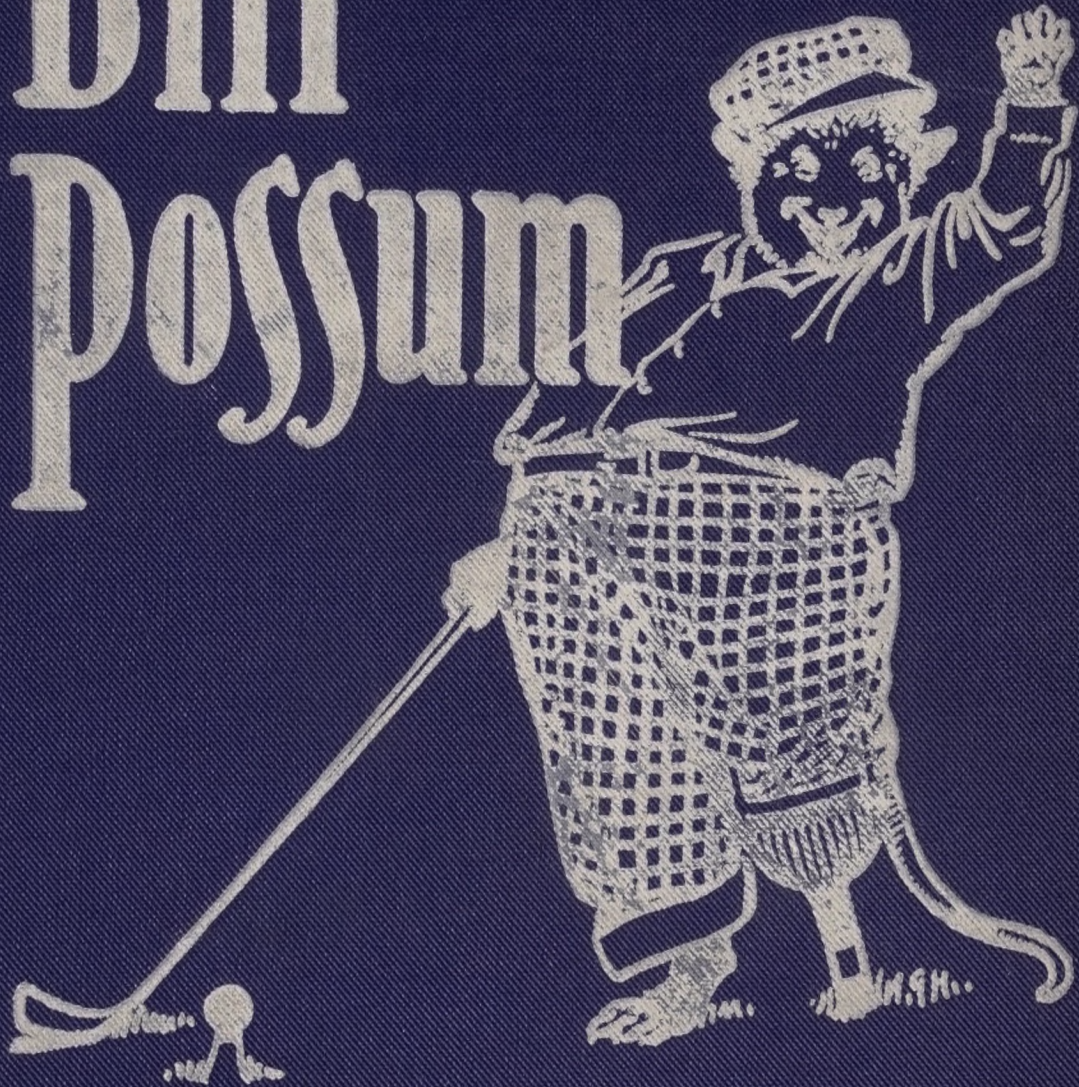


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# Bill Possum



**HIS BOOK**

==== **BY** =====

**MARY BRENT**

**WHITESIDE**





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# BILL POSSUM:

HIS BOOK

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BY  
MARY BRENT WHITESIDE

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TO

PRESIDENT TAFT

*As a Modest Memento of His Visit to Atlanta.*







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- II. Uncle Isaac Williams Makes a Discovery.
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UNCLE ISAAC SAT IN THE DOORWAY, CLEANING AN INCREDIBLY RUSTY OLD GUN. (Chapter II.)



## CHAPTER I.

### GRANDFATHER POSSUM'S STORY.

Oh, sing er song ob de good ol' time,  
    But I wish dis chick'n uz bigger),  
Oh, sing er song ob de good ol' time,  
    'Fo' de possum met de nigger.  
Oh, dem uz moughty happy days, happy days,  
    happy days;  
Fros' time come whut a racket us raise;  
Dar on de groun' de 'simmons lays,  
    Dem good ol' times in Georgia.  
  
En now des look whut a fix us in,  
    (But I wish dis chick'n us bigger),  
En hit ain't safe now fer ter set en grin,  
    Fer de possum's met de nigger.  
Fros' still teches de 'simmon tree, 'simmon tree,  
    'simmon tree,  
But us all time tu'nin' eroun' ter see,  
Is de dawg en de nigger erhuntin' we,  
    Fer times is change' in Georgia.

Grandfather Possum, who was singing this song, finished the last line, just as he helped the youngest of his grandchildren to a slice of chicken. He sang it, of course, in the possum language, which being trans-



lated into human speech, naturally takes the form of negro dialect, for between the negro and the possum exists a peculiar affinity, which to the white man is unknown and unattainable.

“Ain’t hit al’ays been dis erway?” demanded the youngest grandchild, speaking with difficulty, for his mouth was very full; “aint us al’ays been skeered ob dawgs en niggers? I ain’t ’member no time w’en we all warn’t scootin’ eroun’ en hidin’ fum dem critters.”

“Ez fer dat,” responded Grandfather Possum, also speaking with difficulty, for his mouth was even fuller than the youngest grandchild’s, “I ain’t got no ’membunce on hit mase’f, but I done been heerd about hit fer de longes’. Hit all happen ’long er one ol’ fool possum erway back yon’er ’fo’ de wah. I ’clar I des natch’ly ershame’ ter own up ’bout dat ol’ critter bein’ a gran’daddy ob ourn.”

“Whut dat ol’ an’mul done?” demanded Mrs. Possum, carefully helping herself to a drumstick.

“Wuz ’im we all’s gran’daddy too?”





asked the youngest grandchild, who was both inquisitive and insistent.

“In co’se, ef ’im uz ma gran’daddy, he uz bleedje ter been yourn. But Lawdy mussy, chile, he done had ser menny gre’ts in front ob hisse’f, I ain’t got strenk ter mention um. Ef de one on ma lef’ des lights in en sez ’gre’t t’ree times, en de one nex’ ’im tek hit up, en ser on, eroun’, I ’low yo’all ’ll erbout git in all de gre’ts, whut uz in front er dat dar gran’daddy Possum’s name. You, ‘A’ Possum, you des tek’n sling out yourn, en so on ’twel hit gits to ‘O’ Possum, ’ginst w’ich time, I ’low, yo’ll done mention’ all de gre’ts dey wuz.”

At this, ‘A’ Possum shouted “Gre’t, gre’t, gre’t,” as fast as ever he could, in order to lose as little time as possible from his dinner.

‘B’ Possum, who sat next to him, had just taken such a large mouthful of chicken, that he choked terribly over his words, and ‘C’ Possum, who in turn, sat on his left, had to pound him violently on the back, before he could say, “Gre’t, gre’t, gre’t,” himself.



At last, however, it had passed all the way around to 'O' Possum, who roared "Gre't, gre't, gre't," at the very top of his voice, right in Grandfather Possum's ear.

"You ain't needin' ter beller dat erway," cried the old gentleman indignantly, "I done year yer widout dat." He had now a good opportunity to finish his dinner, however, and was ready to go on with his story. "Wall, ladies en gem'men," he began, in an impressive manner that quite befitted his reputation as an after dinner speaker, "dis hyar ol' gran'daddy Possum whut I done sot out fer ter susscribe, wuz de one whut gun we all dis repertation we got ob des natch'ly bein' onsensible. Up twel dis hyar time whut I gwine spec'fy, de niggers en de possums, dey all libs hyar erbouts, des ez peacerble ez lambs. Ever' time a nigger come er lopin' down der road, en meet up wid er possum, he stop right den en dar en gun axin' how 'im wuz, des ez sosherble lak ez yer please, en 'low he hope all Mister Possum's chillun well en prosp'rous en des kyar on dat erway lak




de possum wuz de bes' frien' whut he eber gwine hab.

“Wall, hit keep on dis erway fer de longes', de nigger en de possum all de time er 'changin' 'howdedo,' en bowin' en scrapin', en tekin' on ober one ernudder fit ter kill. De possum he go trapusin' roun' de nigger cabin, en tote erlong a whole passel ob sas'fras roots, en de nigger he ax 'im in en gun him a cheer, des ez perlite, en 'lows he mought lak a roas' 'tater whut he des cook. En all de time de nigger's dawg en de possum des set dar en wunk dey eye at one ernudder, but ain't 'change no conv'sation whutebber.

“Dis de way hit go on twel bimeby dar come de coldes' spell er wedder whut folks got any ric'lection on. Lawdy mussy, hit got so blizzardy dat de possums all scrouch' deyse'ves up in de holler tree, en dassent poke out dey tail, dey dat skeered hit gwine git friz. But bimeby dey natch'ly 'gins ter git hongry, en atter w'ile dey gits dat empty, twel hit 'pear lak dey gwine starve ter deaf.

“Dis las' so long twel bimeby dat ol' Gran'daddy Possum, whut I done men-





tion', 'low he des ain't gwine stan' dis hyar biz'ness no longer; dat he des gwine light out en fotch home sump'n' t'eat ef hit de las' ac', en he gwine git cotch by Jack Fros' in de barg'n.

“Den all de li'l possums, dey up en sez, “Don' go 'way fum hyar, Gran'daddy; you 'bide hyar 'long er we all, Gran'daddy! Dat Jack Fros' sho' gwine git you, ef you tek en go trab'lin' eroun' ternight!”

“But dat Gran'daddy Possum, he ain't lis'n ter nut'n'. He 'low dat 'twix' gittin' friz ter deaf' en gittin' starve' ter deaf', dar ain't no more ch'ice dan 'twix' a blin' mule en a mule whut can't see. En wid dese wuds, he des lit out, en go rackin' eroun' de woods, huntin' 'im sump'n' whut's fitt'n' fer ter eat, but he ain't fin' hit. Atter w'ile, do', he lan' 'long side ob a nigger cabin, en he dat col', he 'cide he'll drap in en wa'm hisse'f.

“Wid dat, he knock on de do', des ez per-lite ez he know how. ‘Please lemme in, Mister Nigger,’ he sez, ‘I dat col' I mos' friz.’

“But de nigger he 'tend lak he ain't year 'im.



“ ‘Please sir, lemme in, Mister Nigger,’ sez ol’ Gran’daddy Possum, ‘I dat col’ I des erbout ter drap daid, I is dat.’

“Den de nigger he up en ’low, ‘Us ain’t got ernuf fire ter wa’m weall by, Mister Possum,’ he sez, ‘en us drefful sorry, but you ain’t gwine git in.’

“Den po’ ol’ Gran’daddy Possum, he ser col’ twel he des whimper. ‘Please sir, Mister Nigger,’ he sez des ez pitiful lak, ‘please sir, gimme li’l hunk ob fat meat, I dat empty I mos’ drap daid wid hongriness.’

“But de nigger he up en ’low, ‘I ain’t got ernough fat meat fer ter fill mase’f wid, Mister Possum,’ he sez, ‘en you des ez well be gwine erbout yer biz’ness, you had dat.’

“W’en de nigger sez dem las’ wuds, Ol’ gran’daddy Possum git so mad twel he can’t skasely see, en he ’low ter hisse’f, he’ll des light in en gib dat nigger sech a skeer he ain’t soon fergit it. Wid dat, whut dat fool possum do, but clam’ up ter de top ob dat cabin, twel he gits ter de chimbly. Den he ’low he’ll des holler down dat place en perten’ dat hit’s de win’ er-talkin’, en hit’ll skeer de niggers so dat



dey'll all tek'n run out'n de do', en den he'll des lope in en he'p hisse'f. But Lawdy mussy, chillun, dat ol' critter ain't stud'n' erbout dat dar chimbly bein' ser slip'ry wid ice en sleet, en he dat stiff wid col' twel he right clubfooted."

Here Grandfather Possum stopped to sigh profoundly over the unhappy fate that awaited his lamented ancestor. "Wall," he continued presently, "de long en de sho't ob hit wuz, dat he des slip up en go haid fust, 'bumpity, bump, blam, blam,' down dat nigger's chimbly, en lan' in a big pot ob water whut settin' ober de fire."

"Um, um," interrupted the youngest grandchild in a horrified voice, "dat mus'er hu't 'im powful bad, Gran'daddy."

"Huh! hit des cook' 'im," was the response, "dat whut hit done; hit des cook' 'im, froo en froo, en dem niggers, dey des sot dar en haw, haw, lak dey's 'enjoyin' deyse'ves mought'ly. But bimeby dey 'gun ter smell sump'n."

"Whut dey smell, Gran'daddy?" demanded the youngest grandchild, in a tone of awe.

"Dey all smell dat po' ol' gran'daddy ob



yourn, whut done cook’,” returned Grandfather Possum in a mournful voice. “En hit ’pear lak dey think he smell moughty good.”

“Ser dey all des tuck’n lif’ dat pot off’n de fire, en dem niggers squat eroun’ dar on de flo’, en ’gun ter tas’e dat po’ ol’ cook’ possum. Den dey ain’t was’e no time er talkin’. Dey sot dar en dey et en dey et, en chaw, en chaw, en sma’k dey mouf, en tain’t long ’fo’ dey lick out dat ’ar pot twel hit plum clean.”

“En den whut happen nex’?” inquired the incorrigible youngest grandchild.

“Dey ain’t no nex’,” responded Grandfather Possum with a groan; “Leas’ wise dey warn’t no nex’ wid dat po’ ol’ critter, kaze he wuz done et up, en fum dat day clean twel dis, de nigger been er layin’ fer de possum en er eatin’ ’im ever’ time he git a chanst. En dat’s de gawspel truf, des lak whut I’m tellin’ you.”

For a few short moments the youngest grandchild was unusually thoughtful, then: “Gran’daddy,” he began in a somewhat awe stricken voice, “is dat whut dat ol’ bow laig nigger, Unc’ Isaac, want wid you?”



Is dat how come 'im cotch you in a trap, en how come you got one less foots den we all? Us ain't nebbber heerd erbout des how dat happen."

Grandfather Possum, who was rather sensitive on the subject of this affliction, scowled severely. "Hit's more'n time chil-luns uz in bed," he declared, "en yo'all bettah be trapusin' home. Dat ol' nigger you mention ain't lak us eatin' up de po'l-try; dat whut bodderin' 'im. I heerd he done 'quired de repertation ob bein' a gre't possum ketcher, en I ain't 'sputin' hit. But 'im ain't gwine git dis hyar one, en dat's sho' en sart'n," he ended in a tone that carried conviction.





## CHAPTER II.

## UNCLE ISAAC WILLIAMS MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Up, nigger, up, fer de sun gittin' high,  
 Up, nigger, up, fer de night's pass' by;  
 Up, nigger, up, ef de day don' fotch you,  
 Bettah min' out, fer de oberseer'll cotch you,

Up, nigger, up, en run.

Up, nigger, up, fer de plow done wait,  
 En de ol' gray mule he 'lows you's late,

Up, nigger, up, en run.

Ho, whe-ee, nigger hatter rise at day;  
 He rise moughty quick, en he travel moughty fas',  
 Ef he eber gwinter pick in de heabenly fiel's at las';  
 In de cotton fiel's ob heaben fer away.

Up, nigger, up, fer de turkey buzzard fly,  
 Down by de branch, en de day am high;  
 Up, nigger, up, fer de owl he watch you,  
 En 'lows he'll hoot so de marster'll cotch you,

Up, nigger, up, en run.

Up, nigger, up, ain't you see dat sun?

Up, nigger, up, fer de night am done;

Up, nigger, up, en run.



Ho, whe-ee, nigger hatter rise at day;  
He rise moughty quick, en he travel moughty fas',  
Ef he aimin' ter eat possum, up dar in heab'n at las';  
Up dar some day in heab'n fer away.

Uncle Isaac Williams, who was in the barnyard, feeding the poultry while he sang, turned a rueful countenance towards the mistress of the house, as she picked her way through the long wet grass with carefully lifted skirts.

“Mawnin', Miss Ellen,” he said, unlatching the tall gate for her to enter; “pow'ful fine day fer dis time ob de y'ar, hit sho' am. I 'lowed we'd had a right sma't fros' befo' dis, but Lawd, naw'm! De 'simmons is dat green yit, dat you dasent tetch um, 'thout you aim ter twis' yo' mouf up ser's you can't onpucker hit in less'n a mont'.”

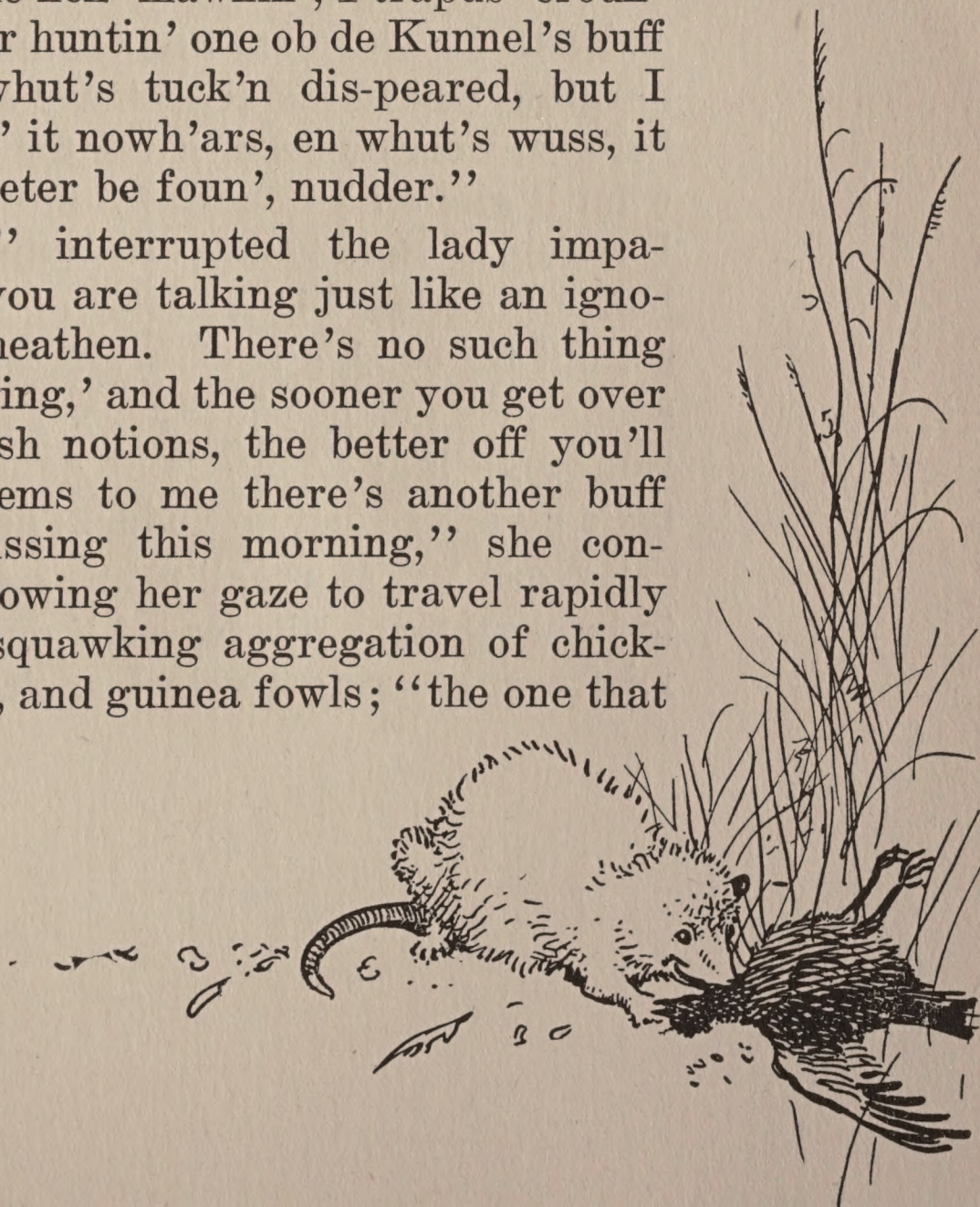
“I don't think it's the greenness of the persimmons that's troubling you this morning, Isaac,” returned the lady severely, “but a different and more serious matter altogether. I counted the poultry myself, yesterday, and it's nothing short of astonishing the way the ducks and young turkeys have disappeared. Something is go-



ing to have to be done about it, and done quickly, too."

"Yas'm, I year you, Miss Ellen, I year you," replied the old man, removing his shapeless old soft hat, and scratching his grizzled head in perplexity. "I 'low I dunno whut you gwineter do, do'; I don't, fer a fac'. Dey done been kunjur'; dat whut happen. Dese hyar fowls been kunjured fer sho'. One mawnin' I come hyar, en hit's two ol' white ducks dat's missin', en not a toenail ner a fedder ob um is I dis-kiver, en de nex' mawnin', I trapus' eroun' dis place er huntin' one ob de Kunnel's buff cochins, whut's tuck'n dis-peared, but I ain't foun' it nowh'ars, en whut's wuss, it ain't gwineter be foun', nudder."

"Isaac," interrupted the lady impatiently, "you are talking just like an ignorant old heathen. There's no such thing as 'kunjuring,' and the sooner you get over such foolish notions, the better off you'll be. It seems to me there's another buff cochin missing this morning," she continued, allowing her gaze to travel rapidly over the squawking aggregation of chickens, ducks, and guinea fowls; "the one that





Richard claimed for his, and marked with a red string. Have you seen it recently,"

"Gawd er mussy," Miss Ellen," protested the old negro, "you got ez sha'p eyes ez yo' ma uster hab back yon'er in slav'ry times! Naw'm, I ain't see dat dar chick'n you spec'fy, nudder. I sho' ain't."

"I heard," resumed the lady, after a pause, and as if pursuing a new and diverting line of thought, "that some of you colored folks entertained your new preacher at a big dinner last night?"

"'Fo' de Lawd, now, Miss Ellen," exclaimed the old man, divided between admiration and uneasiness; "dar ain't nut'n happen, worf de brea'f it tek ter tell it, but whut it gits ter yo' ears 'fo' hits a day ol', I reckon! But, honey, we didn't hab no buff cochin las' night! En' ef we had er sot out ter cotch a buff cochin, we all ain't gwine pick out one jes' kase it got a raid rag on de laig er hit. Dat don't make it tas'e no better dan no yudder; naw'm."

"When Mr. Marshall returns, he's going to be very much displeased," declared the mistress, ignoring Uncle Isaac's protests;



“and please don’t forget that I’ve told you this thing is to stop.”

The old man shook his head with a profound sigh. “Naw’m, I ain’t gwine disremember dat, Miss Ellen. I ’low I’ll des natch’ly lay ’wake ob nights, stud’n’ ’bout hit. En dis ol’ nigger ain’t know nuth’n’ mo’ ’bout dat chick’n’ ’n a new bawn babe nudder!”

The mistress vouchsafed no reply to this, but opening the gate, threaded her dainty way through the wet grass again, back to the house.

Uncle Isaac, left alone, gave himself over to mournful reflections. “Dat ol’ one eye nigger ’oman whut lib ober yon’ ’crost de crick, is sho got me in a sight er trouble wid her kunjurs. Hit ain’t no nigger stealin’ dese hyar critters, en hit ain’t no fox stealin’ um, en it ain’t no nuthin’ stealin’ um. Hit des a kunjer, dat’s what hit is.”

The fowls having now been fed to the limit of their capacity, Uncle Isaac opened the barn door, and choosing a hoe which was hanging there, closed the door behind him, and passed out at the opposite side, where there was an unused bit of ground,



which he proposed converting into an early onion patch.

Laying down the hoe, he cleared away some briars with his hand, and while doing so, a bit of bright color caught his eye. "Wall, I 'clar ter goodness, ef hit ain't a raid rag," he said, stooping to pick it up, "en hit ain't nary nudder raid rag but de one dat white chile tie onter dat buff cochin. But how come hit layin' hyar in dese briars, dat whut I wanter know, en dat what Miss Ellen gwinter be axin', 'ginst she year 'bout it."

While conversing with himself in this characteristic fashion, the old negro had been exploring the soft ground in the vicinity of which he had found the tell tale red string, and in a few moments was rewarded by the discovery of first one chicken foot and then another, and presently of some bones, which had been carefully buried. "Uh, huh," he told himself, "dis nigger done 'skivered all de mortual remains ob dis same chicken, en ef I ain't fell shy on my calc'lations, dar's mo' yit ter come, yassir, dar's mo' yit."

By this time indeed, Uncle Isaac ap-



peared to be on the eve of a momentous discovery, for he was rapidly uncovering an extensive funeral mound which appeared to contain endless bones, and feathers of all colors and descriptions. "Gawd er mussy, I done 'skivered a whole chick'n cemingtery, I is dat, en I 'low I ain't gwine drap daid ob ol' age, 'fore I gits on de trail ob de grave digger, nudder. Hi, dar, you Ab'ram Linco'n!" he called out, catching sight of a young mulatto who was crossing through the peach orchard not far away. "You git a hump on yo'se'f, en lope 'crost dat dar cabbage patch, en 'zamine dese hyar tracks. Am dat a dawg track, I ax you, er am it not?" he demanded, pointing to an intricate network of flat bottom footprints which led to and from the mound where he had unearthed the bones.

Abraham grinned broadly. "Naw, dat ain't no dawg track," he returned promptly, "en hit ain't no rat track, nudder.





Whar'd you git all dem fedders, Unc' Isaac?"

The old man ignored the question. "Dat ain't no kinder critter's track, cep'n' one," he declared, "en dat critter muster growed so fat by now twel he's moughty nigh bustin'. Dat's a possum track, dat is, en hit's dat oncommon imperdent possum wid de peg laig, whut I done been had a 'quaintance wid fer de longes'. Ain't you see one ob dem tracks ain't no foot track—hit des a peg laig track. Lawsy gracious, ef dis ol' nigger ain't gwinter lay fer dat critter sho'!"

Abraham's gaze traveled from the possum tracks to the pile of bones and feathers and back to the possum tracks again, and his black, beady eyes, fairly bulged with awe and wonder. "Dat's a monst'ous big an'mul, Unc' Isaac," he observed at last, "ef hit's done et up all de meat whut come off'n dem dar bones. Dat possum mus' be erbout de same size ez er el-phunt. Ma mouf des hankers atter er slice off'n dat an'mul dis ve'y minute."

"G'wan 'way fum hyar, nigger," cried the old man indignantly, "dat's ma possum



dat is, en I des natch'ly ain't gwine ter tek no res' twel I lays him low, I ain't dat. Dat's ma possum, en I des betcher er bale er cotton 'ginst a grasshopper, hit's dat same ol' critter whut I been trailin' fer de longes'. Huh! I reck'n you 'low yo'll stan' dar stud'n' 'bout dem tracks twel dey tu'ns inter a libe possum, is you? You g'wan down ter de big house, Ab'ram Linco'n, en ax Miss Ellen will she step hyar, please'm? But don't you tek en gib 'way no conf'mation 'cep'n dat. Don' you daas tek'n let on 'bout whut I done 'skivered; don' you dass."

Abraham, who stood in considerable awe of the old man, turned obediently in the direction of the "big house" to deliver the message. Meanwhile, Uncle Isaac seated himself complacently beside the mound of bones and feathers to cogitate. "Miss Ellen's de jedge en de jury," he said to himself, "en I 'low I'll git cl'ared ob de cha'ge ob chick'n stealin', en it ain't gwine ter tek long ter do hit nudder. Ma Lawd! dis ol' nigger feel er sight better'n whut he feel dis mawnin', he do dat. En I 'low



dar's goin' ter be de bigges' possum hunt ternight whut I got any 'membunce on."

Then as usual when alone, his deep, sonorous old voice rose in song; the triumphant strains this time of a stirring camp-meeting air.

"Jacob, Jacob, he clam' er ladder, ladder,  
Jacob, Jacob, he clam' er ladder, ladder,  
Peter ax him whut wuz he atter, atter,  
Chillun ob de Lawd.

"Esau, Esau, he sol' he cottage, cottage,  
Esau, Esau, he sol' he cottage, cottage,  
All fer er lil ol' mess er pottage, pottage,  
Chillun ob de Lawd.

"Phar'oh's darter went atter roses, roses,  
Phar'oh's darter went atter roses, roses,  
Down in de bulrush she foun' li'l Moses, Moses,  
Chillun ob de Lawd.

"Rise, shine, keep on ter glory, glory,  
Rise, shine, keep on ter glory, glory,  
Rise, shi-i-ne, keep on ter glory, glory,  
Chillun ob de Lawd."

It was some time before Uncle Isaac's "Miss Ellen" appeared on the scene of the old man's discovery, but when she finally



did so, he was as completely and frankly vindicated as he could wish. More than this, the mistress manifested the keenest interest in the proposed possum hunt, and went so far as to order the old negro to ring the farm bell, in the late afternoon, and summon the hands to take part in the expedition.

Uncle Isaac was jubilant. While not as spry as he had been in his younger days, before the rheumatism got in its telling work, he was not yet so disabled that a night in the woods, with a pack of dogs, and the blissful possibility of a possum in the branches of every persimmon tree, had lost any of its early charm.

Before the rise of the early moon, half a dozen negroes, accompanied by an equal number of dogs, and carrying sticks, hatchets, torches, and nondescript firearms of varying degrees of antiquity, were gathered about Uncle Isaac's cabin. Uncle Isaac himself sat in the doorway cleaning an incredibly rusty old gun, while Aunt Betsey, his wife, busied herself in the preparation of an ash cake, " 'ginst de ol' man git hongry 'fo' he come home agin.' "



The negroes outside were arguing with more or less heat concerning the respective merits of the various dogs and their proven abilities in "treeing" a possum. "Dat ol' houn' dawg yon'er wid de scar 'crost he back, ain't nebber lie yit," declared Mose Freeman, a short, thick set negro, who had acquired the enviable reputation of being the best banjo player in the county.

"Huh! I reck'n you disremember dat time he went chasin' hisse'f roun' er pole cat," scoffed Uncle Isaac, "I 'spose you cl'ar disremembers dat, but I ain't fergit hit, naw sir. It uz des 'bout dis time ob de y'ar, en folks uz layin' by dey fixin's 'ginst Thanksgibin—"

"Unc' Isaac," interrupted Mose hastily, "us ain't tek no spechul int'rust 'long er pole cats. Us druther hyar 'bout dat time de li'l boy whut useter stay ter de Kunnel's had 'im a possum hunt in Atlanta."

"'Fo' de Lawd, nigger," protested Abraham, "dey ain't no possums lib in dat place, is dey? I'm gwine dar mase'f come Sat'day, en I 'low I'll fin' out fer sho'."

"I ain't been in dat city since de 'casion



ob dat possum hunt whut you spec-fy," mused Uncle Isaac, "en dat's gwine on ten y'ar. En dat time I lit out en go dar kaze de Kunnel's brudder-in-law ax 'im fer ter sen' a re'l ol' time nigger up dar, ter he'p his li'l boy hab a possum hunt. Huh! dat white chile ain't know dis ol' nigger tuck'n kyar de possums 'long wid hisse'f, en tu'n um loose dar. He 'lowed dey des growed right dar outside dat town!" Here the old man stopped to chuckle i npleased reminiscence.

"You ain't mean you des tuck 'n tu'n dem critters loose dar in Atlanta, is you?" demanded Abraham, in amazement. "How come dey ain't git erway 'fo' de li'l boy eber sot 'is eyes on um?"

Uncle Isaac's chuckle developed into a laugh, in which Aunt Betsy joined heartily. "Ef you'd des 'low dis narrationment ter contin'yate hitse'f widout no int'ructions," he resumed presently, "fus' thing you know, you'd fin' out erbout dis hyar possum hunt widout ex'cisin' yo' mouf axin' erbout hit. De Gub'nor (dat de li'l boy's paw), done confab'late wid me, en he sez, se zhe: 'Unc' Isaac, you take dem pos-



sums out ter de woods, en you keep holt on um twel des you year we all comin'; den you tek'n tu'n um loose, en de li'l boy'll come erlong en sick 'is dawg on um, en we'll all hab a gen'wine possum hunt right hyar out'n dis city.

“But I 'low dis hyar derangement ain't gwine wu'k, en whut I do? I des tuck 'n s'lec' me a young hick'ry, en den I slit two er de branches wid a big knife, en I tuck dem possums out'n de sack whut I done kyar'd um in, en I farsten dey tails in dem split limbs whut I fix', so's dey can't git erloose, en dis no sooner happ'n, den 'long come de li'l boy en 'is paw, en de Kunnel hisse'f. Lawsy gracious, I mos' dislocervate ma jaws er laffin' at dat chile! He see dem possums, en he feel dat biggity twel he mos' bus' wid pride. En when dey done been fotch' down wid a rock, he sez, 'I reck'n yo' eyes ain't ez good ez mine, Unc' Isaac,' he sez; 'hyar you been stan'in' eroun' fer de longes', en you ain't cotch sight er dem possums twel I up en shows um ter you!' ”

The other negroes greeted Uncle Isaac's story with hearty and good natured laugh-



ter, and as the moon was now up and the old man's gun had been cleaned to his satisfaction, the party started cheerfully down the big road to the woods, singing lustily as they went, the music in no wise interfered with by the barking and yelping of the dogs:

Oh, de moon shine bright,  
 Wid er lubly light,  
 But us ain't gwine home dat way.  
 Oh, de moon shine bright,  
 In de middle ob de night,  
 But us ain't gwine home twel day.  
 Mister 'Possum he out,  
 En he rackin' erbout,  
 But he ain't gwine home dat way;  
 He swing ter de limb,  
 En kerblip, kerblim,  
 Ev'ey nigger dar tek a shot at 'im,  
 En he ain't gwine home terday.

Oh, dat's a feas' whut's fitt'n fer a king;  
 Thump away dar on de banjo string,  
 Dance, nigger, dance, en sing, nigger, sing,  
 De buzzard eye en de pidgin wing,  
 Thump away dar on de banjo string.





Oh, de rabbit's outer sight,  
En he sez goodnight,  
But us ain't gwine home dat way;  
Oh, de bullfrog's slid,  
Off de bank en hid,  
But us ain't gwine home twel day.  
Mister 'Possum he dar,  
In de limbs somewhar,  
But he ain't gwine home dat way;  
He sets in de top  
Er de tree; kerflop,  
He go w'en you hit 'im, en den he stop,  
But he ain't gwine home terday.

**Oh, dat's a feas' whut's fitt'n fer a king;  
Thump away dar on de banjo string,  
Dance, nigger, dance, en sing, nigger, sing,  
De buzzard eye en de pidgin wing,  
Thump away dar on de banjo string.**



## CHAPTER III.

## WHY GRANDFATHER POSSUM HAD A PEG LEG.

Dis hyar ol' worl' am a qu'ar ol' worl';  
Des git whut comfort you kin,  
Ef yo' plans goes wrong, ez you trabel erlong,  
Hit's de nigger's tu'n ter grin.  
Dis hyar ol' worl' am a qu'ar ol' worl',  
En hit full ob traps en sin;  
So des keep el'ar; ef you don't, den dar  
Ain't nut'n ter do but grin.

Oh, g'wan ter sleep fer yo' mammy please;  
Li'l possum, shet yo' eye,  
En dream erbout er lubly cloud,  
En heaben, bimeby,  
Whar all de trees is 'simmon trees,  
En niggers ain't allowed.

Dis weary worl' am a dreary worl';  
Des git whut comfort you kin,  
En ef things goes wrong, ez you trabel erlong,  
Des b'ar hit all en grin.  
Dis weary worl' am a dreary worl',  
En hit des jam' full ob sin,  
Ef you foteh up sho't, whar you nebber ought,  
Des lay right still en grin.



Ef you fin' yo'se'f in er place betwix',  
Er dawg en er nigger, yo're in a fix,  
En dar's whar trouble begin,  
Fer bofe am sneaky en full ob tricks,  
En dawgs en possums warn't meant ter mix,  
So des lay still en grin.

Oh, g'wan ter sleep fer yo' mammy, please;  
Li'l possum, shet yo' eye,  
En dream erbout er lubly cloud,  
En heaben, bimeby,  
Whar all de trees is 'simmon trees,  
En niggers ain't allowed.

Mrs. Possum sang this touching lullaby to her young ones in her queer possum fashion, which man can know of only through his imagination, for he has never heard her song, and however inquisitive he may be, it is a privilege to which he may never aspire. A possum is, indeed, an animal, whose speechlessness in the presence of any member of the human race, rivals the proverbial dumbness of the oyster. But who may dare to say that in the seclusion of his family life, many tender confidences are not exchanged, many noble sentiments uttered? Otherwise, how has he acquired the philosophy which makes him smile





when face to face with disaster, the shrewdness which informs him unerringly where to seek the tenderest young poultry, and the wit which prompts him to feign death as a means of escape from his arch enemy, the dog?

On the evening following the dinner party, when Grandfather Possum related for the edification of the youngsters, the sad story of the terrible disaster which befell his lamented ancestor in falling down the negro's chimney, the elder children, whom the careful Mrs. Possum had not already put to sleep, crowded about him and begged, child fashion, for another story.

Now Grandfather Possum scented trouble, for he felt it was only a question of time before the continued theft of Mr. Marshall's poultry would be laid at his door, and Uncle Isaac, or some of the other negroes, would set out in pursuit of the rogue.

“I ain't know ary story dis time,” he replied in answer to their request, “I'se er scentin' trouble ter night, dat whut, en



I got a pow'ful strong idee it ain't gwine be long er comin'."

Then he sighed deeply, but as the youngest grandchild was sound asleep there was no one to bother him with the usual questions, so he took his own time about resuming his discourse.

"I ain't know ary *story*," he continued presently, "but I 'low dis hyar's de bes' time dar eber gwinter be, fer ter set out'n tell yo'll erbout dat time I run 'ginst dat ol' bow laig nigger, Unc' Isaac. I 'cl'ar dat's de contra'est ol' cullud pusson eber I see. Dar ain't nut'n dat pleas' dat ol' man lak gittin' folks in trouble. How he 'spec' us gwine git erlong dis time ob de y'ar widout chick'n meat's more'n I got de 'bility ob tellin'. Whut wid green things bein' skeerce, en nary aig in de bu'd nes's, what us gwine ter do, I ax you, onless dis ol' possum sot out en fotch home some chick'n meat?"

"I 'spoz'n us'll des git starve'," replied one of the older grandchildren mournfully.

"Naw, dat ain't gwine happen," returned Grandfather Possum firmly; "I ain't gwine set eroun' hyar en wait twel



dat hongriness come erlong. But whut I uz sottin' out fer ter tole yo' all uz how come yo' gran'daddy ter run 'crost dat ol' nigger sech a long time ago dat des when hit happ'n, done slip' ma 'membunce. Hit uz des erbout dis time ob de y'ar, ef I ain't fergit, en dey'd done been a pow'ful col' spell ob wedder fer dat season, en dey been de turriblest skeerceness ob vittles, eber I see. I hunts all eroun' de groun' fer sump'n ter eat, en ain't see nut'n dar, en I tak'n clam' ever' tree, cl'ar ter de top limb, but I ain't fin' hit. En all de time I des gittin' dat weak en po'ly twel I 'low dat de weasl'est coon whut eber holler, could er lick' yo' gran'daddy out, ef dey er sot in'n fit one ernudder.

“Wall, atter dis been gwine on er moughty long time, I uz des er creepin' eroun' one night, en dat puny twel I couldn' skasely trabel, when fust thing I know, sump'n go 'snap', en right den en dar dis foot whut ain't hyar, is done cotch in one ob dem fool traps. I 'low I des dat mad I wanter beller, en I pulls dis erway, en jerks mase'f dat erway, but I ain't git loose. Den I tek'n study erbout hit fer de



longes', but I ain't fin' out whut I gwine do.

"Terreckly, 'long come Mister Coon, rackin' eroun' th'oo de woods lak he lookin' fer sump'n. Time he see yo' gran'daddy, he fotch hisse'f up sho't, en laff lak he gwine bust.

" 'Dis ain't no laffin' matter," I squall out, so mad I right crazy.

" 'Mebbe hit ain't en mebbe hit am, hollers dat critter; 'hit all 'pends on de p'int ob view, en dat make a sight er dif'funce, Mister Possum, dat make a sight er dif'funce.

"Erbout dat time, whilst I been stud'n erbout how I gwine git out'n dat trap, en how I gwine git eben wid dat aggervatin' critter, I 'gun ter hyar a noise off yon'er to'ard de big road. Hit keep er comin' closter en closter, en yo' gran'daddy des sho' en sart'n hit ain't nut'n less'n dat ol' nigger Unc' Isaac, en dat he done fotch erlong de lowes' down ol' houn' dawg eber I see.

"Den I know dar ain't nut'n lef' fer ter do, 'cep'n des ter tek'n gnaw dat po' laig off des 'bove de trap jaws, en g'long erbout



ma biz'ness without hit. En dat des whut I does.

“En all de time Mister Coon's des settin' dar er laffin'.

“Wall, time dat ol' nigger en de houn' dawg gits erlong dar whar de trap sets, I done cl'ar, en I des sorter snooks off inter er holler tree whut ain't fer erway, en hides. Den I hyar dat ol' cullud pusson er kyar'n on ter hisse'f sorter dis erway:

“ ‘Gawdermussy, ef dat fool possum ain't git erloose! En hyar he laig, whut he gnawed off'n hisse'f en done lef' behime!’

Den fust thing I know he cotch sight er dat ol' coon still er sottin' dar, en hit dat da'k 'mongst de branches dat he 'low dat's yo' gran'daddy hisse'f, en him en dat houn' dawg des hump deyse'ves, en 'gun chasin' atter dat imperdent ol' coon; which same critter I ain't nebber see agin!’”

Here Grandfather Possum sighed as profoundly as if the probable untimely end of the coon were a matter of infinite regret.

Then again there was silence, for as the youngest grandchild was fast asleep, there was no one to ask questions. Presently, however, Grandfather Possum be-



gan muttering something very softly, and as if more to himself than to the children, and this is what he said:

“Oh, once uz a time, er fer off time,  
 When de critters lib at peace;  
 De an'muls all, dey tek'n call  
 On one ernudder, en nebber quar'l,  
 Fer perliteness nebber cease.  
 Fum de big raccoon, ter de man in de moon,  
 En ol' Mister Mockin' bu'd, singin' er tune,  
 De folks all lib at peace.  
 Den dey come er tur'ble change, tur'ble change,  
 Des whut happen uz monst'ous strange, monst'ous  
 strange,  
 De critters all, dey tuck'n change,  
 Gun fitt'n' en 'gun yellin',  
 But all erbout, why dey fall out,  
 I ain't set out fer tellin'.

“Oh, once uz er day, er fer off day,  
 When de beas's ez good ez lam's,  
 En de ol' brown ba'r, he sot 'roun' hyar,  
 Des ez gentle, ercombin' he ha'r,  
 En er singin' lubly psa'ms.  
 Fum Mister Fox, ter de slow ol' ox,  
 En de bullfrog settin' out dar on de rocks,  
 De beas's ez good ez lam's.  
 Den dey come er tur'ble change, tur'ble change,  
 Des whut happen uz monst'ous strange, monst'ous  
 strange,



De critters all des tuck'n change,  
 'Gun fitt'n' en 'gun yellin',  
 But de why en de whar, erbout dis hyar,  
 I ain't sot out fer tellin'.

“Oh, once uz a time, er fer off time,  
 When de worl' uz gwine des right,  
 Nary bu'd ner beas' but lib at peace,  
 En dey all's good manners nebber cease,  
 Fer dey al'ays uz perlite.  
 Fum de sparrer hawk, ter de beas's dat walk,  
 Eroun' all night en holler en talk,  
 Dey swar de worl' des right.  
 Den dey come a tur'ble change, tur'ble change,  
 Des whut happen uz monst'ous strange, monst'ous  
 strange,  
 De critters all des tuck'n change,  
 'Gun fitt'n' en 'gun yellin',  
 But de reason ob dis, yo'll hat ter miss,  
 Kase I ain't set out fer tellin'.”

Now old Grandfather Possum had unconsciously allowed his voice to rise so high before he reached the last stanza, that the youngest grandchild awoke and looked about him in some astonishment.

“Is you know how come all dat, yo' own se'f, Gran'daddy?” he demanded, suspiciously.

“In de good ol' time when I wuz young,”



replied Grandfather Possum, "chillun had mo' 'spect fer de rights ob ol' age, den w'at dey got now," which words seemed to the young people in no wise to answer the youngest grandchild's question.

"You ain't tol' de chillun yit, erbout how come you ter git dat peg laig in place ob de one whut you gnaw off en lef' behime in dat trap," observed Mrs. Possum, after scolding the youngest grandchild, and telling him to go back to sleep.

"Dat so," responded Grandfather Possum, nodding his head, "but I sho'ly hopes dese chillun ain't gwine need fer ter l'arn how ter 'quire a peg laig dey own se'ves. Hit tuck er long time ter git dat contraption fix'," he went on, after devoting a few moments to reflection, "but I'm gwine des light right in en mek hit ez sho't ez I kin. Fust place I ain't lak limpin' eroun' wid one laig less'n eve'y an'mul got er natchel bawn right to, but I ain't know whut ter do, twel one day I seen er nigger come trab'lin' erlong, 'bump, bump, bumpity,' kaze, he two laigs is diff'unt, one ob um bein' all nigger, en de yudder one bein' all



wood, which mek um hit de groun' wid er diff'unt kinder noise.

“Den I 'low I'll set right in en rig me up some kinder laig lak dat, too, so I des projick eroun' tryin' fer ter 'skiver whut de bes' kinder wood fer ter mek hit out'n.

“Fust I tek'n chaw off er young hick'ry shoot, but hit too sof', en I ain't know how ter farsten hit. Den I tek'n fotch er piece er wil' cherry wood, but hit ain't do, nudder. But I des keep on, en atter while I fix' up er laig out'n er piece er willer tree, but dat ain't tu'n out no bettah'n de res'.

“Now 'long erbout dis time I 'gun ter git sorter onscourage', en I ain't know whut mo 'ter do. All de an'muls dat lib eroun' dar, dey 'gun to gib dey 'pinions, de mos' ob which is moughty onsensible.

“Ol' Miss Owl, she ricommen' cuttin' de yudder laigs off, kaze she sez den dis ol' possum be eben all eroun', en Mister Sparrer, he tuck'n put in he sass en sez, dat possums walk ser humpy anyways dat he ain't see how one laig de less is worf all dis rumpus.

“All de time do', I des gwine on erbout



ma biz'ness, en ain't listen ter dis hyar fool'shness.

“One day, not long atter dis, one ob de chillun uz rackin' eroun' de woods some-whar, en he git in trouble. Some nigger'd done cook' hisse'f er mess er vittels out dar, en done went off'n lef' de fire bu'nin', en er roas' 'tater erlayin' in de ashes. En whut dat chile done but lope atter dat dar yam en fell inter de fire hisse'f.

“Co'se I des up en flop right in dar, fer ter fotch him out, en den whut you spoz'n done happen?”

The youngest grandchild, who was still awake, expressed a total inability to guess, and after an impressive pause, Grandfather Possum went on with his narrative.

“Dat fire uz all pile' up wid de fattes' pine wood eber I see,” he resumed slowly, “en de rosin uz drappin' off, 'n ser sticky dat you des git all mess' up wid hit ef you tech hit.”

“Is you tech hit, Gran'daddy,” demanded the irrepressible youngest grandchild.

“I is en I ain't,” responded Grandfather Possum rather ambiguously. “Leas' ways





I ain't aim fer ter tech hit, but I done lan' on er piece wid ma behime foots, en de sticky en' des fly up en hit yo' gran'daddy right whar dat laig done been chaw' off."

"Warn't dat drefful!" cried the youngest grandchild; "how yo' git hit off, Gran'daddy?"

"Lawdy mussy," cried Grandfather Possum, "I ain't git hit off er t'all, hit des whut I want. Hit stick dar good en tight, en dar I got er puffick peg laig!"

The little possums all expressed varying degrees of wonder and surprise at the unexpected denouement of this story, but before the youngest grandchild had completed his innumerable questions and comments, Grandfather Possum assumed a listening attitude, and whispered a hurried warning.

"I knowed dar gwine be trouble ter-night," he declared, "Unc' Isaac on de wah paf' agin, dat whut."

And then all the possum family suddenly lapsed into the characteristic silence in which huntsmen of both races invariably find them.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE POSSUM HUNT, AND HOW IT ENDED.

Ol' Mister Trouble come er trablin' down de road;  
 (Hol' up yo' haid, true belieber)  
 Come 'long er groanin', kaze he totin' sech er load,  
 (Belieber, don't you nebber git ter doubtin')  
 He up en he 'low dat he got you sho',  
 Fer he'll set down dar right in front ob de do',  
 (But keep on er singin' en er shoutin',)  
 Den up en 'spon' dat you happy, do po',  
 En he ain't need nebber come eroun' no mo';  
 (Hol' up yo' haid, true belieber.)

Ol' Mister Trouble moughty long en moughty lean,  
 (Hol' up yo' haid, true belieber),  
 He wush you ebil, kase he des dat mean,  
 (Belieber, don't you nebber quit yo' trustin'),  
 He up and he 'low dat he gwine fer ter stay,  
 En you got ter git eroun' him den in des one way;  
 (Fill him up ser full he nigh ter bustin'),  
 Den you up en 'spon' dat befo' ernudder day,  
 He'll tu'n inter joy, en yo'll bid him stay;  
 (So hol' up yo' haid, true belieber).

We have already learned that Grand-



father Possum was quite right in his conjecture that it would not be long before Uncle Isaac was on the war path again. Indeed the most surprising thing about the matter was that the old man had been so slow in attributing the theft of the poultry to the right source, waiting as he did, until the tell-tale tracks behind the barn, proved the identity of the culprit beyond all doubt.

It was a perfect night for the hunt. The air was mild and damp, and the moon appeared, only to vanish again behind a bank of yellowish cloud.

On reaching the woods, the possum hunters suddenly stopped singing, and got their torches in readiness for use. These were nothing more than pine branches, cut with a resinous knot at one end, which, when lighted, gave forth a bright, though sputtering, light. Their office was a curious one, for they were designed, as Uncle Isaac would have expressed it, "to shine de possum' eye."

Now a possum hunt, though dear to the soul of the negro, on account of its substantial and edible results, is not in itself an actually exhilarating affair, the possum be-





ing too slothful and silent a beast to prove "game," according to the huntsman's usual acceptance of the term.

"I reck'n you'se aimin' at dis bein' de las' night dat ol' peg leg possum eber gwine see, ain't you, Unc' Isaac?" demanded Abraham with a suspicious chuckle which suggested that he was cherishing designs on that particular animal himself.

"Now yo're talkin'," assented the old man, "now you done said sump'n! But I 'low hit des too bad dat you gwine off ter Atlanta, en ain't got nary chanst ob habin' yo' name in de pot, 'ginst de time me'n Betsey up en cook dat feller!"

"I aims ter git back a right sma't time 'fo' jedgment day," responded Abraham, "en ef dey ain't nuth'n happ'n, dat possum'll keep."

Before Uncle Isaac had time for any further remarks, the stillness of the woods was broken by a sharp cry, followed by another and yet another in rapid succession. The dogs, with answering barks, set off in pursuit of the disturber of the peace, and the negroes themselves exchanged answering nods and chuckles.



“Ol’ Mister Coon’s a fighter fum erway back,” observed Mose Freeman, “but I b’liebe he done met up wid he match.”

Uncle Isaac, in the meantime, in spite of his infirmities, was getting over the ground so rapidly that he outdistanced most of the younger negroes; reaching the scene of conflict second only to little Rastus Simmons, a diminutive picaninny, whose incredible degree of blackness would have taxed the mind of a beholder in search of a simile.

The fight was taking place on the edge of a shallow pond, and the contestants were a large and furiously angry raccoon, whose cries rent the air, and a fat, slow moving possum, who appeared to have the upper hand, for his teeth were buried deep in his opponent’s shoulder.

“Sick um, Towse, sick um, sick um, ol’ dawg!” shouted the little pickaninny, jumping up and down and clapping his hands in an ecstasy of delight.

Towse promptly obeyed, and a moment later, was joined by two other dogs, Uncle Isaac appearing just in time to see the possum release its hold, and stretching out on



its back, assume the deathlike rigidity, and the characteristic grin for which it is famous.

The coon, meantime, had plunged backward into the water with a splash, and was swimming madly away, with two of the dogs in hot pursuit, while the pickaninny had shinned up an adjacent tree, to view the whole of the fight from a point of vantage, until the coon and his pursuers disappeared in the engulfing darkness.

Uncle Isaac rescued the possum from the remaining dog, which after sniffing around it suspiciously, was bent on its immediate destruction, and fastening its tail in one of the forks of the big stick he carried, he pursued his way triumphant, the possum dangling fat and helpless, with its head downward.

Rastus found himself left suddenly alone. Far away he could hear the cries of the coon and the dogs, one of the latter yelping as if in sudden pain.

“Year, Towse, year,” he cried, filled with sudden concern for the safety of his own dog; “year, Towse, come erway fum dat ol’ coon, sah! Come erway fum dar I



done tol' you! You ain't tree no poss ter-night; you ain't worf yo' bo'd en keep, you ain't dat." But just here the little darkey's soliloquy (for such it was, Towse being out of earshot) ended suddenly, for he found himself staring with frightened fascination, into a pair of round, glittering eyes, which appeared to be moving toward him, up the tree trunk. The night had grown darker, all trace of the moon being gone, and where once had been only oak and hickory trees, sprang forth weird and menacing black shapes, while slowly, nearer and nearer, came the glittering eyes.

"Pappy, Pappy!" screamed the picaninny, in an access of terror, "Unc' Isaac, Mose—anybody, dey's a b'ar atter me! Pappy, Pappy, I 'cl'ar hit's a b'ar! Ain't nobody comin'? Hit's a b'ar I done tol' you! Ain't nobody keer?"

By this time, Mose who was the nearest of the negroes, came running through the underbrush, just in time to see Rastus, who had ventured to the outer edge of one of the limbs, let go his hold, and fall shrieking into the pond.

"Ef you dat skeered ob possums, you



ain't better come erlong wid we all no mo'," remarked Mose, pulling the terrified youngster, by his heels, out of the shallow, muddy water. "Ef you hadn' er fell in lak dis," he went on; shaking the little darkey, like a terrier shakes a rat, "Mose Freeman 'ud er done cotch Isaac's peg laig possum, sho'!"

"W-W-'at dat you say?" sputtered the unfortunate Rastus, gasping for breath: "I ain't seen no possum; I seen a big ol' b'ar! Whar hit go, you reck'n?" he demanded, clutching Mose with two muddy fists, and peering cautiously around this substantial bulwark. "Dat ol' b'ar have two gre't big fi'ry eyes, en 'bout seb'n hund'ed toofs, en 'im crepe 'long sniffin'; 'im do," went on the little picaninny volubly, drawing on the fertile resources of a lively imagination.

Mose shook off the wet, muddy encumbrance, and relighted his torch, which had gone out when he dropped it to rescue the frightened little darkey. "You black coon! you dat skeered you ain't see good," he cried disgustedly; "hyar you run up 'ginst dat ol' poss Miss Ellen 'spectin' sum er us



ter cotch, en wid de chanst frontin' you, hyar you des squall out, en tuck'n drap off in de pon'. Whar dat ol' possum done went? Dat des w'at I ain't know! But dar de tracks ob Unc' Isaac's ol' chick'n thief, sho'." And Mose, with lowered torch, pointed out to the astonished Rastus, the unmistakable footprints of Grandfather Possum, which led for a short distance along the muddy edge of the pond, and disappeared.

"Dat peg laig track ain't tell no lie," asserted Mose with conviction; "hit mean des dat one sneakin' ol' possum, en no yudder."

"I reck'n dat ol' b'ar done cotched 'im," suggested Rastus, with ready invention. "But whar you s'poz'n de b'ar done went hisse'f?"

Mose, who was engaged in calling his dog, paid no attention to the question. "Hyar! Tige, hyar! Whoo-oop, Tige, sick um, dawg, sick um. You no 'count ol' rascal," he went on, as the dog appeared, "you ain't tree no possum ternight!"

Then, to the astonishment of both negroes, the dog stationed himself in front



of the same tree from which Rastus had fallen, his nose lifted, and his whole tense body in the characteristic attitude so familiar to the sportsman.

The tree was a fairly large one, and halfway up the trunk was a hollow of considerable size. Mose raised his torch and peered up into the branches. "I ain't see nuth'n'," he said doubtfully, "but dat possum des bleedje ter be dar, he am dat, kaze dis ol' dawg ain't nebber lie 'bout no possum yit."

"Ump um!" taunted Rastus, "you done fergit Unc' Isaac say one time he tuck'n tree a pole cat! En dis time he done tree a b'ar!"

"Pole cats ain't clam' trees, nigger," retorted Mose. "Hyar, you black coon, tek'n shin up dis'n agin, en see is dat ol' possum er hidin' hisse'f in dat holler trunk. Den us'll hab dat mis'ble ol' critter ter show Miss Ellen, 'stid er Unc' Isaac





gittin' 'im. Lawdy, but I 'low he'd eat good," he went on to himself. "He des tas'e ob tu'key en chick'n, en ol' white duck, en— en— guinny, let 'lone habin' he own possum tas'e w'at des natch'ly his'n! Is you 'lowin' ter des tek'n stan' hyar all de night th'oo, nigger?" he demanded impatiently, as Rastus showed no indication to obey his command to climb the tree.

"I ain't wan'er see no b'ar, no mo'," he declared obstinately. "I ain't wan'er see no mo' eyes w'at got fire comin' th'oo um! Naw, I ain't wan'er see dem seb'n hund'ed toofs, en dat ol' bris'lin' hide, en— en— dat mouf w'at so beeg twel you could des up en jump clean down he th'oat."

What further details Rastus would have added to this picturesque description, it is unsafe to say, but at this moment Abraham appeared in triumph, carrying his forked stick over his shoulder, with a fat possum held captive at each end.

Mose's eyes lighted with an expression of undisguised envy. "Huh! I ain't know how ter hunt 'long er black coons w'at all time seein' things w'at ain't!" he com-



plained, as if in explanation of his own lack of success; "I gwine ax Brudder Simmons ter keep dis hyar skeery nigger home, endurin' de nex' possum hunt, I is dat!"

"Mose 'low dey ain't no b'ar, en I des knows dey's a b'ar, kaze I'se done seed 'im wid ma eyes," protested Rastus indignantly; and was about to launch forth into another account of this formidable beast, when Uncle Isaac rejoined them.

"How long yo'all gwine stay right eroun' dis place?" he demanded; "hit 'pear lak you aimin' ter des fool eroun' hyar en let all de possums come erhuntin' you, Mose Freeman."

"Is you see dem tracks?" demanded Mose, leading Uncle Isaac to the spot where he had already pointed out to Rastus the easily recognized footprints of Grandfather Possum.

The old man was all excitement at once. "Whar hit go?" he demanded; "ain't nobody cotch sight ob dat ol' chick'n stealer t'all?" His voice betrayed a combination of regret at the possum's escape, and relief that some other negro had not made



the capture which he himself was desiring so intensely.

“I gwine cut dis tree down, dat w’at I gwine do,” announced Mose suddenly, and bringing his ax into requisition, he began operations at once.

Rastus withdrew to a discreet distance, where he was sure that when the tree fell, and the hollow trunk disgorged the hidden “b’ar,” one of the negroes nearest would prove the beast’s victim, and not himself.

Abraham and his brother ‘Bijah, who had joined the party a few moments before, set to work assisting Mose, while Uncle Isaac himself kept a sharp watchout for the intended victim.

“Ef you can’t clam’ a tree, des cut hit down,  
Ef you can’t fo’d a crick, des walk eroun’,  
But keep on er trab’lin’, brudder,”

crooned the old man, to the rhythmical accompaniment of the negroes’ axes:—

“Ef you can’t git chick’n den po’k’ll do  
En dey plenty ob spring water all y’ar froo,  
So you ain’t need moonshine nudder.  
When you moughty hongry, de hoecake’s prime,  
But possum eat good des any ol’ time,  
So keep on er trab’lin’, brudder.”



By this time the tree was almost ready to fall, and the cautious Rastus betook himself to a still safer distance. Uncle Isaac, however, measured the distance with a careful eye, and took his stand as nearly as possible at the spot where the hollow part of the trunk would lie when the tree fell.

With a resounding crash it came down at last. The dogs made a rush forward with wild yelps and barks, for wonder of wonders, there on the ground, stiff and stark, and apparently as dead as the proverbial doornail, lay Grandfather Possum himself.

Mose and Abraham and the other negroes exchanged a glance which expressed some doubt as to who was entitled to the prize, but there was no question as to who would be the leading claimant, for Uncle Isaac, with an amazing agility, stepped in, called off the dogs, and secured the possum for his own.

“Uh huh! ol’ poss, I done got you dis time,” he chuckled in a transport of delight; “Miss Ellen ’lowed I done got her



chick'ns, en now I is, en dey warn't no stealin' 'bout hit nudder!"

"Time ter be trab'lin' home now, niggers," declared the old man presently; "kaze de king ob de possums done los' his freedom! Gawdermussy! dis de bes' possum hunt I eber see! I 'c'lar I dat happy twel I mos' bustin' wid joy; I is dat!"

Unfortunately, the other negroes failed to share Uncle Isaac's enthusiasm. Abraham looked sulky, and Mose was openly rebellious. "Ma dawg done tree dat possum," he protested, "en ma hatchet done he'p cut down dat tree, en den how hit up'n gotter be yo' possum, I ain't know! Who dat possum b'long to, niggers?" he demanded of the company at large; "who got de fust right I wanter know?"

"I reck'n hit's de one w'at jump in fust en grab hit!" returned 'Bijah, not without sarcasm.

Uncle Isaac replied with a derisive laugh. "Dis done been ma possum fer de longes'," he snorted; "ain't I been de cause ob





why he peg laigged? Ain't I 'skiver' de tracks 'hin' de barn?" And, as if this were the final and irresistible argument: "Ain't Miss Ellen tol' me herse'f ter come out hyar en cotch dis ol' chick'n thief? Ain't all dat happen?"

With these words, Uncle Isaac, in righteous indignation, turned his back on the company, and set off toward home, following a different course from that which was likely to be chosen by the other negroes.

Whether his conscience was entirely easy, it might, perhaps be unwise to judge, but as to his being the very soul of superstition, to whom "signs," and "ha'nts," and "kunjers," were as potent realities as his own identity, there could be no question. Therefore the accident which befell Uncle Isaac on his way home was obviously consistent with his character.

The night had grown darker, and the old man's way led him at times through thick underbrush and over fallen trees, and again across a marshy stretch where he sank to his ankles in the black ooze, and where, tradition had it, a mysterious murder had once occurred. Usually at this



point Uncle Isaac hastened his steps, but tonight he was forgetful of everything except the joy of his capture.

“Dey ax who dis possum b’long ter!” he chuckled to himself; “des lak dis critter I’m er totin’ could er been any yudder nigger’s ’cep’n Unc’ Isaac’s! Who hit b’long ter? Huh!”

“Tu-who! tu-who!” came a sudden shrill response out of the darkness; “tu-who-oo-oo! tu-who!”

With a cry of terror, the unfortunate darkey leaped into the air, dropping gun, torch, and possums. “’Fo’ de Lawd, now,” he cried piteously, lighting on his feet again, and standing as rigid as if turned to stone; “I ’c’lar dat dis ol’ nigger’s possum, en no yudder, en I ain’t know whedder dis er ’n’er kunjur er whut!”

“Tu-who, tu-who,” came the voice again, and at the same moment, a large bird flew heavily over Uncle Isaac’s head and perched on the limb of an adjacent tree.

“Gawdermussy, dat’s a ol’ hawn owl,” cried the old man, with chattering teeth;



“dis hyar nigger mus’er been bawn fer trouble, sho’!”

With trembling knees Uncle Isaac stooped down to rescue his belongings.

The forked stick still lay where he had dropped it, and at one end a possum was imprisoned, but at the other end, the forked portion had broken off short, and the prize,—the king of possums,—had made good his escape!





MISS OWL HOLLER OUT, "DES DRAW YO'SE'F A LEETLE STIFFER, MR. POSSUM."



## CHAPTER V.

HOW THE TRICK OF "PLAYING POSSUM"  
CAME ABOUT.

Worm dat peart, he up en clar,  
     He de gre'tes' thing dat squirm;  
 'Long come a sparrer; now den whar  
     Am dat onlucky worm?  
 Sparrer set on de lowes' limb;  
 'Long come a cat en look at him;  
 Sparrer singin' en nebber see,  
 Cat mek a jump, den whar am he?  
     Cat so happy, she lay en purr,  
 En tek a nap in de sun;  
     'Long come a dawg, en he lef' er her,  
     Nuth'n' er t'all 'cep' er hunk er fur,  
 Befo' de fight uz done.

Dawg des brag's he trabel eroun',  
     En fight eve'y thing in reach;  
 Coon come er rackin' ober de groun',  
     En 'gin ter holler en screech.  
 Po' dawg up, en he fit his bes',  
 But de way hit en', ain't hard ter guess.  
 Dawg brag no mo', en he nebber will,  
 But de coon kep' on wid his biz'ness still.  
     Yit soon he huntin' fer trouble sho',—



Mister Possum big en fat,  
Dey bofe pitch in, en nebber mo',  
Am de beas' en de bu'ds eroun' dar know,  
Whar dat ol' coon am at.

Possum sot, en he grin erway,—  
He so swell up wid glory,  
Twel a nigger come erlong one day,—  
But dat's ernudder story.

“Ain't you gwine ter tell we all de yudder story, Gran'daddy?” was the inevitable demand that came from the youngest grandchild, immediately after hearing the song quoted above.

Grandfather Possum sighed. “I ain't goin' ter do dat,” he returned, “kase dey re'lly warn't none. Dey des tuck'n put hit in dat song, I reck'n, ter mek hit soun' good.”

The youngest grandchild looked injured. “Dat des lak tellin' 'bout ripe 'simmons,” he complained, “en mekin' um soun' ser good twel yo' mouf des waterin' fer a tas'e, 'fo' you fin' out dey ain't no ripe 'simmons, en hit ain't eben de time er y'ar, w'en 'simmons gits ripe. Dat des w'at hit lak.”

“Dat de way wid songs,” returned



Grandfather Possum. "En hit des erbout de way wid de worl 's well," he went on reflectively. "All de signs p'int ter one thing dat mos' lakly gwine happ'n, en when de time come eroun', hit sump'n diff'unt all tergedder. Hit des lak de yudder night when dat whole pack er dawgs en niggers uz er huntin' we all."

"I heerd de rumpus dey all uz mekin' mase'f," interrupted the youngster; "en us chillun uz dat skeered twel us tu'n ser col' we plum stiff wid col'ness."

"Yit de dawgs ain't tree yo' all ez I knows on," returned Grandfather Possum. "Dey cotch' two er yo' mudder's brudder's chillun's cous'ns, do', en dey tree yo' po' ol' gran'daddy hisse'f. Ef hit hadn' er been fer ol' Miss Owl, up'n holp'n me out, dis possum'd been wa'min' hisse'f in ol' Unc' Isaac's pot dis ve'y minute. Dat des whar he'd be."

"How come ol' Miss Owl ter be all time er he'pin' you out, Gran'daddy?" demanded the youngest grandchild. "How come she keer 'bout w'at come er we all?"

Grandfather Possum gave the preliminary sigh which suggested as plainly as



words that a long and delightful story might be expected to follow. "Whut happ'n uz so long ago," he began, "dat I done los' track er de time w'en all dis hyar come erbout."

"You al'ays does dat, Gran'daddy," interrupted the saucy youngest grandchild; "but we all ain't keer."

Grandfather Possum frowned, and Mrs. Possum administered a much needed rebuke, before the story was resumed.

"Dat all happ'n 'long eroun' de time w'en de critters uz er libin' er heap mo' peac'ble den w'at dey is now. Now en agin two er de beas' up'n hadder fight, en erbout onst er mont' er so, dey sta't up some kinder rumpus er n'er, but fer de mos' pa't, dey gittin' erlong moughty good.

"Wall, dey all feelin' ser peart, kaze hit sech a good y'ar fer craps, en vittles dat 'bundunt, ain't none er de critters hatter go hongry; dat dey all up, one atter er n'er en gib soshubles. Ol' Mister Squir'l he sot de ball rollin', en hit des keep on twel hit 'pear lak hit ain't nebber gwine stop."

"W'at kinder soshuble ol' Mister



Squir'l gib?" inquired the youngest grandchild.

"Ef you des lemme 'lone," complained Grandfather Possum, "I 'low I be gittin' erlong a heap mo' fas'er. Mister Squir'l he gib a nut crack'n'. He done hed hick'ry nuts, en walnuts, en chink'-pins, en ches'nuts, en goobers. Eve'y kinder nut dat ol' Mister Squir'l kin lay his han's on, he done fotch erlong fer dat ar nut crack'n'.

"Den he up'n 'nvite all de critters, fum de ledder wing' bat, cl'ar ter ol' Mister Cent'pede, en fum Miss Gyarden Snake, clean down ter li'l Mister Butterfly. En dey all come en dey 'njoyed deyse'ves moughty good. But I 'c'lar, ef I ain't hustle erlong a heap mo' fas'er, I ain't cotch up wid de en' er dis hyar tale 'fo' daybreak."

"De nex' un dat up'n gib sump'n uz ol' Mister Longlaig Grasshooper, en w'at he gib uz a re'l ol' time dance, endurin' which you des tek'n fling yo'se'f eroun' twel you plum foolish. Mister Possum own up he right glad w'en dat biz'ness done wo' hit-se'f out, en he git ter tu'n eroun' en drag



hisse'f home, fer he dat tired, he feel lak he cl'ar onjointed.

“Now de nex' soshuble dat possum git 'nvited ter, uz a concu't, en hit done been got up by ol' Mister Goggle Eye Bullfrog, en sech a goin' on ain't nebber been heerd eroun' dem pa'ts befo' ner sence. De critters dey holler en screech en screech en holler, twel de Man in de Moon, w'at been grinnin' down on um, look lak he can't stan' no mo', so he des hid hisse'f 'hinst a cloud, en ain't show up n'er time dat night.

“Atter dat one an'mul gun one kinder doin's, en n'er an'mul up'n gun er n'er kinder doin's, twel hit des look lak dey ain't nuth'n dem critters ain't been had. Miss Molly Ha'r she tuck'n got up a cake walk, en all de folks w'at dar dat night mos' drap daid wid 'sprisement w'en ol' Mister Slowpoke Mud Tu'tle up'n kyar'd off de prize.

“Las', hit happ'n dat mos' eve'y critter dat libin' anywhar eroun' dat neighborhood, is done had sump'n er n'er,—all 'cep' ol' Miss Owl, en she dat flustered in her min', she 'low she ain't know w'at ter



do, kaze she want her soshuble ter tu'n out a long sight diff'unt fum all de yudders.

“Den she go eroun' en ax all her cronies fer ter 'sges' sump'n, en dey all pesters dey min's wid hit, but dey ain't think er nuth'n. Bimeby she git ter Mister Possum.

“ ‘Please, please, Mister Possum,’ she baig, ‘can't you tek'n figger out sump'n w'at ain't lak all de res' been had?’

“Now Mister Possum ain't keer wheder ol' Miss Hawn Owl hab a soshuble er t'all, en he des up'n sez, kinder off han', ‘Whyn't you gib a fun'ral, Miss Owl?’ he sez, des dat erway.

“Miss Owl 'pear lak she stud'n' erbout dat a while, en den she 'spon', ‘But I ain't got no co-pse, Mister Possum! Who gwine be de co'pse I ax you? None er ma frien's ain't daid, en I plum sho' dey ain't gwine wanter die, des ter holp fix up dat fun'ral! I des sho' dey ain't.’

“Now time ol' Miss Hawn Owl done said dem wuds, she sorter ruffle up her fedders, en she look dat flusticated dat Mister Possum des stretch hisse'f on his



back en grin lak he gwine split his mouf wide open.

“Soon’s dat happ’n, ol’ Miss Owl holler out, ‘Des draw yo’se’f a leetle bit stiffer, Mister Possum,’ she sez, ‘des a leetle bit stiffer, please sir, Mister Possum.’

“Mister Possum he ain’t know w’at Miss Hawn Owl atter, but he tuck’n draw hisse’f up some mo’, en bimeby she holler out, ‘Dat’ll do, Mister Possum! Now you des a puffick co’pse,’ she sez. ‘I ’c’lar you look lak you been daid mos’ ’bout a mont’, dat w’at you do. I ’low I’ll des in en git up de bigges’ fun’ral folks eber see, en you gwine be de co’pse at hit.’

“Mister Possum ain’t lak dat er t’all, en he up’n sez, ‘But I ain’t daid, Miss Owl! I ain’t wanter be bury w’en I still got de breaf in me; I ain’t dat!’

“Miss Owl she tuck’n study erbout hit agin, den she say, ‘Us’ll des bury you wid leaves, Mister Possum,’ she sez, ‘us’ll des bury you wid leaves, ’stid er down de groun’. Dat ain’t hu’t none, Mister Possum, naw sir, dat ain’t hu’t! En I ’c’lar, ef you des he’p me out lak dat I ain’t gwine nebber fergit hit. I ’low I gwine mek hit



up ter you some time er n'er, en ef I don' mek hit up ter you, Mister Possum, I gwine mek hit up ter yo' fambly. Owls lib a long time dey does, en dey got a right good 'membunce, dey is dat!

“Now de long en de sho't er dat 'rangement wuz, dat Mister Possum, gib in en 'gree dat he'll 'ten' ter be de co'pse at Miss Hawn Owl's fun'ral, w'at she gwine git up.

“Lawdermussy, dat uz a moughty curious fun'ral, sho'! De beas's dat 'stonish' ter hyar erbout Mister Possum bein' daid, dey des up'n hustle erlong ober ter ol' Miss Hawn Owl's house, en dar sho' nuff lay po' Mister Possum, des ez still, en dar at his haid uz a bo'quet er flowers, en erlong at his foots uz ernudder bo'quet er flowers. En dar in a row sot de mo'ners, en dey sing en dey holler, en some un um mek foolergies erbout how po' Mister Possum done de bes' he could. Den dey tuck'n dey kiver' him up wid leaves lak w'at ol' Miss Hawn Owl done tol' him dey gwine do, en dey all cry en beller, en sech a rumpus, you ain't nebber hyar.

“But bimeby dey sot eroun' en et dey supper, en got ter laffin en kyar'n' on lak



dey clean disremember how dey des now bury dat po' ol' Mister Possum.

“ 'Fo' long do', dey hyar sump'n comin' erlong froo de woods. Hit git closter en hit git closter, en hit warn't long 'fo' dem critters tuck'n run en galloped en flew ev'ey whicherway, but Lawdermussy, ef dey ain't cl'ar fergit dat po' ol' Mister Possum, w'at ser kivered up wid leaves twel he ain't hyar nuth'n.

“Fust thing he know sump'n done haul' off en gib him a kick in de side, den de leaves 'gun ter drap off'n him, so he kin hyar w'at happ'n, en a voice sez, 'Hyar's a possum all kivered up wid leaves.'

“Den dat po' ol' Mister Possum he know dat hit's men's talkin', en he dat skeered twel he des lay right still en ain't move.

“But bimeby ernudder voice sez, 'Come on erway fum dar, ain't you see dat ol' critter is done daid?'

“En de fust one he 'spon' 'Dat's des w'at I done foun' out mase'f. He des erbout ez daid ez a critter eber gwine git.' En wid dat dey bofe laff en des g'wan erbout dey biz'ness.

“Soon's dey's outer sight, Mister Pos-



sum git up, en trabel er long home, en he 'low ter hisse'f dat he done 'skivered a trick w'at gwine ter do him moughty heap er good's long's he lib. En de possum fambly been a playin' dat se'f same trick on dey en'mies eber sence."

"Dat all you aim ter tell we all, Gran'daddy?" demanded the youngest grandchild, the moment Grandfather Possum had finished.

"Some chilluns ain't eber know w'en dey had ernuff," was the reply. "Hyar you done heerd two stories roll' tergedder, en you ax fer mo'! You done heerd why ol' Miss Hawn Owl's ser raidy ter do yo' gran'daddy a good tu'n, en you done heerd how come we all ter larn how ter 'ten' lak we done daid, which same, bofe de white man en de nigger is atter callin' 'playin' possum.' "



## CHAPTER VI.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN PERKINS BRINGS NEWS  
FROM ATLANTA.

Oh, de watermelon grow, big en ripe dar on de vine,  
 En de nigger 'low do' po', dat he libin' moughty fine.  
 But who's agwine ter he'p ma soul, when I years  
     dat trumpet blow,  
 En Gab'rel he's a waitin' dar on de fer off heab-  
     'nly sho'?

I'se er trab'lin' 'long er de glory road,  
     De glory road,  
     De glory road,

I'se er trab'lin' 'long er de glory road,  
 Er waitin' twel dat trumpet blow.

Oh, de possum done been cotch, en he moughty fat  
     en fine,  
 En de 'taters done been fetch fum de sweet pertater  
     vine.

But who's a gwine ter he'p ma soul, when I'se  
     er trab'lin' home,  
 En whut's a nigger gwine fer do, when de jedg-  
     ment come?



I'se er trab'lin' 'long er de glory road,  
 De glory road,  
 De glory road,  
 I'se er trab'lin' 'long er de glory road,  
 Er waitin' twel de jedgement come.

Oh, de possum look ser good, des er layin' on de she'f,  
 Twel hit 'pears lak ef he could, dat he'd up en tas'e  
 hisse'f.

But what a nigger gwine ter do when de trouble  
 done begin,  
 En all de folks whut daid is riz out'n de groun'  
 agin?

Oh, my Lord, whut a nigger gwine do,  
 Whut he gwine do,  
 Whut he gwine do,

Oh, my Lord, whut a nigger gwine do,  
 When de trouble done begin?

There were several more verses to this song, but Uncle Isaac, who was singing it, stopped suddenly on the appearance of Brother Simmons, who dropped in for a few moments to pass the time of day.

“Ebenin!’ Brudder Simmons, des he’p yo’se’f ter a cheer, en set right down by me by de fire,” cried the old man hospitably; “I ’low hit gwine sot in col’ ’fo’ night, kaze de win’ comin’ fum de norf wes’, en col’ wedder ain’t good fer dese



hyar ol' j'int's. Howsomebber, I des g'long erbout ma biz'ness, en 'ten' I feelin' happy, whutebber come."

"Dat's de Christ'n spir't, dat is, Brud-der Isaac," returned the preacher approv-ingly; "I des return' fum de distracted meetin' ober ter Norcross, en dar I see a po', 'flicted soul, w'at nigh bent double wid dis year neuralysis, 'long wid de presump-tion, en de skyanticus, yit dar he wuz, thankin' de Lord A'mighty dat he libin', en j'inin' in de singin' en de shoutin' des ez loud ez de res'. You ain't dat bad off, brudder; leas' ways you ain't *yit*, do' dey ain't none ob us know w'at triberla-tions is comin'. I 'low you been feelin' right low in yo' min' eber sence dat ol' peg-laig possum 'scape out'n yo' han's, back 'long erbout Thanksgibin'. Dat wuz a jedgment, brudder, en twel you done 'fess en repent ob yo' da'kes' sins, dar ain't gwine be no res'!"

"Amen," responded Uncle Isaac with a groan, "I knows all dat, en I got ez cl'ar a conscious ez a lam. I is, fer a fac', Brud-der Simmons, so he'p me, Jesus, ef I ain't speak de Gawd's truf!"



At this moment the unexpected entrance of Abraham, put an end to what might otherwise have been an interminable discussion.

“Gawdermussy, nigger, is you done git back a’ready?” was Uncle Isaac’s somewhat superfluous greeting, and in a totally changed tone of voice. “Hyar I done been pestered in ma haid, stud’n’ erbout whedder you’d come trapusin’ erlong wid a ban’ wagon follerin’ you, er whedder you’d mos’ lakly ’nounce yo’s’e’f wid a screech off’n on er dese hyar new fangle’ water-on-wheels, lak whut I see one day at Norcross.”

“Wall, I ain’t done nary one,” returned Abraham with a self conscious grin, and stopping squarely in front of the old man to allow him a closer view of the multi-colored glories of his new “city” clothes. “I done return’ sorter sudden lak on a job fer de new president, en I gwine right back.

“De Lord year him!” ejaculated both Uncle Isaac and Brother Simmons, incredulously.

“Hit’s a long story, do’,” continued Abraham with an elaborate affectation of





carelessness, "en I des gotter tek ma time er gittin' ter hit. In de fust place, Unc' Isaac, I lef' dat veh'cle you mention at de garridge fer repairs. Hit done run so fas' dat hit busted de behime wheels off hit-se'f."

"You lef' hit whar?" demanded Uncle Isaac, opening his eyes very wide, and giving an incredulous sniff. "Does you mean ter c'nvey de intell'gence dat you is done lef' dat veh'cle in de garbage?"

Abraham's smile became frankly condescending. The change wrought in him by a few weeks sojourn in the city was amazing, but characteristic of his generation. "Dat's de place whar dey keeps ortimobiles," he returned suavely, "dat's a ortimobile stable. Lawsy, Unc' Isaac, I been in Atlanta mos' two monts, en I reck'n I ain't got much mo' ter larn!"

"Huh! dat's whar dey gits dat pow'ful rank smell den; I done been pestered erbout dat, wond'rin' whar on dis y'arth hit come fum."

Abraham laughed outright.

"You quit dat laffin', nigger," snorted the old man, "en you quit hit quick. Dar's



a time ter laff en dar's a time ter cry, en ef you keeps up sech a kerflumptiousness, dat laff'll git twisted 'roun' de yudder side er yo' mouf twel hit don't look lak a laff no mo'. Whut de Good Book say 'bout de 'spectableness ob ol' age, huh? You tell me dat?"

"Amen, brudder, amen," responded Brother Simmons, rocking himself to and fro.

Abraham sobered immediately. "I wuz des laffin' 'bout sump'n'I see in Atlanta," he returned soothingly. "Dar's some moughty high falutin' doin's goin' on in dat town; dey sho' is. I reck'n dey ain't no beatener place anywhars."

"Mebbe dey ain't en mebbe dey is; I ain't tellin' you," declared Uncle Isaac, "but I hyar tell dat New Yo'k is a sight bigger."

"Uh, hu-h, but I ain't seen New Yo'k," asserted Abraham in a tone which suggested that an optical demonstration would be necessary to convince him, "I ain't seen dat place, en I *has* seen Atlanta."

By this time the news of Abraham's arrival had traveled by some mysterious



means up and down the big road to the adjacent fields and cabins, and presently other negroes came in to hear the news.

Abraham's self esteem grew with each accession to the ranks of his auditors. "I reck'n hit ain't goin' ter take no less'n a mont' ter tell you all eve'ything I seen in dat city, en I ain't got no mont' ter do hit. But I 'low I'll des pitch right in en relate dat 'sperience whut I had w'en I went ter de flea-ater. Dat's a place whar dey does play actin'," he explained, with a lofty glance at the somewhat awed and puzzled faces of the group surrounding him.

"Umph! I been heerd erbout dat play actin'," asserted Minerva White with a knowing toss of her head; "a white lady comes a runnin' out all dress' up in pa'ty clo'es, en twis's herse'f eroun' en hollers out, 'Oh, whar is ma lubber, is he done kilt? Is he done got sawed up wid a saw?'"

Abraham looked indulgently at Minerva, who was the belle of the neighborhood, but shook his head firmly. "Dis hyar warn't dat erway er t'all," he said gently; "hit warn't no wise lak dat."

"Dey ain't no good come ter true be-



liebers out er dat dar same kinder vain gloriousness," observed Brother Simmons with solemnity; "de debbil don't ax nuth'n' better dan layin' in wait fer cullud pussons whut ain't got no mo' consumption dan ter run eroun' erlong er dis hyar play actin'."

Abraham's demeanor was respectful, but still firm. "Brudder Simmons," he said impressively, "dis flea-ater whut I'm fixin' ter tell you all erbout, wuz des lak heaben gwine be. Hit des e'zac'ly lak dat good country."

"How you mek dat out, nigger?" demanded the preacher and Uncle Isaac in the same breath, the latter with an aggressive and characteristic snort.

"Hit's des dis erway; all de po' folks is got de high seats, en all de rich uns is settin' down des ez low en flat ez a pancake, dat's how," explained Abraham ingeniously; "dat's des lak hit gwine ter be up dar. W'en I went ter see dat play actin', I clam' en clam' en clam' twel I mos' los' ma breafe, 'fo' I gits ter de place whar I gwine ter set down. But, 'fo' de



Lawd, w'en I does git dar, hit des de mos' scrumptious lookin' ed'fice I eber see."

"Oh, go 'long 'bout yo' ed'fice, Ab'ram Perkins," cried Minerva scornfully, "en tell we all 'bout de play actin'; dat whut us waitin' fer."

"Wall den," resumed Abraham obediently, "I seen a distraction dat dey des'gnates ez a common wropper. I disremember des 'zac'ly whut de yudder name dey call hit, but hit wuz a common wropper fer sho'."

"Huh! dat clean knocks out ma canfaberlations on de subjick," cried Uncle Isaac. "I ain't see whut no kinder wroppers is got ter do 'long side er play actin'. You ain't mean dese hyar baggified contraptions whut de white ladies w'ar w'en dey ain't 'spectin' comp'ny, is you?"

Abraham's laugh was a masterly combination of scorn and righteous indignation. "Dat ain't w'at I say," he returned, "en I mos' gin'rally sez w'at I'm 'scussin' 'stid er sump'n' else on ernudder all tergedder. Dis hyar wropper des bus' right out in music de fust thing, en hit bus' ser loud twel de front wall er dat flea-ater 'gun ter



shin up de a'r lak a possum clam'in' a 'simmon tree, en dar wuz a whole passel er white gals runnin' 'roun' an' 'roun' lak dey los' sump'n.

“At fust dey all holler out sorter skeered, but bimeby dey fotch up sho't, en 'gun singin' sump'n' 'bout de 'honey baby' en de 'moonshine,' den dey kyar on en rampus eroun' lak dey tak'n hit kinder ha'd, yit I ain't mek out whedder dey's spec'fyin' dis hyar co'n licker er sump'n else whutebber.”

“Gawdermussy, nigger, g'wan 'way fum year!” cried Uncle Isaac indignantly, “ain't you know dis year's a prohibition set'munt, en de Gub'nor ob dis State ain't 'low de po' white trash ter keep up sech sinful kyar'n's on ez moonshine'?”

“Naw, I ain't know nuth'n' 'bout dat,” returned Abraham rather sulkily, “'cep' I ain't res' dis hyar right eye ob mine on nary drap ob dat dar co'n licker sence de night 'fo' Chris'mus, wuz a y'ar ago.”

“Git a hump on yo'se'f, Ab'ram Perkins,” admonished Minerva, shrilly; “we all ain't heerd much erbout dat play actin' yit. Dat ain't all dey done, I reckon?”



“ 'Fo' de Lawd, how I gwine tell you all 'bout no play actin' ef yer all time gittin' me het up 'bout dat licker w'at don't be?” demanded Abraham plaintively. “I cl'ar disremembers whar I done got. Dat common wropper wuz a moughty oncommon peart show, do'—hit wuz dat.

“Atter while de gals goes switchin' off, en I 'low dat thing done en' fer sho', but 'fo' de Lawd, hyar come sech a rippin' en a snortin' en a growlin', I 'low I mus' er got mix' up wid a circus outfit by ac'dunt, en den dey tu'n de lights plum out, en a man w'at sittin' 'side er me sez, sez he, 'Hyar come de teddy b'ars.' Lawd, ef I don't fling bofe ma foots up in de a'r lak I gwine git froo de roof, sho', en den dat man he grab ma coattails, en he bus' out in de bigges' 'haw haw' eber I hyar, en he sez, sez he, 'You idjit, dis is a scan'lous p'rformance of yourn!' sez he. 'Dese ain't no sho' nuff b'ars; dese is play b'ars, w'at is name' atter de Presingdent, dat w'at dey





is.' En den I larn dat dem critters is des folks wrop' up in some sorter furry hide w'at look lak re'l b'ar skin fer sho'. Den de teddy b'ars tuck'n fling deyse'ves erbout, en cavort 'roun' dat place, en dey sing a chune wid wuds dat go sorter dis erway:

'De teddy b'ar he gwine ter git right  
lonesome, lonesome,  
Git right lonesome, lonesome, lone-  
some—' "

Minerva interrupted this thrilling recital with an audible giggle. "Dat's de plum lonesomes' song eber I heerd," she snickered.

"En hit don't 'pear lak hit's oncommon sensible, nudder," commented Uncle Isaac.

"Wall, I 'c'lar ter goodness," protested Abraham, "I ain't 'sponsible fer whedder dat song got sense, er whedder hit ain't got sense. I des givin' you all w'at I see en hyar, en dat's all I got ter do wid hit."

"G'wan wid yer relationment, Ab-ram Linco'n," commanded Brother Simmons, "en don't git ser almighty proud en big-



gity 'long er you bein' two monts in Atlanta. Some folks could 'bide fo' y'ars in dat place, en not 'quire de compunctiousness w'at you is got a'ready."

Abraham resumed his narrative in a plainly aggrieved manner. "'Pears lak I dunno whedder I'm tellin' 'bout dis hyar, er whedder you all'er tellin' hit," he continued after a long pause, "but nex' thing I know, de folks w'at sot nigh me, 'gun ter let out some back talk 'bout dat same lonesomeness. One ob um 'low he dunno w'at dey gwine ter do 'bout dis teddy b'ar biz'ness, nohow. Hyar we done 'lected a new Presingdent ob dis glor'ous Uniting States, w'at ain't name' Teddy, en he 'low w'en Mister Roosingvelt go out, dat Mister Taf' ain't gwine want no teddy b'ars layin' 'roun' dis country so promis'cous. Den de yudder man up en 'spon' dat de nex' thing dey does, dey gotter rig up some kinder Taf' an'mul, en gun him de name, 'Bill,' but I ain't nary 'spicion w'at kinder critter hit gwine ter be."

Here Abraham paused, and after carefully mopping his heated brow with a large scarlet bordered handkerchief, al-



lowed his gaze to wander from face to face with the expression of a man who could make more intimate revelations if he would.

“Is dat all you gwine ter tell us?” demanded Uncle Isaac, athirst for further information.

“Dat’s erbout all er de play actin’ w’at ain’t slip’ ma ’membunce,” returned Abraham, “but atter while I sorter nose eroun’ en I done c’llected some pol’tics, but w’at I dunno yit is how come a Dem’crat’ city ter be ’lectin’ ob er ’Publican Presing-dent.”

“G’wan wid yer, nigger! Dat Dem’crat’ city ain’t had nuth’n’ ter do wid hit,” scoffed Uncle Isaac.

“Huh! I des been dar, I reck’n,” insisted Abraham, “en Atlanta done fix dat whole biz’ness herse’f. How I know dat, you gwine ax? I know hit kaze de ve’y minute dat Mister. Taf’ ’skiver’ hisse’f ’lected, he des lit right out en made tracks fer dis hyar town. Dat’s how I knows w’at I done tol’ you! Who-ee, I knows more’n dat, too. He ain’t got dar yit, but de white folks des er layin’ fer him w’en



he does lan' dar, en dey gwine hab de beatenes' kyar'ns on eber I heerd ob."

"Whut dey gwine ter do ter dat big white man?" demanded Uncle Isaac curiously.

"Dey gwine gib him a kinder blowout, w'at you gits up in sech t'arin' hurry, dat you des'gnates hit ez a bang-quick," responded Abraham knowingly, "en yit," he continued, modulating his voice to a tone that suggested an important confidence; "en yit I done heerd a cullud pusson at dat dar Piedmont hotel 'low dat hit warn't gwine be nuth'n' but des a good ol' possum dinner, wid 'simmon beer en 'taters. En he say dat a white genterman, name' Mister Can'ler, done plan ter fix hit up des dat way."

"Huh! dat's a moughty cur'ous kinder doin's for a Presingdent," commented one of the negroes.

"I 'lowed dey'd des feed him wid dese hyar li'l c'nary bu'ds," volunteered another.

"En dat ain't all," resumed Abraham after an impressive pause, and ignoring the comments; "dey wants erbout a hund-



'ed possums I reck'n, en dey wants um quick, en I done come home ter cotch um's fas's I kin,—dat's why I come."

"You ain't aimin' ter cotch a whole hund'ed, is you?" demanded Uncle Isaac, stretching his eyes in amazement.

"Um— naw, I ain't count on dat," admitted Abraham reluctantly; "dey ain't 'spectin' me ter do dat, but I aims ter do de bes' I kin, en w'at's mo', I gwine ter let you all he'p me," he ended with manifest condescension.

The company laughed somewhat derisively, yet promptly fell to discussing ways and means by which they might secure the largest number of choice possums in the most incredibly brief space, and before they dispersed, a possum hunt on an ambitious scale, had been planned for the same evening.

Uncle Isaac, left alone, nursed his ailing joints, and reflected. "I gwine erlong spite er de worl'," he muttered; "I gwine ter git ter dat possum hunt ef hit's de las' ac'!"

And rocking back and forth, the old man crooned in philosophical strain:—



Goodby, Mister Ha'd Times, 'long wid Mister Sorrer,  
Ain't got nuth'n' fer ter len', en nuth'n' fer ter  
borrer.

Whut dat, Mister Ha'd Times? 'Lows you'll come  
tomorrer,

Bringin' 'long bofe want en woe,

Ef don't nuth'n' hinder?

W'en you fotch up at de do',

I'll clam' out de winder.





## CHAPTER VII.

HOW UNCLE ISAAC MADE FRIENDS WITH  
GRANDFATHER POSSUM.

Possum clam' de 'simmon tree,  
Grinnin' fit ter kill;  
Sump'n lam 'im side de haid,  
En out de tree he spill.

Nigger caddy come erlong,  
Lookin' fer de ball,  
En fin' dat possum layin' dar,  
Zackly whar he fall.



(Possum meat fer bobbecue,  
Taters on de side;  
Talk erbout dat game er golf—  
Bes' you eber tried)

On the morning following the record breaking possum hunt on which Abraham led all the negroes of the vicinity, Uncle Isaac, to quote his own words, found himself 'pow'ful bad off, en gittin' wuss,' yet "Miss Ellen" had sent for him in haste, to come to the "big house" and help with extra chores, for a number of guests were expected on an early train for a week end house party. Now disobedience to "Miss Ellen's" requests was a form of treason which the old man had never yet contemplated for a moment, so stiff and grumbling, he appeared in the Marshall's kitchen, awaiting orders.

"Miss Ellen" herself fluttered in, arrayed in one of the "wroppers," which suggested to Uncle Isaac's mind that the "company" was not immediately due after all.

"They've all gone perfectly crazy on the subject of golf," she explained with a sigh;" as a result of President-elect Taft's



fondness for the game, and Mr. Marshall's nephew (Richard's grown brother) has asked permission to bring a party of friends up for a few days, to play. He thinks the links near here are especially fine. Then I shouldn't much wonder if they wind up with a possum hunt, due to the sudden notoriety of our friend, the chicken stealer, and all his tribe."

Uncle Isaac scratched his head reflectively. "I knows dat young genterman moughty well," he responded. "You ain't disremember how de Kunnel en me he'p git up a possum hunt fer him, erbout ten y'ars ago in Atlanta, is you, Miss Ellen?" And the old man indulged in something between a wheeze and a chuckle.

"I recall the occasion very well," returned the lady; "William has always been a great favorite with Mr. Marshall, and now he's coming with a party of grown up boys and girls, among whom is a little sweetheart from New England. She is on her first visit south, and for this reason I am anxious for everything to be as typical as possible of the old Southern regime, so of course, Isaac, no one but yourself must



wait on the table. A young darkey with the ways and manners of the new order would spoil it all."

Uncle Isaac managed to achieve an old-fashioned bow in spite of his stiffness, and his black face beamed. "I thank ee, Miss Ellen, I thank ee, honey," he said with genuine emotion. "I got de mis'ry in dese ol' j'int's pow'ful bad, but I'll be proud ter sarve Mister Will'm en de young miss,— I will dat."

The day proved one of the most eventful the old negro had ever experienced. The young folks, rejoicing in the brilliant sunshine of a mild Southern winter, swarmed over the old place like happy bees, and under Uncle Isaac's escort, inspected the gardens and orchards, before setting off for the golf course.

When they started at last, Uncle Isaac returned to his duties indoors, and the young people were accompanied by Richard and the pickaninny Rastus, both of whom were to act as caddies; the latter jubilant in the prospect of a whole quarter as the result of an afternoon of by no means strenuous toil.



For several of the participants, the afternoon was a memorable one. The observant Rastus could not fail to notice that "Mister Will'm" in spite of his professed devotion to the game, was playing badly, due as the pickaninny was shrewdly aware, to a desire not to get too far away from the young lady from New England.

The rest of what happened might be more graphically expressed in the language used by the little darkey himself, when he told it afterwards to Mose Freeman whom he met in the big road on the way home.

"Hit look lak dat young white lady gits tuckered out in no time," he declared; "atter her en Mister Will'm done lam dey li'l balls eroun' in des erbout ha'f dem dar li'l holes, which I ain't see does no good no-how, dey 'low dey so wo' out twel dey gwine ter set down dar on de hillside en res' deyse'ves, en Mister Will'm, he sez, sez he; 'Hyar, Rastus, you take keer er all dese hyar go'f sticks, en tote um on back ter de house, but fust, you des tak'n hump yo'se'f 'crost dat ditch en fin' Miss Pa'ker's ball, w'at she los'."

"Atter dat I ain't see Mister Will'm en



de young white lady no mo'. I lit out 'crost de ditch he done p'int out, en w'at I see nex' I des 'low ain't re'ly dar. I reck'n I des walkin' eroun' ersleep, en habin' a good dream, kaze 'long un'erneaf de tree lay de li'l ball, en 'longside er dat li'l ball hit 'pear lak wuz de fattes' ol' possum I eber see. Now am dis a re'l possum, I ax you,— er am hit des a dream possum?" he ended anxiously.

And the little pickaninny held up for Mose's inspection, a fat and well grown specimen, whose genuineness was beyond argument.

"Dat sho' is de squares' thing I eber year," declared Mose, carefully examining the animal, which was still warm, and had evidently come to its untimely end less than an hour before. "I 'low you gwine ter sen' dis ter Atlanta, 'long er Ab'ram Linco'n, ain't you?"

Rastus looked so overcome at the suggestion that it was evident such a thought had not occurred to him. Snatching the animal out of Mose's hands, he hugged it up tightly in his little skinny arms, while a sort of gray pallor, indicative of strong



emotion, crept over his expressive black face. "Is you think dat Mister Presingdent Taf' gwine want ma possum?" he demanded wistfully; "ain't he gwine ter hab 'nuff possums his own se'f, widout mine?"

Before Mose had an opportunity to reply, they were joined by Uncle Isaac, who came limping across the fields from the direction of the "big house." "Miss Ellen got ser much comp'ny," he explained, "de house des plum runnin' ober wid folks, en she done sent me atter Betsey, kaze she des bleedje ter hab some mo' he'p. Whar you git dat possum, Rastus Simmons? I 'c'lar hit des look lak hit's rainin' possums dese days! Whut wid de niggers huntin' um all night, en all de white folks ober ter Miss Ellen's er talkin' erbout um twel you can't res'."

"W'at de white folks been sayin'?" demanded Mose.

Uncle Isaac sighed. "I ain't got time ter stan' year all night," he replied, "en dat's erbout how long hit ud tek ter tell hit. Dey 'low dat eve'ybody's done gone plum foolish ober dis hyar visit er de new presingdent's, en dey ain't know how ter do



'nuff ter mek him 'joy hisse'f. Whut wid bang-quicks en deceptions, en one thing en ernudder, dey gwine keep him hustlin' eroun' so fas' atter he gits ter Atlanta to-morrer, dat I skeered dat white genterman gwine ter be clean wo' out. Lawsy gracious, I done heerd ser much twel ma ol' haid is got plum flusteredw id hit! One young Miss sez kinder sorrerful, sez she; 'Po' li'l Teddy B'ar, you ain't gwine ter hab nobody ter lub you; eye'ybody gwine ter set dey 'fections on Mister Bill Possum, whut done tuck yo' place!''

At this moment there was a rattling of  
At this moment there was a creaking of wagon wheels, and down the road in triumph drove Abraham Lincoln Perkins, with his contribution to the banquet in honor of the President-elect. Seated in an ox-cart of such antiquity that the probability of its weathering the trip to Atlanta seemed questionable, and entirely unaware of the incongruity of his newly acquired "city clothes," Abraham, if not the monarch of all he surveyed, felt no less important, and doubtless much happier, than such a personage. For was he not

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bound for the "new Presingdent's" banquet, and was not his creaking ox-cart filled wit hthe most delectable of Georgia commodities?

"How come you settin' out dis time er day?" demanded Uncle Isaac, allowing his gaze to travel wistfully over the precious collection of fat possums.

Abraham attempted, with indifferent success, not to look too self-important. "I aim ter git's fer's de nex' town beyon' Norcross, en res' dar twel daybreak, den I got er easy jou'ney fum dar on, termorrer."

"Is you gwine ter ax de Presingdent fer a job?" inquired Mose, with a grin; "I reck'n you'll be trab'lin' right erlong up ter Wash'nton fus' thing us know!"

"Mebbe I gwine ax 'im fer a job en mebbe I ain't; dat ma bizness," and whipping up the oxen, Abraham started on at a somewhat brisker pace.

With a queer little cry, Rastus sprang after him, and thrust his own possum into the back of the ox-cart. "Des kyar dat erlong ter Mister Presingdent Taf', too," he said with a suspicion of chokiness, "en—

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en ax 'im des ter please sir think erbout dis hyar li'l black nigger w'en he go fer ter eat hit!"

De poodle dawg done had 'is day,  
Lakwise de teddy b'ar,  
En eve'y place dey use ter be,  
De possum's settin' dar.  
Dey tied de poodle wid er chain,  
En kyar'd 'im all eroun',  
But eve'y place he use ter go,  
De possum now am foun'.

Now atter while dey tu'ned aroun',  
En lubbed de teddy b'ar,  
But 'tain't no use ter look fer 'im,  
Kaze he no longer dar.  
But eve'y whar he use ter be,—  
In books en pictures, too,  
You'll fin' des sho' en sart'n, dat  
Bill Possum grins at you.

When dusk had settled over the golf links and driven the players home again, Grandfather Possum ventured cautiously down from the hollow tree, where he had been watching the game, and near which Miss Parker's ball in its erratic course, had struck one of his acquaintances.

Rastus, in his excitement over the dis-



covery of the possum, had run away leaving "Mister Will'm's" golf sticks exactly where he had dropped them, and it was towards these curious objects that Grandfather Possum made his thoughtful way, talking to himself as he went, for he was quite alone, the youngest grandchild and the rest of the family being in hiding in the depths of the woods. To be accurate, all of them who were still alive and at liberty, were in hiding, for it must be confessed that several of Grandfather Possum's nearest and dearest were at that moment on their way to Atlanta, in Abraham's ox cart, and he himself had been in imminent danger of capture again, adding one more to his long list of hazardous adventures.

Grandfather Possum subjected the bag of golf sticks to a curious and thorough examination. At first he had hoped that they would prove edible, but a gingerly taste of one corner of the bag having convinced him to the contrary, he set about experimenting with the sticks themselves in the somewhat faint hope of discovering some possible usefulness.

"Hit 'pears lak ter me," he reflected,



“dat dey ain’t nuth’n mo’ den some new kinder biz’ness dey done fix’ up ter kill possums wid, en all dese white folks I done set hyar en watch, ain’t hed nuth’n better ter do, den ter practise up er slingin’ dese hyar roun’ white rocks all day, so’s dey kin do all de debbilment dat comin’. Dat’s des w’at hit look lak.”

Now it was just about this time that Rastus, who had suddenly remembered “Mister Will’m’s” injunction regarding the golf sticks, and his own carelessness in leaving them on the links, reappeared in search of them, followed by Uncle Isaac, whom he had persuaded to come a little out of his own way to keep him company.

Just before reaching the exact spot where he had left the sticks, Rastus stopped short and gasped. Surely he must be seeing double, or was the sky simply raining possums? “Unc’ Isaac,” he whispered huskily, clutching the old man by the arm, “is you see sump’n?”

Uncle Isaac shook off the pickaninny’s clinging fingers, and peered forward through the shadows. “Gawdermussy, hit’s dat ol’ peg laig possum, out hyar on



de go'f links des er playin' erway all by hisse'f! I 'c'lar ter gracious ef dat an'mul ain't got sech er oncommon sight er onderstandin' twel hit ain't natchel. Hit ain't dat!"

At this moment Grandfather Possum, who had his back to the intruders, turned slowly around, and he and the old man looked each other full in the face.

Uncle Isaac, overcome with superstitious fear, fell, quaking and trembling, on his knees. "I ain't gwine hu't you," he cried earnestly, "'fo' de Lawd, I ain't gwine tech hide ner h'ar er you; I ain't dat. De Lawd's tuck keer er you dis fer, en fum now on dis ol' nigger 'lows he's gwine he'p 'im do hit, he is dat. Come on, Rastus," he added in a somewhat changed tone of voice; "git dem go'f sticks, en less g'wan erbout our biz'ness. I 'c'lar, ef any er dese hyar possums desarves de name er de new Presingdent, hit's dis year oncommon sens'ble peg laig one, en fum now on I ain't gwine call 'im peg laig no mo',—I 'low I'm gwine des'gnate 'im ez Mister Bill Possum ob Georgia!"

THE END.























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