Nancy; an’ I tell her, ‘No’m, I ’bleeged to git home.’

“Well, when I got home Marse George he warn know all dat gwine on; but I mighty sick — dat man done beat me so; an’ he ax me what de marter, an’ I upped an’ tell him.

“Gord! I nuver see a man in sich a rage. He call me in de office an’ meck me teck off my shut, an’ he fyah bust out cryin’. He walked up an’ down dat office like a caged lion. Ef he had got he hand on Mr. Darker den, he’d ’a kilt him, sho!

“He wuz most ’stracted. I don’t know what he’d been ef I’d tell him what Nancy tell me. He call for Peter to get he horse torectly, an’ he tell me to go an’ git some’n from mammy to put on my back, an’ to go to bed torectly, an’ not to say nuttin to nobody, but to tell he pa he’d be away for two days, maybe; an’ den he got on Reveller an’ galloped ’way hard as he could, wid he jaw set farst, an’ he heaviest whup clamped in he hand. Gord! I wuz most hopin’ he wouldn’ meet dat man, ’cause I feared ef he did he’d kill him; an’ he would, sho, ef he had meet him right den; dee say he leetle mo’ did when he fine him next day, an’ he had done been ridin’ den all night; he cotch him at a sto’ on de road, an’ dee say he leetle mo’ cut him all to pieces; he drewed a weepin on Marse George, but Marse George wrench it out he hand an’ flung it over de fence; an’ when dee got him ’way he had weared he whup out on him; an’ he got dem whelps on him now, ef he ain’ dead. Yes, suh, he ain’ let nobody else do dat he ain’ do heself, sho!

“Dat done de business !

“He sont Marse George a challenge, but Marse George sont him wud he’ll cowhide him agin ef he ever heah any mo’ from him, an’ he ’ain’t. Dat perrify him, so he shet he mouf. Den come he ring an’ all he pictures an’ things back — a gret box on ’em’, and not a wud wid ’em. Marse George, I think he know’d dee wuz comin’, but dat ain’ keep it from huttin him, ’cause he done been ’gaged to Miss Charlotte, an’ got he mine riveted to her ; an’ do’ befo’ dat dee had stop writin’, an’ a riff done git ’twixt ’em, he ain’ satisfied in he mine dat she ain’t gwine ’pologizee — I know by Nancy ; but now he got de confirmation dat he done for good, an’ dat de gret gulf fixed ’twix him an’ Aberham bosom. An’, Gord, suh, twuz torment, sho ’nough ! He ain’ say nuttin ’bout it, but I see de light done pass from him, an’ de darkness done wrap him up in it. In a leetle while you wouldn’ a knowed him.

“Den ole mistis died.

“B’lieve me, ole marster he ’most much hut by Miss Charlotte as Marse George. He meck a ’tempt to buy Nancy for me, so I find out arterward, an’ write Jedge Darker he’ll pay him anything he’ll ax for her, but he letter wuz sont back ’dout any answer.

He sutney was mad 'bout it — he say he'd horsewhip him as Marse George did dat urr young puppy, but ole mistis wouldn' le' him do nuttin, and den he grieve heself to death. You see he mighty ole, anyways. He niver got over ole mistis' death. She had been failin' a long time, an' he ain' tarry long 'hinst her; hit sort o' like breckin up a holler — de ole 'coon goes 'way soon arter dat; an' marster niver could pin he own collar or buckle he own stock — mistis she al'ays do dat; an' do' Marse George do de bes' he kin, an' mighty willin', he kyarn handle pin like a woman; he hand tremble like a p'inter dog; an' anyways he ain' ole mistis. So ole marster foller her dat next fall, when dee wuz gittin in de corn, an' Marse George he ain' got nobody in de wull left; he all alone in dat gret house, an' I wonder sometimes he ain' die too, 'cause he sutney wuz fond o' old marster.

“When ole mistis wuz dyin', she tell him to be good to ole marster, an' patient wid him, 'cause he ain' got nobody but him now (ole marster he had jes step out de room to cry); an' Marse George he lean over her an' kiss her an' promise her faithful he would. An' he sutney wuz tender wid him as a woman; an' when ole marster die, he set by him an' hol' he hand an' kiss him sorf, like he wuz ole mistis.



“But, Gord! twuz lonesome arter dat, an’ Marse George eyes look wistful, like he al’ays lookin’ far ’way.

“Aunt Haly say he see harnts whar walk ’bout in de gret house. She say dee walk dyah constant of nights sence ole marster done alterate de rooms from what dee wuz when he gran’pa buil’ ’em, an’ dat dee huntin’ for dee ole chambers an’ kyarn git no rest ’cause dee kyarn fine ’em. I don’t know how dat wuz. I know Marse George *he* used to walk about heself mightily of nights. All night long, all night long, I’d heah him tell de chickens crowin’ dee second crow, an’ some mornin’s I’d go dyah an’ he ain’ even rumple de bed. I thought sho he wuz gwine die, but I suppose he done ’arn he days to be long in de land, an’ dat save him. But hit sutney wuz lonesome, an’ he nuver went off de plantation, an’ he got older an’ older, tell we all thought he wuz gwine die.

“An’ one day come jes befo’ Christmas, ’bout nigh two year arter marster die, Mr. Braxton ride up to de do’. He had done come to teck Marse George home to spen’ Christmas wid him. Marse George warn git out it, but Mr. Braxton won’ teck no disap’intment; he say he gwine baptize he boy, an’ he done name him after Marse George (he had marry

Marse George cousin, Miss Peggy Carter, an’ he vite Marse George to de weddin’, but he wouldn’ go, do’ I sutney did want him to go, ’cause I heah Miss Charlotte was nominated to marry Mr. Darker, an’ I warn know what done ’come o’ dat bright-skinned nigger gal whar I used to know down dyah); an’ he say Marse George got to come an’ stan’ for him, an’ gi’ him a silver cup an’ a gol’ rattle. So Marse George he finally promise to come an’ spend Christmas Day, an’ Mr. Braxton went ’way next mornin’, an’ den hit tun in an’ rain so I feared we couldn’ go, but hit cler off de day befo’ Christmas Eve an’ tun cold. Well, suh, we ain’ been nowhar for so long I wuz skittish as a young filly; an’ den you know twuz de same ole place.

“We didn’ git dyah till supper-time, an’ twuz a good one too, ’cause seventy miles dat cold a weather hit whet a man’s honger jes like a whetstone.

“Dee sutney wuz glad to see we all. We rid roun’ by de back yard to gi’ Billy de horses, an’ we see dee wuz havin’ gret fixin’s; an’ den we went to de house, jest as some o’ de folks run in an’ tell ’em we wuz come. When Marse George stept in de hall, dee all clustered roun’ him like dee gwine hug him, dee faces fyah dimplin’ wid pleasure, an’ Miss Peggy

she jes reched up an’ teck him in her arms an’ hug him.

“Dee tell me in de kitchen dat dee wuz been ’spectin’ of Miss Charlotte over to spend Christmas too, but de river wuz so high dee s’pose dee couldn’ git cross. Chile, dat sutney disapp’int me !

“Well, after supper de niggers had a dance. Hit wuz down in de wash-house, an’ de table wuz set in de carpenter shop jes’ by. Oh, hit sutney wuz beautiful ! Miss Lucy an’ Miss Ailsy dee had superintend ev’thing wid dee own hands. So dee wuz down dyah wid dee ap’ons up to dee chins, an’ dee had de big silver strandeliers out de house, two on each table, an’ some o’ ole mistis’s best damas’ tablecloths, an’ ole marster’s gret bowl full o’ egg-nog ; hit look big as a mill-pond settin’ dyah in de cornder ; an’ dee had flowers out de greenhouse on de table, an’ some o’ de chany out de gret house, an’ de dinin’-room cheers set roun’ de room. Oh ! oh ! nuttin warn too good for niggers dem times ; an’ de little niggers wuz runnin’ roun’ right ’stracted, squealin’ an’ peepin’ an’ gittin in de way onder you foots ; an’ de mens dee wuz totin’ in de wood — gret hickory logs, look like stock whar you gwine saw — an’ de fire so big hit look like you gwine kill hawgs, ’cause hit sutney wuz cold dat

night. Dis nigger ain’ nuver gwine forgit it! Jack Forester he had come ’cross de river to lead de fiddlers, an’ he say he had to put he fiddle onder he coat an’ poke he bow in he breeches leg to keep de strings from poppin’, an’ dat de river would freeze over sho ef twarn so high; but twuz jes snortin’, an’ he had hard wuck to git over in he skiff, an’ Unc’ Jeems say he ain’ gwine come out he boat-house no mo’ dat night—he done tempt Providence often ’nough for one day.

“Den ev’ything wuz ready, an’ de fiddlers got dee dram an’ chuned up, an’ twuz lively, I tell you! Twuz jes as thick in dyah as blackberries on de blackberry bush, ’cause ev’y gal on de plantation wuz dyah shakin’ her foot for some young buck, an’ back-steppin’ for to go ’long. Dem ole sleepers wuz jes a-rockin’, an’ Jack Forester he wuz callin’ de figgers for to wake ’em up. I warn’ dancin’, ’cause I done got ’ligion an’ ’longst to de chutch sence de trouble done tech us up so rank; but I tell you my foots wuz pintedly eechchin for a leetle sop on it, an’ I had to come out to keep from crossin’ ’em onst, anyways. Den, too, I had a tetch o’ misery in my back, an’ I lay off to git a tas’e o’ dat egg-nog out dat big bowl, wid snowdrift on it, from Miss Lucy—she al’ays

mighty fond o’ Marse George ; so I slip into de carpenter shop, an’ ax her kyarn I do nuttin for her, an’ she laugh an’ say, yes, I kin drink her health, an’ gi’ me a gret gobletful, an’ jes den de white folks come in to ’spec’ de tables, Marse George in de lead, an’ dee all fill up dee glasses an’ pledge dee health, an’ all de servants’, an’ a merry Christmas ; an’ den dee went in de wash-house to see de dancin’, an’ maybe to teck a han deeself, ’cause white folks’ ’ligion ain’ like niggers’, you know ; dee got so much larnin dee kin dance, an’ fool de devil too. An’ I stay roun’ a little while, an’ den went in de kitchen to see how supper gittin’ on, ’cause I wuz so hongry when I got dyah I ain’ able to eat ’nough at one time to ’commodate it, an’ de smell o’ de tuckeys an’ de gret saddlers o’ mutton in de tin-kitchens wuz mos’ ’nough by deeself to feed a right hongry man ; an’ dyah wuz a whole parcel o’ niggers cookin’ an’ tunnin ’bout for life, an’ dee faces jes as shiny as ef dee done bas’e ’em wid gravy ; an’ dyah, settin’ back in a cheer out de way, wid her clean frock up off de flo’, wuz dat gal ! I sutney did feel curiousome.

“I say, ‘Hi ! name o’ Gord ! whar’d you come from ?’ She say, ‘Oh, Marster ! ef heah ain’ dat free nigger agin !’ An’ ev’ybody laughed.

“Well, presny we come out, cause Nancy warn see de dancin’, an’ we stop a leetle while ’hind de cornder out de wind while she tell me ’bout ev’ything. An’ she say dat’s all a lie she tell me dat day ’bout Mr. Darker an’ Miss Charlotte; an’ he done gone ’way now for good ’cause he so low down an’ wuthless dee kyarn nobody stand him; an’ all he warn marry Miss Charlotte for is to git her niggers. But Nancy say Miss Charlotte niver could abide him; he so ’sateful, ’spressly sence she fine out what a lie he told ’bout Marse George. You know, Mr. Darker he done meck ’em think Marse George sont me dyah to fine out ef he done come home, an’ den dat he fall on him wid he weepin when he ain’ noticin’ him, an’ sort o’ out de way too, an’ git two urr mens to hold him while he beat him, all ’cause he in love wid Miss Charlotte. D’you ever, ever heah sich a lie? An’ Nancy say, do’ Miss Charlotte ain’ b’lieve it all togerr, hit look so reasonable she done le’ de ole jedge an’ her ma, who wuz ’pending on what she heah, ’duce her to send back he things; an’ dee ain’ know no better not tell after de ole jedge die; den dee fine out ’bout de whuppin me, an’ all; an’ den Miss Charlotte know huccome I ain’ gwine stay dat day; an’ she say dee was sutney outdone ’bout it, but it too late den; an’

Miss Charlotte kyarn do nuttin but cry 'bout it, an' dat she did, pintedly, 'cause she done lost Marse George, an' done 'stroy he life; an' she nuver keer 'bout nobody else sep Marse George, Nancy say. Mr. Clarke he hangin' on, but Miss Charlotte she done tell him pintedly she ain' nuver gwine marry nobody. An' dee jes done come, she say, 'cause dee had to go 'way roun by de rope ferry 'long o' de river bein' so high, an' dee ain' know tell dee done git out de ker'idge an' in de house dat we all wuz heah; an' Nancy say she glad dee ain', 'cause she 'feared ef dee had, Miss Charlotte wouldn' 'a come.

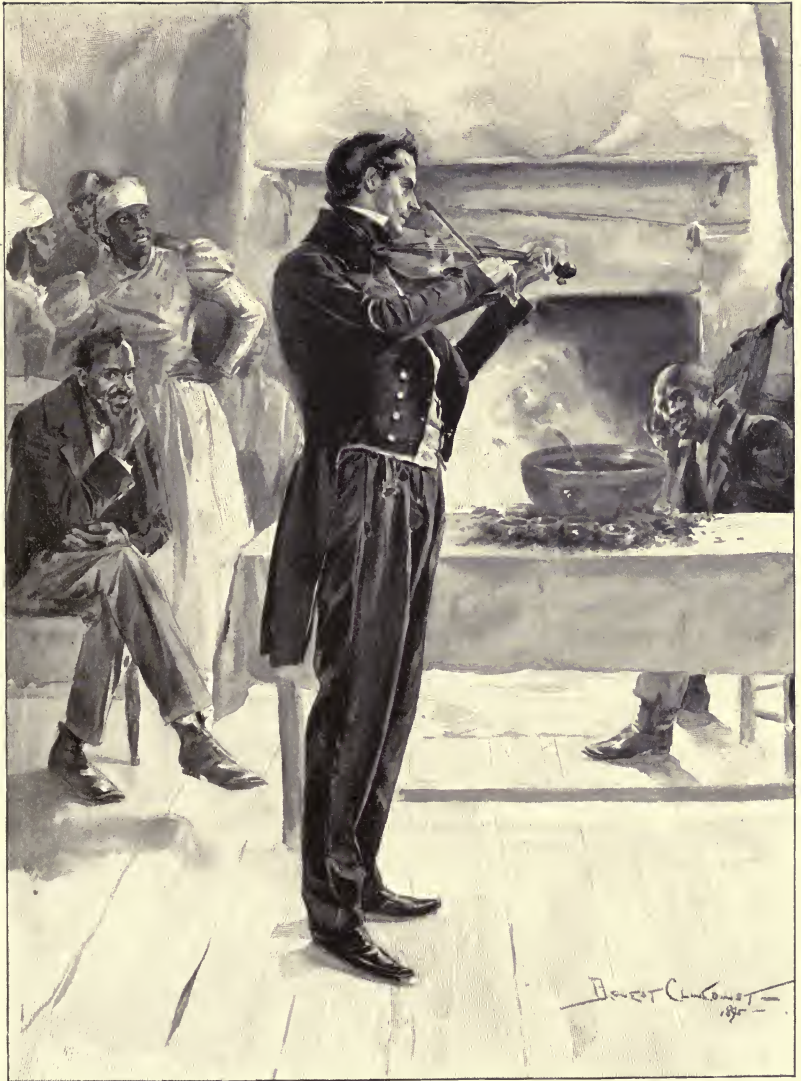
“Den I tell her all 'bout Marse George, 'cause I know she 'bleeged to tell Miss Charlotte. Twuz powerful cold out dyah, but I ain' mine dat, chile. Nancy she done had to wrop her arms up in her ap'on an' she kyarn meck no zistance 'tall, an' dis nigger ain' keerin' nuttin 'bout cold den.

“An' jes den two ladies come out de carpenter shop an' went 'long to de wash-house, an' Nancy say, ‘Dyah Miss Charlotte now;’ an' twuz Miss Lucy an' Miss Charlotte; an' we heah Miss Lucy coixin' Miss Charlotte to go, tellin' her she kin come right out; an' jes den dee wuz a gret shout, an' we went in hinst 'em. Twuz Marse George had done teck de fiddle,

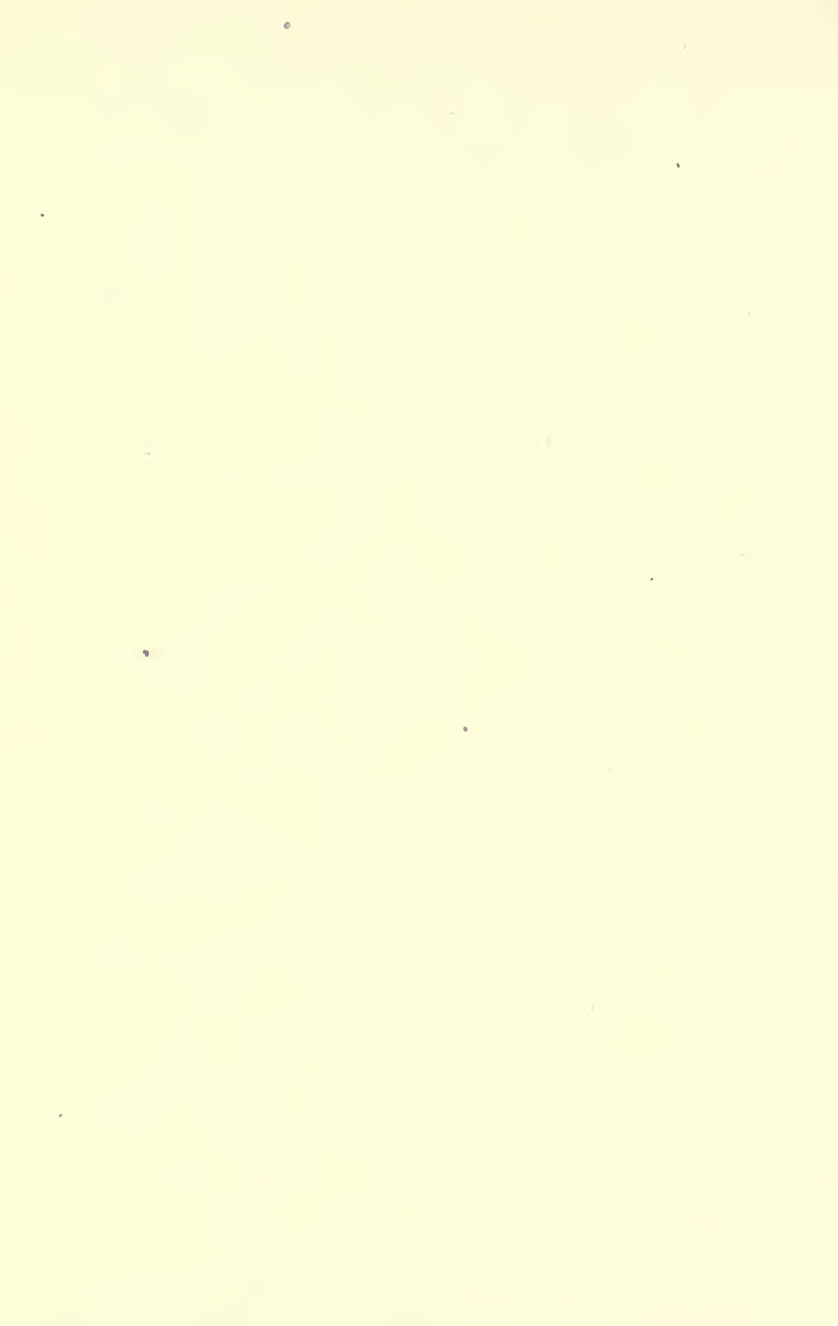
an’ ef he warn’ natchelly layin’ hit down! he wuz up at de urr een o’ de room, ’way from we all, ’cause we wuz at de do’, nigh Miss Charlotte whar she wuz standin’ ’hind some on ’em, wid her eyes on him mighty timid, like she hidin’ from him, an’ ev’y nigger in de room wuz on dat flo’. Gord! suh, dee wuz grinnin’ so dee warn’ a toof in dat room you couldn’ git you tweezers on; an’ you couldn’ heah a wud, dee so proud o’ Marse George playin’ for ’em.

“Well, dee danced tell you couldn’ tell which wuz de clappers an’ which de back-steppers; de whole house look like it wuz rockin’; an’ presney somebody say supper, an’ dat stop ’em, an’ dee wuz a spell for a minute, an’ Marse George standin’ dyah wid de fiddle in he hand. He face wuz tunned away, an’ he wuz studyin’—studyin’ ’bout dat urr Christmas so long ago—an’ sudney he face drapt down on de fiddle, an’ he drawed he bow ’cross de strings, an’ dat chune ’bout ‘You’ll ermmember me’ begin to whisper right sorf. Hit begin so low ev’ybody had to stop talkin’ an’ hold dee mouf to heah it; an’ Marse George he ain’ know nuttin’ ’bout it, he done gone back, an’ standin’ dyah in de gret hall playin’ it for Miss Charlotte, whar done come down de steps wid her little blue foots an’ gret fan, an’ standin’ dyah in her dim blue dress an’





*"Hit begin so low ev'ybody had to stop talkin'."*



her fyah arms, an’ her gret eyes lookin’ in he face so earnest, whar he ain’ gwine nuver speak to no mo’. I see it by de way he look — an’ de fiddle wuz jes pleadin’. He drawed it out jes as fine as a stran’ o’ Miss Charlotte’s hyah.

“Hit so sweet, Miss Charlotte, mun, she couldn’ stan’ it; she made to de do’; an’ jes while she watchin’ Marse George to keep him from seein’ her he look dat way, an’ he eyes fall right into hern.

“Well, suh, de fiddle drapt down on de flo’—perlang! — an’ he face wuz white as a sycamore limb.

“Dee say twuz a swimmin’ in de head he had; an’ Jack say de whole fiddle warn wuff de five dollars.

“Me an’ Nancy followed ’em tell dee went in de house, an’ den we come back to de shop whar de supper wuz gwine on, an’ got we all supper an’ a leetle sop o’ dat yaller gravy out dat big bowl, an’ den we all rejourned to de wash-house agin, an’ got onder de big bush o’ misseltow whar hangin’ from de jice, an’ ef you ever see scufflin’ dat’s de time.

“Well, me an’ she had jes done lay off de whole Christmas, when wud come dat Marse George want he horses.

“I went, but it sutney breck me up; an’ I wonder whar de name o’ Gord Marse George gwine sen’ me

dat cold night, an’ jes as I got to de do’ Marse George an’ Mr. Braxton come out, an’ I know torectly Marse George wuz gwine ’way. I seen he face by de light o’ de lantern, an’ twuz set jes rigid as a rock.

“Mr. Braxton he wuz baiggin him to stay; he tell him he ruinin’ he life, dat he sho dee’s some mistake, an’ twill be all right. An’ all de answer Marse George meck wuz to swing heself up in de saddle, an’ Rev-eller he look like he gwine fyah ’stracted. He al’ays mighty fool anyways when he git cold, dat horse wuz.

“Well, we come ’long ’way, an’ Mr. Braxton an’ two mens come down to de river wid lanterns to see us cross, ’cause twuz dark as pitch, sho ’nough.

“An’ jes ’fo’ I started I got one o’ de mens to hol’ my horses, an’ I went in de kitchen to git warm, an’ dyah Nancy wuz. An’ she say Miss Charlotte up-stairs cryin’ right now, ’cause she think Marse George gwine cross de river ’count o’ her, an’ she whimper a little herself when I tell her good-by. But twuz too late den.

“Well, de river wuz jes natchelly b’ilin’, an’ hit soun’ like a mill-dam roarin’ by; an’ when we got dyah Marse George tunned to me an’ tell me he reckon I better go back. I ax him whar he gwine, an’ he say, ‘Home.’ ‘Den I gwine wid you,’ I says. I

wuz mighty skeered, but me an’ Marse George wuz boys togerr; an’ he plunged right in, an’ I after him.

“Gord! twuz cold as ice; an’ we hadn’ got in befo’ bofe horses wuz swimmin’ for life. He holler to me to byah de myah head up de stream; an’ I did try, but what’s a nigger to dat water! Hit jes pick me up an’ dash me down like I ain’ no mo’n a chip, an’ de fust thing I know I gwine down de stream like a piece of bark, an’ water washin’ all over me. I knowed den I gone, an’ I hollered for Marse George for help. I heah him answer me not to git skeered, but to hold on; but de myah wuz lungin’ an’ de water wuz all over me like ice, an’ den I washed off de myah back, an’ got drownded.

“I ’member comin’ up an’ hollerin’ agin for help, but I know den ’tain’ no use, dee ain’ no help den, an’ I got to pray to Gord, an’ den some’n hit me an’ I went down agin, an’ — de next thing I know I wuz in de bed, an’ I heah ’em talkin’ ’bout wherr I dead or not, an’ I ain’ know myself tell I taste de whiskey dee po’rin’ down my jugular.

“An’ den dee tell me ’bout how when I hollered Marse George tun back an’ struck out for me for life, an’ how jes as I went down de last time he catch me an’ helt on to me tell we wash down to whar de

bank curve, an’ dyah de current wuz so rapid hit yuck him off Reveller back, but he helt on to de reins tell de horse lunge so he hit him wid he fo’ foot an’ breck he collar-bone, an’ den he had to let him go, an’ jes helt on to me; an’ den we wash up agin de bank an’ cotch in a tree, an’ de mens got dyah quick as dee could, an’ when dee retched us Marse George wuz holdin’ on to me, an’ had he arm wropped roun’ a limb, an’ we wuz lodged in de crotch, an’ bofe jes as dead as a nail; an’ de myah she got out, but Reveller he wuz drowneded, wid his foot cotch in de rein an’ de saddle tunned onder he side; an’ dee ain’ know wherr Marse George ain’ dead too, ’cause he not only drowneded, but he lef’ arm broke up nigh de shoulder.

“An’ dee say Miss Charlotte she ’mos’ ’stracted; dat de fust thing anybody know ’bout it wuz when some de servants bust in de hall an’ holler, an’ say Marse George an’ me bofe done washed ’way an’ drowneded, an’ dat she drapt down dead on de flo’, an’ when dee bring her to she ’low to Miss Lucy dat she de ’casion on he death; an’ dee say dat when de mens wuz totin’ him in de house, an’ wuz shufflin’ de feets not to meck no noige, an’ a little piece o’ wet blue silk drapt out he breast whar somebody picked up an’ gin Miss Lucy, Miss Charlotte breck right



*"Miss Charlotte she 'mos' 'stracted."*





down agin; an’ some on ’em say she sutney did keer for him; an’ now when he layin’ upstairs dyah dead, hit too late for him ever to know it.

“Well, suh, I couldn’ teck it in dat Marse George and Reveller wuz dead, an’ jes den somebody say Marse George done comin’ to an’ dee gi’ me so much whiskey I went to sleep.

“An’ next mornin’ I got up an’ went to Marse George room, an’ see him layin’ dyah in de bed, wid he face so white an’ he eyes so tired-lookin’, an’ he ain’ know me no mo’ ’n ef he nuver see me, an’ I couldn’ stan’ it; I jes drap down on de flo’ an’ bust out cryin’. Gord! suh, I couldn’ help it, ’cause Reveller wuz drownded, an’ Marse George he wuz mos’ gone.

“An’ he came nigher goin’ yit, ’cause he had sich a strain, an’ been so long in de water, he heart done got numbed, an’ he got ’lirium, an’ all de time he thought he tryin’ to git ’cross de river to see Miss Charlotte, an’ hit so high he kyarn git dyah.

“Hit sutney wuz pitiful to see him layin’ dyah tossin’ an’ pitchin’, not knowin’ whar he wuz, tell it teck all Mr. Braxton an’ me could do to keep him in de bed, an’ de doctors say he kyarn hol’ out much longer.

“An’ all dis time Miss Charlotte she wuz gwine ’bout de house wid her face right white, an’ Nancy say she don’ do nuttin all day long in her room but cry an’ say her pra’rs, prayin’ for Marse George, whar dyin’ upstairs by ’count’ o’ not knowin’ she love him, an’ I tell Nancy how he honin’ all de time to see her, an’ how he constant cravin’ her name.

“Well, so twuz, tell he mos’ done wyah heself out; an’ jes lay dyah wid his face white as de pillow, an’ he gret pitiful eyes rollin’ ’bout so restless, like he still lookin’ for her whar he all de time callin’ her name, an’ kyarn git ’cross dat river to see.

“An’ one evenin’ ’bout sunset he ’peared to be gwine; he weaker’n he been at all, he ain’ able to scuffle no mo’, an’ jes layin’ dyah so quiet, an’ presney he say, lookin’ mighty wistful :

“‘Edinburg, I’m goin’ to-night; ef I don’t git ’cross dis time, I’ll gin’t up.’

“Mr. Braxton wuz standin’ nigh de head o’ de bed, an’ he say, ‘Well, by Gord! he *shell* see her!’—jes so. An’ he went out de room, an’ to Miss Charlotte do’, an’ call her, an’ tell her she got to come, ef she don’t, he’ll die dat night; an’ fust thing I know, Miss Lucy bring Miss Charlotte in, wid her face right white, but jes as tender as a angel’s, an’ she come an’

stan’ by de side de bed, an’ lean down over him, an’ call he name, ‘George!’—jes so.

“An’ Marse George he ain’ answer; he jes look at her study for a minute, an’ den he forehead got smooth, an’ he tun he eyes to me, an’ say, ‘Edinburg, I’m ’cross.’”

















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