

A Report of an Investigation of Folk-Stories  
Orally Transmitted  
Among the Negroes of the Present Day.

by

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## PREFACE

It is with pleasure that I present this collection of Negro Folk-tales to those who may be interested in them. I have spent more than a year in making this small collection of thirty-nine stories. Statistics included in this report show that one hundred and six stories were received. Some stories were duplicated, some had been told and retold so many times that for want of the main point, which had been lost in the retelling, I omitted them. I wanted the stories in dialect, and many were omitted because they came without this attractive element.

When the Negroes were freed they were too busy with the economic problems of life to find time for story telling. There was little demand for stories at the "Big House." The people there, too, were going through a process of readjustment. Story telling then became neglected. The Negroes who have been born since freedom have cultivated a taste for a different kind of literature and know little of the old folk-tales. Thus to obtain a very large number of genuine folk-tales orally transmitted is a very difficult undertaking.

It is my purpose to give the story of my quest, tell something about the contributors, give, wherever possible,

something of the origin of the stories, and make an analysis of them. At the close of the report I shall give a list of the contributors.

The stories are given just as they were given to me. Whenever I felt that the reader might be in doubt as to the meaning of the word used, I have inclosed the word commonly used in brackets. No attempt has been made to "dress up" the stories. In many cases it may be hard for the sophisticated reader to catch the point of the story; it does not necessarily follow that the teller did not.

I wish to acknowledge my obligation and express my thanks to Miss Burnham, Miss Morgan, and Dr. W. S. Johnson, of the University of Kansas, who have helped me in the study and production of my project. I wish also to thank all other persons who have so liberally given me their assistance in making my collection, for without the cooperation of my advisers and friends my efforts would have been futile.

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## INTRODUCTION

### THE STORY OF MY QUEST

### HOW THE COLLECTION WAS MADE

The lore of the Negro is rich in story. Some of these stories have been recorded. My work represents only a smattering of the material existent, but great pains have been taken to make the collection as characteristic as possible. Close personal field work has been supplemented by a questionnaire<sup>1</sup> that was sent to the various Negro colleges in the South, to such persons with whom I had intimate acquaintance as I thought would be interested in my project, and to other persons whose names and addresses were given to me.

It is a very difficult task to make a collection of Negro-tales; since the young generation knows nothing about them, and the old people generally either have forgotten or pretend to have forgotten them. It is indeed strange that the old Negroes do not like to relate the tales that enchanted their masters' children before the Civil War; but it is a fact. Thus, it was often with the greatest difficulty that a story could be obtained.

The principal of the school in which I am teaching gave me permission to give questionnaires to as many pupils as I desired. I selected some promising pupils, told them what I was trying to do, explained some of the difficulties that I thought they might encounter, and sent them out. Responses came in slowly both from the questionnaires I sent out and those given the pupils. This I attributed to the wording of the questionnaire.

(1) See copy, page 7.

When the questionnaires were printed, my thought had been to let my thesis cover the field of folk-lore. Later, it was thought advisable to narrow the subject to folk-tales. Many persons to whom I had sent questionnaires, not knowing this, sent me games, superstitions, religious beliefs and melodies. I then crossed out the word "lore" and replaced it with the word "tales" and sent out more questionnaires. To these many did not respond.

Many conferences were necessary with my pupils. They first reported that the old Negroes did not care to tell them any stories because they wished to forget the cruelties of slavery. After I had made some further explanations the pupils were more successful. The cruelties of slavery all Negroes want to forget, but the little stories that were told around the cabin fires, when the day's toil was over, all should desire to cherish as a rich heritage.

I thought it would be interesting to get some folk-tales from African Negroes. I wondered whether story telling had become a lost art to them, or, if they still told folk-tales, just what kind of story they did tell. I immediately got in touch with Bishop Gregg, who is now stationed at Woodstock, Cape Town, South Africa. I wrote to tell him what I was trying to do, and he sent me two stories. Later, by chance, I met Max Yergen, a missionary worker, and he gave me two stories.

A large part of this collection consists of animal stories, yet there are to be found therein, ghost stories, character stories, and variants of book stories.

PERSONAL INVESTIGATIONS

First I took invoice of my own stock. My grandmother was a slave and my mother was born during slavery. Together we talked over the tales I could remember that grandmother told me and the ones that mother had heard her tell in their old Kentucky home. The majority of the stories were concerning hardships, about how she had outwitted her master and mistress, and with what difficulty she was able to pilfer sufficient food to keep her children well and happy. These stories I did not want. Much to my regret my returns from this source were few.

I next began visiting as many old Negroes as I could. I visited all the old persons in Lawrence whom I knew and as many others as I was put in contact with. It was interesting to find out that many who seemed quite old enough to know stories refused to tell me one. This was such a disappointment to me that I tried to find a reason for these refusals.

After a visit to one very old person with whom I had a very intimate acquaintance, my problem was solved. He told me that he had told the white children stories, but in those days it didn't matter if you said "Dis" and "Dat"; whereas now he just couldn't talk to educated Negroes because they would laugh at him. I summoned all the tact that I possessed, and when I left him I not only left with a story but had made a warm friend.

At first I boldly asked the narrator his age. This I found to be a very unwise thing to do. Nobody cared to be old, and I found many who appeared old enough to know stories giving their ages as forty or forty-one, though they had first heard a story related in 1867. Since age was of minor importance I ceased to ask about it. Many times I made two or three trips to the same person before obtaining a story. Old people are forgetful, and I frequently found that on different occasions they would tell practically the same story but in a slightly altered form. In this part of my investigation it was necessary to work rapidly, because of the heavy mortality among old Negroes.

At first, it was my intention to consult only Negroes past the meridian of life. I decided, however, to try a younger group. I visited persons in their thirties. Among the less cultured I learned that they had not yet found sufficient leisure time to sit down to tell stories to their children. The highly cultured of the group read stories to their children, but the idea of folk-tales never entered their minds. These visits did not add any stories to my collection.

Without any notion of becoming a Moses of my people, I started out to find whether the child of today would like the old Negro Folk-tales as well as the modern tale, "Little Red Riding Hood", for instance. I went to live with a family that had three little girls, six, nine, and thirteen

years of age, respectively. I told them what I was trying to do, and often I would reward them for good behavior by telling them one of the folk-stories. The children liked them. The little girl of six, although she could not tell the story coherently, loved to relate the "Tar Baby Story". Of this then I was sure, that my race was missing a wonderful opportunity of fostering a love for tales all our own, and that the young generation had a willing ear if only somebody would tell the stories to them.

Last summer I toured with a party to Atlantic City, New Jersey. When we left Kansas City, Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania, was our objective. En route I spent two days in Wilberforce, Ohio, where Wilberforce University is located. In the vicinity of the school many of the more cultured of my race live. There the stories of Joel Chandler Harris were well known, but no person could tell me a Negro Folk-tale that he had had told to him.

The next stop of relatively any importance was Wheeling, West Virginia. The people of this city told me that they had heard stories, but could remember none. I was encouraged by the members of my party to wait until I reached Phillipsburg; there they said I would meet an old man who was nearing ninety years of age and who loved to talk.

We spent two weeks in Phillipsburg, and I met this old man, whose name was Mr. Chase. He was a Civil War veteran

and was quite a character in that vicinity. He did love to talk. He told me war stories and how the little white boys and girls did and do gather around him for stories.

Mr. Chase could read, and, I think, had read many folk-tales. He was familiar with the Uncle Remus stories, but I regret that he was not able to distinguish between the stories that he had read and the ones that had been told to him. He told me many nursery rhymes but no stories included in this report.

We traveled to Atlantic City and back, making frequent stops, but not many tales were collected.

Last of all I made several trips to small towns near Kansas City, such as Liberty and Excelsior Springs, Missouri; Olathe and Leavenworth, Kansas.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Name of Contributor \_\_\_\_\_  
 Town \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address--State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street No. \_\_\_\_\_

II. I have chosen for the subject of my Master's thesis, in the English Department of the University of Kansas, "Negro Folk-lore". I desire to get my material from living sources, actual word of mouth accounts. I am asking my friends, acquaintances, and persons with whom I am put in touch, who are interested in the preservation of the many wonderful stories in which our ancestry was so rich, to help me. Will you make at least one contribution to this valuable collection?

These stories may be obtained from anyone, but particularly from middle-aged and elderly Negroes. What stories did they tell their children or what stories were told to them when they were children? These stories may be animal stories, Bible stories told in their own way with a genuine folklore character or genuine ghost story.

I especially desire to have the story in the narrator's own language. Do not "dress it up". It may be necessary to have the narrator tell the story a second time in order to get it exact.

Do not feel that your contribution is limited to one story. I shall be very grateful for one story, but I shall receive enthusiastically all that you may contribute.

Sincerely,

Trussie Smothers,  
 1922 North Fourth Street,  
 Kansas City, Kansas

III. The name of the person who narrates the story to the contributor:

Address: { (Town: \_\_\_\_\_)  
               { (State: \_\_\_\_\_)

Age (if narrator is willing) \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate date of the narrator's

Learning the story

(Use back of this paper)

IV. The Story.

STATISTICSQUESTIONNAIRES

The number sent out of the city.....	200
The number returned.....	50
The number given to pupils.....	50
The number returned.....	28
The total number sent out.....	250
The total number returned.....	78

PERSONAL VISITS

The number made in Lawrence.....	50
The number of stories obtained.....	10
The number made in Kansas City, Mo., and vicinity.	45
The number of stories obtained.....	10
The number of visits made on the tour.....	25
The number of stories obtained.....	8
Total number of personal visits made.....	100
Total number of stories obtained.....	28

STORIES USED

The number of animal stories.....	16
The number of ghost stories.....	9
The number of character stories.....	6
The number of African stories.....	4
Book stories.....	4
The total number of stories used.....	39

I. AFRICAN-NEGRO FOLK-TALES

### A WORD ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

These contributors both are located in South Africa, but Bishop Gregg's work calls him into other sections of the country. In a personal conference with him, I learned that the African told many kinds of stories and that story-telling to him was almost a passion. The Bishop also said that many of the same animals that inhabit the realm of American Negro tales are also found in the African stories. From contact with the African he felt that originally, perhaps, these African tales had a deeper purpose than merely providing amusement. In a symbolic way they might have been a form of prayer whereby protection against the beasts of the jungles was secured.

Bishop John A. Gregg is a native of Kansas and an Alumnus of the State University of Kansas, having been graduated in 1902. He has served as a pastor of two A. M. E. churches. He went to Africa as a missionary and did work that was so effective, that he was consecrated bishop of that district. He attended the Bishops' Council in Berlin, last fall, after having visited his native land. His interest in the African native is manifested by his refusal of the Presidency of Howard University, because he had told the natives that he would return.

The stories contributed by Bishop Grett are: "Masekane, the Herder Boy" and "How Setuli Became King". The Bishop explained that both stories were very old and that the story,

"How Setuli Became King", was told to him by a very old native. The other story was related to him by a younger person, who assured him that it was an old story among his tribe. The Bishop further explains that when he took down the stories, in both instances, the relaters used many idioms which he knew I would not understand; so he sent the stories written in his own way and has used the African word only where there was no English one to substitute.

Max Yeargen is also an American Negro doing missionary work in Africa. He visited this country, last spring, in an effort to obtain funds for a school in Africa. The stories contributed by him are stories told to him by young natives who delight at evenfall to hear the old natives tell stories.

The stories contributed by Mr. Yeargen are: "The Python, the Leopard and the Tortoise" and "The Squirrel and the Viper". They were related to me by Mr. Yeargen, and I have set them down just as he told them. He made no attempt to give African idioms.

These four stories, I consider, are very valuable for my collection, because they come from the very source of all Negro Folk-tales.

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TITLES OF STORIES

1. How Setuli Became King.
2. Masekane, the Herder Boy.
3. The Python, the Leopard, and the Tortoise.
4. The Squirrel and the Viper.

Note: When a word that is not familiar to us has been used in a story, I have followed the relater's word with the familiar word placed in brackets.

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HOW SETULI BECAME KING.

This story used to be told about the campfires of Swaziland when our fathers' fathers were little children. It is about Setuli, one of our kings of long ago, and how he became king in spite of the fact that he was born deaf and dumb. Because of this great affliction, Setuli was loved by none save his own brother, who was a wizard. These two brothers were always out upon the mountains and through the forests, but they never feared, for they loved all the birds, animals and creeping things, and were in turn loved by these dwellers away from the haunts of men.

One day these brothers were hunting herbs for the various medicines that Setuli's brother knew just how to concoct, when a fairy in disguise met them along the way and said:

"I know you two brothers, and since your behavior is better than that of most men's, the great Nkosi (God) has decreed that Setuli shall be king, and his brother, because he has cared for him when all others have driven the dumb one from the habitation of his kind, shall be the chief man in the kingdom."

Then the fairy raised her wand and birds came trooping from every direction--red birds, blue birds, black birds, golden birds, large birds, small birds--and they cried out:

"What will you have us to do?"

The fairy then said, "You are always to hold yourselves in readiness to come to the aid of Setuli who is now to be the king of all the Swazis. He is to be their sun and will hold the whole Swazi nation in the palm of his hand."

She then gave Setuli a wand like her own and told him to go to the royal kraal of the Swazis and proclaim himself king. Setuli turned to thank the fairy; and, behold, his speech came! He heard his own voice for the very first time. Then, how happy he and his brother were. The fairy vanished and the birds flew away.

Then Setuli and his brother hurried to the royal kraal, but when they would have entered, a stalwart impi barred the way. They told him that Setuli was to be king, and the impi laughed so loudly and long that the people came running to see what the matter could be. When they heard the funny story all pointed their fingers at the two brothers and raised such a din that the king came to see what such a great throng was doing in front of his kraal. When he heard the story, he became very angry and said:

"These two imposters must die. Take them to the precipice and cast them over."

Then the impi called the guard and they caught the brothers up and went toward the mountains while the throng followed laughing. Just as the guards were about to cast the brothers over, Setuli raised the wand which he still carried and cried:

"Oh, if I only had an army to help me."

Suddenly the air was filled with all manner of birds, and they beat the guards with their wings and pecked the people in their faces so that all left the brothers and ran back, the birds swooping down upon them all the way to the village. Birds were everywhere, even in the houses, beating out the fires with their wings, and driving the royal family out of the royal kraal. At last the impis cried:

"We must make Setuli king."

And the people shouted, "Yea, yea."

So Setuli became king and the old king was banished. For many years Setuli ruled and the land was blessed with plenty. Whenever armies came to fight the Swazis, Setuli had but to call his phantom army and all was well.

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MASEKANE, THE HERDER BOY.

Masekane, the herder boy, had driven his father's herd into some very fine pasture near a little pool along the banks of which were growing many mapani trees. As the animals were contentedly eating the long tender grass, Masekane seated himself beneath the largest of the mapani trees, that was growing on the edge of the pool. He had one of those peculiar African musical instruments fashioned from a bow and string, with a gourd attached just over the place where the string and one end of the bow were joined. By strumming with one hand on the string and cupping the gourd with the other hand, he could bring forth the sweetest, albeit most melancholy notes one could imagine.

As he played, the turtles came up from the bottom of the pool to listen and two doves perched above him. A little grey squirrel kept running back and forth on a limb a short distance away, and her little bright eyes were twinkling delight as she listened. At last becoming more bold, she came and perched on a limb just above Masekane. For a long time she sat quietly, but at last she said:

"Masekane, you make wonderful music."

The boy answered, "That is so, my little friend, for see what an audience I have. My father, who is a great in-dune, (seer) taught me to play. My father is a very wise man."

"My father is also very wise," answered the squirrel, "for he knows all about the animals in the forests, and all

## (2) Masekane, the Herder Boy.

about the trees. He knows just when to gather the nuts and just where the best are found. Oh, there is very little that my father does not know."

"Ask him, then, to come and tell me why the leaves of the mapani tree are cut in two."

So the little squirrel hurried away after her father, who was asleep in his nest. He was a bit cross at being awakened in the middle of the afternoon, but when Masekane called him the "wise one" and flattered him, he agreed to tell the story. So, brushing the sleep from his eyes, he settled himself on a limb and began:

"Many, many years ago, when there were not so many mapani trees as now, there was great rivalry between the blue tree spirits who live in the mountain forests and the red tree spirits who live along the low lands, as to which were the more clever. When the blue spirits covered their mountain rocks with snow-white lichen, then the red spirits decorated their lowland rocks with red lichen; when the reds hung their trees with purple flowers so that they looked like cascading fountains, then the blue spirits hung their trees with pale green lichen so that they resembled great waterfalls. Well the rivalry went on. Then, all at once, the reds noticed that the rains had ceased to come down upon their lowlands, while plenty of rain was falling on the uphill country, and the blues were making fun of their rivals, whose trees were dying and shedding their leaves long before the regular time.

## (3) Masekane, the Herder Boy.

"Then the reds held a council and decided to send a deputation to see the Mother of the World, who controlled the rains. The deputation found that the blues had gained the favor of the Mother by weaving a wonderful robe for her made from the green lichen. Now the reds were very sad, for their trees were dying. One of the reds discovered, when playing with the mapani leaf, that he could catch the rays of the sun and imprison the gold, red and yellow in its cup. They took these colors and made wonderful dyes into which they dipped a robe made of spider webs and gave to the Mother of the Earth. She was so pleased with it that she at once sent rain to the reds and cut off the supply from the blues. Then the blues were desperate and began to plan.

"One day they said, so that the guinea fowl could hear, that they were going to give the greatest dance ever dreamed of the next night and would have their trees decorated beyond description. Of course, the guinea fowl, who is an incessant gossip, had to rush off with the news to the reds. Then the reds hid themselves along the hillside to watch their rivals, but there was no dance. When the blues found that the reds were all away from their homes, they sent down a host to gather all the mapani seeds and set fire to the trees. When the reds saw their trees on fire they rushed home but could not save them.

"Then they gathered to go to war against the blues, but the Mother of the Earth came down to make peace and insisted

that the blues return the seeds to the reds. But all night long the blues had been busy cutting the seeds in two. They returned them, however, and the reds at once planted them. But because these seeds were cut in two, when the trees put forth their leaves it was found that they were likewise cut in two, and the reds cannot any more catch the sun's rays and make their peculiar dye. So the rivalry between the reds and blues died out, and they even began to intermarry, and it is impossible now to tell a red spirit from a blue spirit. That is the end of the story," said the old squirrel as he settled down for a comfortable nap.

Then Masekane struck up a lively little tune on his instrument and named his composition the "Song of Peace", and all the folk of the woods and the folk of the pool came out to listen to the sweet music made by the herder boy.

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THE PYTHON, THE LEOPARD, AND THE TORTOISE.

Once upon a time a Leopard came to a Tortoise and asked him to catch a Python for him. The Tortoise dug a pit and partially covered the opening. Along came the Python and begged the Tortoise to catch a Leopard for him. The Tortoise was greatly puzzled, for he did not wish to be so entangled.

When the Leopard came to see the Tortoise, the Tortoise said, "Please go over there".

The Leopard went over to the pit and fell in.

When the Python came to see the Tortoise, the Tortoise said, "Please go over there."

As the Python was going across the pit, he fell in.

The Tortoise approached the pit and looked down upon them and said, "There you are, now settle your troubles."

The Leopard said, "I've caught many an animal, but never a Python."

The Python said, "I've caught many beasts of the forest, but never a Leopard."

They talked for some time along this vein, for they did not hate each other. Soon afterwards they became friends.

---

THE SQUIRREL AND THE VIPER.

Once a Squirrel and a Viper lived together in love and friendship. The Squirrel was afraid of the Viper, for he feared the Viper would do him harm, but the Viper said: "I'll never harm you."

So they lived together in the same nest.

In a short time the Squirrel gave birth to children and she went out to get food for them. The Viper staid in the nest and ate all of the Squirrel's children, not leaving one piece.

When we hear the call of a squirrel it always says, "Is the Viper really a friend of mine?"

Therefore, one man should not deceive another.

---

ANALYSIS OF THE AFRICAN FOLK-TALES.

All tribes and people have their folk-tales. These tales are so strongly tinged with the peculiarities or rather idiosyncrasies of the race among whom they originate as to furnish a fair index of its mental and moral characteristics, not only at the time of their origin but so long as the people continue to narrate them or listen to them. The folk-tales given here, although few in number, are sufficient for me to make an analysis based on the outstanding characteristics of the African people and on the literary form of the stories.

What are the predominant characteristics of the African?<sup>1</sup> Laziness, which is greatly enhanced by the enervating tropical climate, impulsiveness, shortsightedness, an indifference to an disregard for the future and a lively sense of humor, stand out very prominently. If one tribe improves more rapidly than the other, there is immediately aroused a feeling of covetousness on the part of the other. The weaker tribe rarely goes toward the end that they desire, but seeks to compass it by subterfuges. Concealment of design is an element of safety and has been carried out for centuries, and the character of the African Negro is strongly marked by it.

In Africa among some tribes it was once believed that lower animals and birds were endowed with a power of speech.

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(1) Puckett, N. N. Page 8;  
Moran, R., "Batuala"--preface and general characterization throughout.

These tales are stories of birds and animals having this power. The leading topic of these tales is the struggle of cunning and craft over stupidity or brute force. In three of the four stories given, "Masekane, the Herder Boy", "The Python, the Leopard, and the Tortoise", and "How Setuli Became King", weakness triumphs. In all four stories there is the element of struggle. In one story we see the Tortoise pitted against the python and the leopard. In another we find the squirrel pitted against the viper, but he is not victorious.

<sup>1</sup>Although I received no stories of other animals, yet the spider, the rabbit and the dog<sup>2</sup> stalk through the African folk-tales like human beings. The rabbit is not the one we know, but a sort of water deerlet known to the African as "cunnie Rabbit".<sup>1</sup> It might come to us in the expression "cunning rabbit".

In the story of "The Herder Boy" the little squirrel implies that his father is lazy. According to the story, the father rubs his eyes, stretches lazily and grumbles because he is disturbed. Now, this trait of the squirrel, since he is endowed with the powers of the human being, only proves that the African in placing him in the story gives him a characteristic belonging to himself.

In the same story we find two tribes contending. One of these did such an unscrupulous thing as to set fire to all the mapani trees, without any thought of the ultimate

(1) Puckett, N. N., Page 34; Conference with Bishop Gregg.  
 (2) Moran, René, Page 156, Djouma (Dog).

results. They could see only momentary triumph. Impulsiveness and shortsightedness are very evident. In the story, "How Setuli Became King", there is again given another side of the contention between tribes. In both instances the quarrels are merely outgrowths of petty rivalry.

In the story of "The Python, the Leopard and the Tortoise", there is an element of humor. The tortoise very cunningly traps the python and the leopard. The python and leopard are both surprised to find themselves trapped. Surprise is an element of humor.

In the story of "The Squirrel and the Viper", the viper declares that he can live in the nest with the squirrel and not harm her. The viper did not want the tough old squirrel when he knew that there would be plenty of baby squirrels. He really kept his promise, but there was a design behind the promise.

In "Masekane, the Herder Boy" there is a noticeable frame device used by the relater. He begins by having Masekane play his alluring music and after showing the struggle of the tribes and explaining about the split leaves, in a very artful and artistic manner, he returns to his herder boy and has him play the very appropriate "Song of Peace". Figurative language abounds in the story, the simile and personification being used most effectively. The contributor here shows himself almost a perfect interpreter of the language.

In the Setuli story we find the fairy introduced. The coincidental meeting of Setuli and his brother with the fairy

is told in a rather offhand manner. The language used is very simple and lacks the figurativeness of the story just mentioned above.

The story of "The Python, the Leopard, and the Tortoise", is exceptionally well told from the point of view of economy. There is not a word more than is needed, and the whole story is there. After reading stories given in detail the pithiness of this story is especially noticeable.

In the story of "The Squirrel and the Viper" there seems to be something lost in the transmission of the story. There is nothing artistic and nothing to hold your attention. Always there must be something lost in the transmission of a folk-tale, and this is one instance where the loss is keenly felt.

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II. THE AMERICAN-NEGRO FOLK-TALES

A WORD ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS.

In most instances the narrators of these stories could not read or write. I found some narrators far beyond the meridian of life who did not speak dialect. My step-father cannot read or write, but his close contact with the educated white man has caused him to form speech habits of the best. He is just one example. Many of this class of Negroes could relate a story well; the only thing lacking was proper sequence. I was always glad to get the story in any form, but when I failed to get them in dialect my purpose in a measure was defeated.

Some of my contributors were able to record the stories in the dialect related because they were accustomed more or less to hearing dialect spoken in the homes of their grandparents. Others of my contributors could give only the story because they were far removed from the dialect and were unable to write it.

The pupils who made contributions were from all four classes of the high school. The freshmen were most enthusiastic about getting material, although members from each class who were asked, gave contributions.

Only a comparatively few adults mailed back the questionnaires. I received letters, written on other paper, but usually containing the information I desired. There was usually

an apology accompanying the stories because they were not written entirely in dialect. I always assured my contributors that I was glad to receive the stories in any form. I insisted, only, that the stories be obtained from the older Negroes.

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TITLES OF STORIESAnimal Stories

- \*1. Br'er Rabbit Wins.
- \*2. Mr. Fox Buys a Bull at Auction, Which Through Perversity Gets into Mr. Harry's Yard.
3. Mr. Fox's Mistake.
4. Br'er Rabbit and Mr. Fox.
- \*5. Br'er Rabbit, Mr. Fox, and the Horse.
6. Mr. Fox and Mr. Rabbit.
7. Br'er Rabbit, Mr. Fox, and the Cabbage Greens.
- \*8. Mr. Bear, Br'er Rabbit, and the Butter.
9. The Animal's Trip Across the River.
10. The Deer and the Rabbit.
11. Mr. Wolf and Mr. Rabbit.
12. Baby Bear Huntin'.
- \*13. How Mr. Fox Lost His Gal.
14. Br'er Rabbit's and Mr. Fox's Visit.
15. The Feast.

Ghost Stories

1. The Story of the Curious Ball of Fire.
  2. The Story of the Turkey Head.
  3. The Story of the Jack-o'-Lantern.
  4. A Ghost Story.
  - \*5. The Haunted House.
  6. Who'll Dare?
  - \*7. We Can Do Nothing Until Martin Gets Here.
  - \*8. A Ghost Story.
-

Character Stories and Anecdotes

1. John Devil John.
2. The Conjure Woman.
3. Sister Phyllis and the Panther.
4. Hudston and the Panther.
5. Chicken Thieves.
- \*6. Dinah's Proof.

Book Stories

- \*1. The Rabbit and the Devil.
  2. A Dreadful Hour.
  3. Brother Bear's Wood Chopping.
  4. A Fishing Trip.
  - \*5. Mr. Fox and Mr. Crane.
- 

\*Stories related to me.

Note: When a word that is not familiar to us has been used in a story, I have followed the relater's word with the familiar word placed in brackets.

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ANIMAL STORIES

BR'ER RABBIT WINS.

Once Br'er Rabbit and Brother Bear decided to raise a potato crop together. So Br'er Rabbit said:

"I take all that comes on the bottom and you take all comes on top."

Br'er Rabbit knew more about raising gardens than Brother Bear. Brother Bear was so happy and said:

"Can't change now, I got all the best."

When the crop was ready to gather Brother Bear went out and gathered his few withered potato vines. He was very angry at Br'er Rabbit and said:

"Next year I'll raise a pea crop and I'll take all that comes on the bottom and you'll take all that comes on top."

Br'er Rabbit readily consented. Brother Bear had eaten the tops up before half the winter was gone and had to suck his paw the rest of the winter.

Next spring Brother Bear was so happy until he couldn't help but talk how Br'er Rabbit was going to be sucking his paw in the winter. After a while it was time to gather the crop. Br'er Rabbit gathered his fine large peas and went skipping home, leaving angry Brother Bear to gather his few pea roots.

All that winter poor Brother Bear was sucking his paw to keep from starving. Next spring Br'er Rabbit was so big and fat until he could hardly walk. So on one shiny spring day Br'er Rabbit went walking and while he was strolling around he met Brother Bear. He said:

"Say, Brother Bear, want to raise another crop?"

Brother Bear raised his head and said, "Yes, I'm gonna raise it all by myself so whatever comes on top is mine and whatever comes on the bottom is mine."

So this broke up Brother Bear and Br'er Rabbit from raising a crop together.

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MR. FOX BUYS A BULL AT AUCTION WHICH THROUGH  
PERVERSITY GETS INTO MR. HARRY'S YARD

Mr. Fox had a bad reputation. Everybody believed that he got his food by stealing. He decided to seek by honorable conduct to disabuse public opinion concerning him.

His life was unsafe at all times; even if he entered a yard with peaceful intentions he was fired upon by the farmer or attacked by the dogs. Even when spending an evening with his family, the fashionable people would hunt him for sport. The cry was ever, "Let us hunt the fox."

So Mr. Fox decided to go publicly and buy his food and in such large quantities that he would silence thereafter all evil reports in regard to the manner of his living and how he obtained his supplies.

Mr. Fox went to the cattle auction and bought a bull and with conscious pride started home. With the perversity common to bulls, his bull would not go in the direction he wished, but would run first on one side of the road and then on the other seeking to turn back and find an opening. Harassed this way by the stubborn bull, Mr. Fox made little headway towards home. Now, living on the road that he must pass was Mr. Harry, with whom he had long been at enmity; but, since he was resolved to change public opinion, he was obliged to be at peace with him. Slowly and patiently Mr. Fox drove the bull homeward and was making some headway when the following incident happened.

About this time Mr. Harry, himself a cattle dealer, came out of his house and looking up the road, saw Mr. Fox struggling to get the bull home. So, instead of closing the gate to his yard that the bull might not enter, he opened it full wide, and when the bull reached the gate he ran into his yard. So Mr. Fox with Mr. Harry's help, if help it can be called, began the task of driving the bull out. Mr. Harry managed to keep in front each time so that the bull would make another turn in the yard. Finally Mr. Harry said:

"Mr. Fox, get a rope, get a rope. The rope is the thing!"

The idea not being a bad one, Mr. Fox left his bull in Mr. Harry's care and started on his journey for a rope. Then Mr. Harry caught the bull, cut off his tail close to the root and, digging a hole in the yard, stuck it in, leaving part of it above ground to fool Mr. Fox. The bull he locked in the stable. These things done he went to the gate to watch for Mr. Fox. He had not long to wait. When he saw Mr. Fox, he yelled:

"Run, Mr. Fox, the bull is going down into the ground; run Mr. Fox or you will lose him. Run, Mr. Fox, run!"

Mr. Fox doubled his pace when he saw Mr. Harry wildly gesticulating toward him. At last he reached the yard and being under great excitement, was shown his bull's tail sticking out of the ground and quickly seized the end in sight. And it coming out, he fell sprawling on the ground

## (3) Mr. Fox Buys a Bull at Auction.....

with the stump of the bull's tail in his hand, Mr. Harry looked at him for a moment and then with a deep full voice of sorrow, said in deep tones:

"See, Mr. Fox, the bull has gone down into the ground."

Mr. Fox sadly, but reluctantly, accepted the solution but gave up his resolve to reinstate himself in the good opinion of the public. He entertained, however, a strong suspicion that Mr. Harry had tricked him out of his bull and conceived in his heart a desire for revenge. At last his suspicion became conviction and in his rage he declared "war to the hilt" on Mr. Harry.

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MR. FOX'S MISTAKE.

Br'er Fox had been trying to catch Br'er Rabbit for a long, long time. So one day he set out to catch him sure enough. Br'er Fox had seen Br'er Rabbit hopping away from his home; so while Br'er Rabbit was gone, Br'er Fox slipped in Br'er Rabbit's house and tried to figure out how he would fool Br'er Rabbit. He decided that he would play dead and when Br'er Rabbit would come in, as he knew Br'er Rabbit would feel sorry on account of his tender heart and cry, and when Br'er Rabbit started to wipe away the tears, Br'er Fox would jump up and catch Br'er Rabbit.

Finally, Br'er Rabbit returned and saw Br'er Fox all stretched out on the floor as if he were dead, but every now and then he would open one eye and peep at Br'er Rabbit. Br'er Rabbit saw this, but he pretended that he didn't in order to play a trick on Br'er Fox. Finally, Br'er Rabbit said:

"Hey, Br'er Fox, aren't you glad to see an old friend, what? You don't speak? Why don't you-----? Oh! Oh! My, my! Why, Br'er Fox is dead! Poor, poor Br'er Fox!"

Br'er Fox began to get anxious.

"I'm so sorry," said Br'er Rabbit, "but, even if you are dead, you should be glad to see an old friend. If you don't open your eyes and say 'howdy' to me, I won't believe you are dead sure enough, 'cause anybody ought to be glad to see an old friend. Br'er Fox, speak to me, open your eyes, and say

'howdy'. If you don't I'll never believe you are dead as long as I live. Any spirit, if the body was good while it was living, is given the opportunity to say 'hello' to anybody it wants to; and anybody as good, nice, kind and gentle as you were while you lived has a good spirit and can say 'hello' to an old friend; so I pray you, for your goodness, open your eyes and say 'hello'."

Br'er Fox, liking to be called all these good names and not liking to have Br'er Rabbit believe his death to be a fake, decided to make believe that he was relying upon his good spirit, opened his eyes and exclaimed loudly:

"Howdy do, Br'er Rabbit."

Then Br'er Rabbit laughed until his sides ached and bounded off into the briar patch.

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BR'ER RABBIT AND MR. FOX.

Mr. Fox had planted a wonderful field of peas and they were just in blossom and coming big enough to eat. Somebody was taking them off. Mr. Fox suspected Mr. Rabbit, so he put up a board covered with tar. Now, Mr. Rabbit couldn't miss touching this board. After the plan was laid, Mr. Fox went to hide until he could catch the thief.

Soon Mr. Rabbit came along and, not noticing, struck the board with his foot.

"Uh," he said, "what's that holding me? Let loose me."

Of course, his foot stuck tight. "Uh," he said, "I got 'nother foot."

He hit the board and another foot stuck.

"I got 'nother foot." He kicked again and the third foot stuck.

"Shuckin's, I got 'nother foot," and he got the last foot stuck.

Then he said, "I'll butt you." Then his head stuck.

Up walked Mr. Fox and said, "So you are the thief, I thought so."

Mr. Rabbit said, "Oh, Mr. Fox, I haven't stole your peas. I was just coming to see you and your wife."

Mr. Fox said, "I'm going to kill you."

"All right, Mr. Fox," said Br'er Rabbit, "just don't torture me."

"No, I won't," said Mr. Fox. "I'll just hold you over the fire until you burn up."

"All right, Mr. Fox," said Br'er Rabbit, "just burn my coat and when winter comes, 'Po' Br'er Rabbit' will freeze."

"No, I won't," said Mr. Fox. "I'll just throw you in that brier patch."

Br'er Rabbit said, "Oh, Mr. Fox, please don't do that. It will scratch my eyes out and then 'Po' Br'er Rabbit' can't see what the world is doing."

"Yes, into the brier patch you go," And he threw him there.

When Mr. Rahbit hit the brier patch, he said, "Kiss my foot; that's where my breadand born was."\*

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\*Meaning: That's where I was bred and born. This story was related to me. To the relater "bread" was the word he knew. He simply meant that Mr. Rabbit's parents brought food to their home in the briar patch and that that was where he ate it.

Cf. P. 43: Thanks, fool; that's my home!

BR'ER RABBIT, MR. FOX AND THE HORSE.

Br'er Rabbit and Mr. Fox had not been getting along very well. Mr. Fox really had not treated Br'er Rabbit just right. Br'er Rabbit had searched his brain to find some way to get even. One day, he lucked out on something.

While strolling along home from town, he saw a horse lying by the side of the road. He ran as fast as he could until he reached Mr. Fox's house. When he reached the house he was breathless and almost fell in the door, saying:

"Oh, Mr. Fox, I've just found enough meat to last us all winter. Will you come and help me to bring it home?"

"Why, yes, Br'er Rabbit," said Mr. Fox. "I've been wondering what I was going to do for meat."

They left at once and, after walking a few miles, came upon the horse. Now Br'er Rabbit and the horse understood each other. The horse had promised to play dead. Mr. Fox was surprised to see that it was a horse.

"Why, Mr. Rabbit, indeed that will be meat enough for your family and mine."

"Now, Mr. Fox," said Mr. Rabbit, "since your tail is the longest, you let me tie your tail to his and you pull while I push."

"Fine," said Mr. Fox.

Mr. Rabbit tied the two tails together, then he took a stick and hit the horse. The horse jumped up and began to run with Mr. Fox dangling in the air.

## (2) Br'er Rabbit, Mr. Fox and the Horse.

"Hold him, Mr. Fox," said Br'er Rabbit.

"How can I hold him when I can't touch the ground?" moaned Mr. Fox.

Mr. Fox was dragged around by the horse until nearly exhausted, when the two tails worked loose. By this time Mr. Rabbit was at home laughing and telling his wife about it.

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MR. FOX AND MR. RABBIT.

Mr. Fox was a farmer. One day his wife became ill and Mr. Fox hired Mr. Rabbit to do his farming.

Mr. Fox said, "I want you to plant some potatoes."

Mr. Rabbit said, "All right, when do you want me to start?"

"Any old time," said Mr. Fox.

"Well, I will start day after tomorrow."

"All right," said Mr. Fox.

When the day after tomorrow came, Mr. Rabbit started to work; but instead of planting the potatoes, he would carry them home. One day he came to Mr. Fox and said:

"Well, Mr. Fox, I am through."

Mr. Fox started in the house.

"Wait, Mr. Fox. When you get ready to plow up these potatoes you cannot plow them up."

"Why?" said Mr. Fox.

"Because I planted them deep into the ground, you will have to get dynamite and blow the field up."

"All right," said Mr. Fox.

Time came to blow the field up. Mr. Fox ordered a car-load of dynamite and blew his field up in every corner, but he did not find a single potato. He told his wife about it and she said:

"Let's ask Mr. Rabbit what's this all about."

"All right," said Mr. Fox.

So he called Mr. Rabbit over and asked him.

He said, "I heard you carried all of my potatoes to your house and put them in your cellar."

"It is a lie," said Mr. Rabbit.

"I'll get you for this," said Mr. Fox.

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(Note: The relater could give no conclusion).

BR'ER RABBIT, MR. FOX, AND "CABBAGE GREENS".

The Rabbit and the Fox agreed to raise a crop of "cabbage greens". They worked hard all that year. Near the end of the summer, they divided the "cabbage greens". Greens being the choice dish of the Rabbit, he ate his greens before the summer was over. And when the summer was gone he went over to the Fox's house for a few. He made too many visits and the Fox didn't feel as if he wanted to give him any more. The Rabbit told the Fox how he had been stealing the bear's sheep:

"You know you have been stealing Mr. Bear's sheep and because I ask you for a few greens, you won't give me any."

The Rabbit, at last, got on the good side of the Fox.

"Listen here, Mr. Fox," said the Rabbit, "we've been good friends for a long time, and Brother Bear has a great big sheep. I was just wondering if we can't catch him. You catch him, we'll kill him and I'll tie you to him so he won't fall off of the wagon."

So they did. Along the road, the Rabbit began to whistle. The Fox said:

"Don't whistle so loud, the Bear might hear us."

A little farther down the road and almost in front of the Bear's house, the Rabbit began to whistle louder than ever.

"Say, Brother Rabbit, the Bear will hear you."

"Shut up," said the Rabbit.

"What is the matter, Brother Rabbit?" said the Fox.

"Just shut right up. You know you have been stealing Mr. Bear's sheep and I caught you and, if I were you, Mr. Bear, I would get my shot-gun and kill him."

The Bear got his shot-gun and came out.

"Oh, I don't believe I'll kill him," said the Bear.

"You know he has killed almost all of them," said the Rabbit.

And as the shot went "boom", the rabbit said, "Oppy golly, the cabbage patch is mine."

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MR. BEAR, ER'ER RABBIT, AND THE BUTTER.

One day the Bear and the Rabbit stole a large amount of butter in the hot summer time. The butter began to melt, so the Rabbit and the Bear decided to put the butter in the well to cool, and, in the meantime, take a nap.

While the Bear was fast asleep, the Rabbit ate the butter and went back to sleep. He slept so hard that the Bear had to shake him to awake him. When the Bear found that the butter was gone, he caught the Rabbit.

"Mr. Bear," said the rabbit, "please don't throw me in those sticky bushes."

Bloom!--went the rabbit into the bushes. The rabbit turned over and said, "Thanks, fool; that's my home."

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THE ANIMALS' TRIP ACROSS THE RIVER.

The rabbit, fox, coon, possum, bear, panther, elephant had eaten all there was on this side of the river, so they decided to go on the other side where there was plenty to eat. The elephant was to swim the river. As they all were ready to get on the elephant's back, he said that they would have to pay him to take them over. Everyone paid except the rabbit.

"Now, you know I am the smallest. Let me get on your head."

They agreed. He was carried over. After he had gotten his stomach full, he began:

"Now, you know I always pay my debts. Let me get on your head again."

At last, the elephant let the rabbit get on his head and, as soon as the elephant got far enough across for the rabbit to jump, the rabbit went through the bushes.

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THE DEER AND THE RABBIT.

Once there was a Deer and a Rabbit. One day the Rabbit and the Deer were sitting on their door-step, for they lived together.

"Well," said the Rabbit, "I guess I will take a walk."

Then Br'er Rabbit started down the road. On the way sat a little house where lived two girls; and the Rabbit spoke to them, for they were standing in the door.

"Why don't you come to see us some time, Br'er Rabbit; you and Mr. Deer, both? I'll tell you what I will do. The first one here can have the prettiest girl."

"All right," said Br'er Rabbit.

Then he started towards home to tell Mr. Deer. When he reached home he told Mr. Deer:

"Now, the first one there can have the prettiest girl."

"All right," said Mr. Deer, "we will start in the morning. Now, you carry me the half of the way and I will carry you the other half."

When the morning came they started. Br'er Rabbit, carrying Mr. Deer half the way, now said:

"I'll get off so you can carry me."

Then they started out again. When Mr. Deer reached the gate, he stopped.

"Oh, no," said Br'er Rabbit, "you have to carry me to the door."

So Mr. Deer carried him to the door and Br'er Rabbit hopped right in and received the prettiest girl.

MR. WOLF AND MR. RABBIT.

Mr. Wolf had or owned a piece of land. It was entirely covered with trees.

Mr. Wolf said, "I believe I'll get Mr. Rabbit to cut down and saw this wood for me."

The next day he told Mr. Rabbit about it. Mr. Rabbit said:

"All right, when do you want me to start?"

"Any old time you feel like it," said Mr. Wolf.

"I'll start tomorrow," said Mr. Rabbit.

When the tomorrow came, Mr. Rabbit came over to Mr. Wolf's house ready for work.

"When you get thirsty, Mr. Rabbit, you can go down in the cellar. There is a cool stream running down there."

Now, Miss Wolf had her butter and milk down in the cellar, and Mr. Rabbit liked butter. Every time he would go down to get a drink he'd steal some butter. He continued this about every time he would cut up a tree.

The following evening, Miss Wolf came down for some butter for supper. She could see where some claws had been in her butter, for she always smooth her butter over when she was through with it.

She said, "I bet Mr. Rabbit has been in my butter because Mr. Wolf has been away all day and there has been no one down there but Mr. Rabbit."

That evening she told Mr. Wolf all about it, so Mr. Wolf thought up a scheme.

## (2) Mr. Wolf and Mr. Rabbit.

The scheme was to place a bucket of tar between the milk and butter and catch Mr. Rabbit. So the tar was placed in the cellar and Mr. Rabbit did not know anything about it. So he hopped on down in the cellar and was caught in the tar.

"Oh, yes, I have you," said Mr. Wolf.

So he put him out on the front porch and went away. While he was gone, Mr. Rabbit started to singing. He told Miss Wolf, if she turned him loose, he could sing better. So Miss Wolf turned him loose and he sang a little and got away.

---

BABY BEAR HUNTING'.

Once there was a man an' his wife an' they went out in the woods huntin', an' he saw two little cub bears run in a hole. So he told his wife to watch an' see if the mother bear would come; an' let him know if she did. So the ol' mother bear came before the woman knew it; an' the bear began backing in the hole. When the bear started in the hole it made the hole dark. So the ol' man hollered out:

"Ol' 'oman, ol' 'oman, what's that darkin' the hole?"

The ol' lady said, "Ol' man, you wait till the tail holt break, an' you'll see what's darkin' the hole."

---

HOW MR. FOX LOST HIS GAL.

Once there was a rabbit and a fox. They were in love with the same gal. Mr. Rabbit tole the gal not to marry de fox "'cause dat was his ridin' hoss." So dis gal tole him if he proved that the fox was his ridin' hoss by ridin' him up to her house, she would marry him.

So Mr. Rabbit sat out to outwit the fox so he could let the gal see him ridin' him. He took saddle, bridle, spurs and whip and hid them up the road a piece, then tole the fox how bad the gal wanted to see them both. But, he said, he was awful sick. The fox kept en begging him to; so they started out. Jest before dey got to whar the saddle and things was hid, the rabbit played that he was so sick he could not go no farther; but he tole Mr. Fox, if he would let him ride him a piece he would sure feel better. So the fox agreed to do it if he would sure get off of him when he got in sight of de gal's house. By this time he was whar his saddle and bridle was hid. So Mr. Rabbit said:

"Mr. Fox, I am so sick and your back is so slick dat I can't sit on you without a saddle."

Mr. Fox said, "There is the saddle; put it on me."

Mr. Rabbit tole Mr. Fox to let him put on his spur. So Mr. Fox did. Then he said he was so weak that spur would pull him down; so let him put on his other spur. Mr. Fox said:

"Put it on."

Mr. Rabbit said, "This spur is heavier than the other, and I'm so weak it will pull me off. Let me put my whip on my arm to keep me from falling off. Mr. Fox said:

"Put it on."

Mr. Rabbit said, "Now, Mr. Fox, I am so weak that I can't talk much, so let me put the bridle on so I can turn you the right way to go."

Mr. Fox said, "Put it on."

So with saddle, bridle, spurs and whip, Mr. Rabbit is all sot. So Mr. Rabbit rode Mr. Fox until he got in sight of his gal's house, then Mr. Fox tolle Mr. Rabbit to get off. Mr. Rabbit said:

"I'm so weak, let me ride just a little piece further."

By that time their sweetheart was standing looking at them.

Mr. Fox said, "Mr. Rabbit, you got to get off me. If you don't, I'm gonna throw you off."

But instead of Mr. Rabbit gettin' off he "sot" both spurs into Mr. Fox, came down on him with de whip, jerked up with the bridle, rode up to the gate-post, tied Mr. Fox to the gate, went in and kissed his gal and tolle:

"I tolle you Mr. Fox was my ridin' hoss."

So dat's how Mr. Fox lost his gal.

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BR'ER RABBIT'S AND BR'ER FOX'S VISIT.

One bright sunny day Br'er Rabbit went to see Mrs. Meadow and de gals. When he told 'em all howdy, he sat down to hold 'em a commosession; and he cross he's legs and lit he's cigar and say sumpin' to de gals and dey would giggle. Somehow Br'er Fox's name was brought in de commo-  
session and Br'er Rabbit lowed:

"Ladies, Br'er Fox is de ridin' horse of our family for many years.

De gals jus' giggled, but Mrs. Meadow say she felt sorry for Br'er Fox and tried to hold up fur him and say she gwine tell him when he come to her house again. Br'er Rabbit 'low he don' care, cause it's so. Den he bade 'em good day and went home,

Nex' day Br'er Fox come to Mis Meadow and he hadn't mor'n set down, when Mis Meadow up and tell him what Br'er Rabbit say. Br'er Fox git scotchin' made, grit his teef and say:

"Ladies, I'm gwine git Br'er Rabbit and fatch him, chaw dis up and spit it out right where you can see it."

So he don't stay long, but go to see Br'er Rabbit. He find Br'er Rabbit in de bed; he knock on de door. Br'er Rabbit don't answer. He knock ag'in. Br'er Rabbit don't answer. Den Br'er Fox git mighty mad and tell Br'er Rabbit, if he don't open de door, he gwine knock it down an' come in. Den Br'er Rabbit call out in a wee voice:

"Dat you, Br'er Fox?"

Br'er Fox 'low, "Yas, I come at you to go wid me to Mis Meadow's."

Br'er Rabbit 'low he so sick he cain't walk. Br'er Fox 'low he pack 'im. Br'er Rabbit say he might drap 'im. Br'er Fox 'low he won't. Br'er Rabbit say he cain't ride widout a saddle. Br'er Fox say he git a saddle. Br'er Rabbit say he cain't ride widout stirrups. Br'er Fox say he git stirrups. Br'er Rabbit 'low he cain't ride widout blind bridle. Br'er Fox say he git blind bridle. Den Br'er Rabbit say he go.

Den Br'er Fox hopped off to borrow de rig, but weren't gone long before he come saddlin' back all saddled and bridled and chawing on de bits. So Br'er Rabbit got up and started off. When he got way down de road, Br'er Rabbit put on de spurs and rode on. When dey got nearly to Mis Meadow's, Br'er Fox stopped and told Br'er Rabbit to git down an' walk on up to de house, but Br'er Rabbit socked de spurs to him and rode right by de house and de gals just giggle; and Br'er Rabbit hitch Br'er Fox in de stall and marched up to de house and said, "Ladies, I told you Br'er Fox was de ridin' horse of de family."

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THE FEAST.

Once upon a time the animals gave a feast in the woodland. They all gathered early in the morning and fixed their tables in the shade, fixed the food on them, and went home to get ready to come back that afternoon. They left Mr. Rabbit to watch the table because he had his fine gray suit on already. Mr. Rabbit was very fond of butter and he thought he wouldn't get enough at the feast; so he ate all the butter he saw. Then he went to sleep.

Some of the animals came before he awoke. When they uncovered the table and noticed the butter dishes empty, they all got very angry. They decided to build a large fire, and all of them lay down on clean boards around it. When they got up, the one who was on the greasy board should be barbecued and eaten in place of the butter. They built a hot fire and all of the animals lay down on a clean board. All fell asleep except Mr. Rabbit. The grease popped out and his board got very greasy. He got up and slipped Mr. Possum's board out from under him and put his old greasy board in its place. He had just hit the board, when the order was given for them to get up. They examined the boards and poor Mr. Possum was roasted for lunch.

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GHOST STORIES

THE STORY OF THE CURIOUS BALL OF FIRE.

The funniest (strangest) thing that ever happened to me was this: This was during slavery. I was a boy back in Virginia, I think about twelve years old. It was a part of my work to go out every night and bring up the cows.

One night I had been out and rounded up the cows and was bringing them in. I had already started the cows up the road and I knew that they knew the way as well as I did, so I left them and cut across a little sked of woods. I had to go down one small hill, cross a little ravine and go up another little hill. At the top of the second hill, on the edge of the woods, there was a fence. It was necessary to climb this fence, thus getting out of the woods into the road. It was at this point of the road that I was to meet the cows again. Then I would drive them on home.

I had just reached the edge of the woods and was about to climb over the fence when I experienced a strange sensation of fear. I seemed to sense that something was about to happen, so I stopped to look around to see what I could see. I could not see anything, but just then I heard something bleat like a calf. This startled me very much, as there was certainly no calf near.

Almost simultaneous with the bleating of the calf a most startling and terrifying thing happened. Without further warning a large ball of fire, or light, seemed to rise

out of the ground right under my feet. It rose in the air and floated off in the distance. No, it was not really hot, but it did seem to give out a warm sensation of heat. I cannot explain what it meant, but, certainly, I heard the bleating noise and saw the blaze of fire.

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THE STORY OF THE TURKEY HEAD.

(Note: The events of this story are said to have happened about 1873, near Fayette, Missouri. Prichitt's Bottom is a lowland caused by the erosion due to a large creek which traverses the "Bottom" from one end to the other. This story was given to me by a very scholarly person who was wholly unable to give it in dialect. His father has related the story to him many times. He took the story down in the first person exactly as related to him except for the dialect.)

I went to town that day to get me a pair of boots. I was to be married soon, so I wanted some new boots to wear on that occasion. There were no horses handy that afternoon, so I walked to town. It had been my intention to leave town before dark, but I stood around talking, and the sun went down almost before I noticed it, so when I started home it was good and dark. By and by I came to Given's Hill, where the road leads down into Prichitt's Bottom. As I neared the Bottom the darkness became more and more intense, because it is always so dark in that Bottom at night that you cannot by any effort whatsoever discern your hand before you. As I entered the Bottom I thought of the many ghost stories that had been told about it; and I recalled the fact that many people had been frightened by supernatural occurrences, but I had often traversed the Bottom at night by myself and had never seen anything unusual.

As I neared the foot of the hill where the road goes directly into the Bottom, I happened to glance up the creek in the direction on my right. I was surprised to notice a light shining up the creek on the side of the hill. I could not think of anyone who lived up there, yet I thought the light must be in Jack Hill's house and was shining through his window. Having satisfied myself on this point, I dismissed the matter from my mind.

Soon, however, I received a real shock. Looking in that direction again, I noticed that the light seemed to be moving, that is, just floating through the air. Moreover, it seemed to be approaching me, as it certainly seemed to be closer to me than when I first saw it. From that moment I could not keep my mind off that light. Nor could I remove my eyes from it. This was because it soon became evident beyond any doubt that the light was coming in my direction. I decided that there would be no use running, so I just walked along there in the black darkness watching the approach of that light. The light had a reddish hue that was decidedly unnatural. In fact I never had up to that time, and I have never since, seen a light that had just the peculiar glow or hue that that light possessed.

When the light had approached to within a few yards of me, and when there was no longer any doubt that it was going to confront me, I could not take my eyes from it, and I stood hypnotized, fascinated, rooted to the spot. Yes, I was scared! Fact is, never before in my life had I been so frightened.

(3) The Story of the Turkey Head.

Presently the light sailed over the fence into the road in such a position as to approach me from the front. When it had gotten in front of me it paused, turned, and drifting up to within a few feet of me, stopped exactly in my pathway. The light, which was a bright red, yet seemed to have a strange and unnatural dimness, seemed to be about twelve feet from the ground, so that I had to look up to see it well. All I could see was something burning more or less like a candle. But attached to the candle part was something that looked exactly like a TURKEY'S HEAD, or bill, and this bill was pointing right down toward me. There was an uncertain, quivering motion.

The light stood there a few moments as if contemplating what to do next. Then it suddenly turned and drifted away just as it had come, and in the same direction. Fascinated and terrified, I watched it until it disappeared up the ravine. In a few minutes I was scared almost to death to see it coming toward me again, which it did, repeating the same thing it had done before. The light appeared to me the third time before I got out of the Bottom, the last time just as I reached the foot of the hill leading from the Bottom.

Now, when I reached home I saw the same light again as I turned in the gate. That time it was hovering over the family graveyard. Three days later two of Aunt Alice Bradley's children lay dead, the second having died before we had

time to bury the first one. They were buried in that graveyard where I last saw the light; and I always will believe that the light was some kind of a warning or a token.

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THE STORY OF THE JACK-O'-LANTERN.

Yes, sir, I have been led by a Jack-o'-Lantern. When I was a boy back in Virginia my father used to send me on errands. One afternoon long towards night he sent me to the home of a neighboring farmer to return some tools. It was nearly night when I started, so before I could get back home it became dark. It was so dark that I could scarcely pick my way through the woods. Finally, however, I was glad to see the light of the house, and I pushed rapidly forward in that direction.

Pretty soon, however, I began to have strange misgivings. In the first place, though I was walking rapidly, that is, as rapidly as I could, I did not seem to be getting any nearer the light. That light always seemed to burn with the same degree of brightness and always kept about the same distance from me. Moreover, I soon discovered that I was in a strange scene; I could not remember ever having seen before any of the surrounding objects. That light led me all around through the woods, over hills, up hollows, and across fields and I never did get any closer to it. Also I was hopelessly lost, and probably never would have found my way back if my father had not become alarmed at my absence, and started out to hunt for me. It was nearly day before they found me, and though I was not really far from home, I never should have been able to find the way by myself. Yes, sir! I was led around by a Jack-o'-Lantern!

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A GHOST STORY.

Once there was a house that was supposed to be haunted. The people offered a reward for anybody that would go there an' stay all night. Nearly all the men had tried but was scared away. One fellow said he was goin' to stay, and he amused hisself by playin' cards. Along about twelve o'clock somethin' came in the room an' struck him on the shoulder an' said:

"Hello, partner, ain't nobody here but me an' you tonight."

The fellow looked up an' said, "No, by George, an' I won't be here long."

He went out the door an' started to runnin' home. He looked down at hisself an' said:

"Great God, ain't this nigger running?"

The ghost patted him on the shoulder an' said, "If you are runnin', what in the devil am I doin'?"

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THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

There was once a haunted house. Some people bet that a young man wouldn't stay in this house. This young man took his supper and said he was going to stay in this house.

While he was frying his supper, something said:

"I am going to fall."

The young man said, "I don't care. Fall, then."

It fell in the fire but didn't burn. It jumped up and ran around the house.

Then, again, something said:

"I am going to fall."

The young man said, "Why in the Devil don't you fall, then?"

Something fell and ran around the house. Then the room became filled with people. The young man wasn't a bit afraid. They brought a coffin in with a dead man in it. Then they tried to put the top on it. They started screwing it the wrong way. The young man told them they were screwing it on the wrong way. When he spoke, the scene disappeared. One of them ran around the house and he followed. It disappeared in the ground. The young man said he was going to dig till he dug it up. He kept digging till he struck something-and it was a pot of gold.

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WHO 'LL DARE?

There was once a man who had an old farmhouse which was haunted. It was said that no man, woman, or child could ever stay in this house one night; and a reward of ten dollars and a hog would be given to any person who would stay there one whole night. Well, one day a tramp came by the old house; and, since he didn't have any place to stay, he decided he would lodge there. After an hour or so the owner of the house arrived and questioned the tramp, and then told him about the reward offered if he would be able to stay there that night.

That night about nine o'clock he got sleepy; but, not wanting to go to bed, he began to smoke his old pipe. He smoked for hours after hours, until, finally, he got tired of smoking. Then he started to playing his guitar, when all at once he heard a rumbling that sounded like the whole house was going to fall, and the many graves under the house opened and all the ghosts rose up from them. The tramp pretended that he didn't hear the ghosts and just kept on playing. Then all at once the whole regiment of ghosts began to cry:

"Who'll dare, who'll dare, who'll dare?"

The tramp tried not to be afraid and shouted back at the ghosts:

"Who'll dare, who'll dare, who'll dare?"

Then he could hear them approaching the steps and shouting in long and terrifying tones:

"Who'll dare, who'll dare, who'll dare?"

The man again mocked boldly, but less boldly than before:

"Who'll dare, who'll dare, who'll dare?"

Then the ghosts came up the steps and into the room and stood right over the man and yelled:

"Who'll dare, who'll dare, who'll dare?"

The man, weak with fear, but still desiring to seem bold, almost whispered in a quivering voice:

"Who'll dare, who'll dare, who'll dare?"

Then the ghosts sprang at him and he fainted;

"And they stepped on a piece of tin and it bent,

And that's the way that tale went."

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WE CAN DO NOTHING UNTIL MARTIN GETS HERE.

A colored preacher traveling through the country stopped at a brother Deacon's home and asked for a night's lodging. He was informed that owing to crowded conditions it would be impossible to afford him accommodation.

"But," said the Deacon, "there is a deserted cabin over the hill that you can occupy if you do desire. I will furnish you a candle and enough fire wood to keep you warm."

As this was the best that could be done, the Preacher accepted. He was taken by the Deacon to the cabin and a fire made. He then bade the Preacher good night.

The Preacher took off his shoes and made himself comfortable for the night. He dozed off, but in a few minutes he was awakened by a noise up the chimney. Soon there dropped down a small dog, into the fire, crawled out and rubbed his face, took a look at the Preacher, then took his place beside the fireplace. The Preacher had no more than closed his eyes when he heard another noise in the chimney. This time a larger dog dropped down into the fire, took some live coals and rubbed his face and took his place beside the first little dog, with the remark:

"What will we do now?"

The little dog answered, "We can do nothing until MARTIN gets here."

The Preacher dozed off again, when he was awakened by a noise up the chimney. Soon a still larger dog dropped down

in the fire, took up some hot ashes, washed his face and took his place beside the other dogs with the remark:

"What will we do now?" which was answered:

"We can do nothing until MARTIN gets here."

This seemed to get on the Preacher's nerves, but he was determined to stick it out, and dozed off again; when he was disturbed by another noise up the chimney. Soon a large Newfoundland dog dropped down the chimney, took his place by the side of the other dogs, after washing his face with red hot coals, and made the remark:

"What will we do now?"

They all answered, "We can do nothing until MARTIN gets here."

With this, the old Preacher caped on his shoes, grabbed his grip and hat and said, "When MARTIN gets here, you tell him I was here, but am now gone."

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HOST STORY.

This story was told by an old darkey of Hartsville, Tenn.

One night when the white folks were having a party in the big house, this ghost appeared.

Aunt Mandy had a devilish grandson about fourteen years old, trifling, no account, lazy as the day was long. His name was Lee.

Now, Lee loved good things to eat, and he knew exactly what Aunt Mandy had fixed for the white folks. After Aunt Mandy had left the big house and gone to the cabin until time to serve, Lee crept up the walk in the shadow of the holly trees until he reached the kitchen door. The moon was full and he could see the rows of pies and cakes and goodies on a high shelf. Not a soul did he see; the servants were all on the side porch listening to the Negro band and seeing the white folks dance.

Lee was a bit skittish, because folks said "Ole Miss" prowled around at night. "Ole Miss" had been dead about six years; Lee remembered her well. At night she walked around with her keys on a heavy chain locking up her valuables, and woe be to the darkey found in the kitchen or pantry. Just as Lee got in the kitchen, a cloud darkened the moon and gave Lee a chill, but he got on top of the chest, and had gotten a cake, when he heard "Ole Miss" and her keys.

"You, Lee, you trifling, good-fer-nothing niggah; what you doing?"

He could not see her, but knew her voice and heard the keys as she advanced. He tried to crouch up closer in the corner, but, in his fright and scare, he fell off, knocked dishes and caused much noise. The guests and everyone ran to the kitchen, but Lee had flown. Down, down the walk he ran until he reached Aunt Mandy's door.

There he felt the sweat pop out, and he ran his hands through 'is hair; it was on end and remained so until he died. All the folks are dead now, but to this day, folks say that they hear and see "Ole Miss at night seeing if all is safe."

All the darkies that have hair standing straight up, say they were scared by "Ole Miss at the big house."

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CHARACTER STORIES AND ANECDOTES

JOHN DEVIL JOHN

In 1870 I moved to Bailey's Landing, Louisiana, thirty-two miles above Vicksburg, on the Mississippi river. I had not been there three days before people told me all about John Devil or Devil John, as they called him, but whose right name was John Wilson. They said he was a devil. In them days, I claimed to be a purty tough customer myself. The blood and powder of the Civil War was still in my eyes and nose, and I would fight a circle saw at the dropping of a hat; so when they began to talk about John Devil's badness, I made up my mind to look him up, for I felt that Carroll Parish was not big enough for two bad men to live in at the same time, and it was my intention to stay there.

One morning, with a few drinks of liquor in my stomach and a pint bottle in my pocket, I started out to find him. I soon found him and he was about the biggest disappointment I ever saw, so far as to what I thought a bad man should look like. He was not in my class of bad men and I soon found that his badness would not conflict with mine at all. He was a small, brown-skin, smooth-faced feller, with hands and voice as soft as a woman's, and dressed up in tailor-made clothes like a prince. He didn't drink, nor smoke, nor chew, but he was the cussingess man I ever met. He didn't cuss like most folk to show his temper, or emphasize his words, but just let his words ooze out in a low tone as if he had nothing to do with them.

We ha'n't talked long until he asked me if I wanted to make a couple of hundred dollars that night. I asked him how. He said:

"Never mind how. Do you want to make it?"

I agreed that I did, so he said that two men would be up from Vicksburg that night to gamble with a friend of his, and that they would bring five hundred dollars. He wanted me to be the friend and play his hand, as they would not gamble with him, and that he would give me two hundred dollars of the money. I told him I knowed no more about cards than a hog knowed about Sunday and did not have that kind of money noway. He said that made no difference; he would furnish the money and see that the cards run right.

Well, they come and we played at my house. John took a seat close to my chair and kept one foot or one hand on it all the time, but did not seem to pay any attention to the game and never said anything the whole time we was playing. I don't know what caused it, but somehow, I always had the right cards and played them the right way, so by one o'clock I had both of them cleaned of the whole five hundred dollars. John told me to give them twenty-five dollars apiece back and they left. He then handed me two hundred and kept the rest hisself. I asked him how he did it, but he only smiled and said good night.

I was on my way to the store a few days later to get some groceries for dinner, I met John and he began telling me of

another deal he had on. I asked him to walk to the store with me and back home for dinner. It was nearly a mile to the store. When we got there the store was crowded. Both of us walked in, but I soon lost sight of John. After I got my groceries I looked for him, but couldn't find him anywhere. I walked out the door and waited for some time but he didn't come, so I started home alone. After going about a quarter of a mile I found him sitting on a rock by the road, waiting for me. He said he walked behind the counter, opened the safe and took out a package of money, he did not know how much, then walked out right by me while I was waiting at the door for him. I did not see him; neither did anyone.

We went on to my house and to wait for dinner and before John found a chance to count the money, three men on horses rode up and surrounded the house. The one in front called for me. I went out and he wanted to know if John was there. I told him he was. He called him to come out, but John did not come, so the officer went in to get him. There was no way to get out of the house without being seen, but John could not be found anywhere in the house, though they looked in everything and every place where a man could possibly hide. So they got on their horses and left. I then went in the house, and the first thing I noticed was a large looking-glass that hung on the wall had been turned around, and just then a voice said:

"Are they gone?"

I looked toward a corner of the room over the bed just in time to see John step down from the top of one of the high bed posts. I asked him who turned the glass around and why. He said that he did, because if one looked in a glass he could see him. The officer told me that somebody had robbed the safe at the store of about two hundred dollars in the last two hours, and John was thought to be the guilty man. John offered me half of the money, but I refused to take it.

John did not often keep them from arresting him in that way. It was only when he had some private business that he did not want interrupted that he used his strange powers. Usually, he let them arrest him, put him in jail, and I have even seen them chain him to the floor, flat of his back, but he was always out and gone by morning. Officers got ashamed of being laughed at, so seldom tried to get him. But down at Vicksburg a new prison had been built and the officers were anxious to test it with John. A few days later, John placed himself in the hands of the law and demanded a trial. He was bound over to court and ordered taken to Vicksburg for safekeeping. Being known as one of the best boatmen on the river, I was deputized to go with two officers to row the boat that was to take John down the river.

John was handcuffed, a ball and chain was put on his legs and a long chain was tied around his waist and each of-

ficer held an end. He was put in the middle of the boat with an officer behind and in front of him, and I was in the rear end with the oars. My orders were to go to the middle of the river, which was nearly a mile wide, and stay in midstream all the way down. I did this until I reached the big bend just above Vicksburg, where the channel runs near the right bank, and we were swept within about a hundred yards of the bank. John had been keeping everybody laughing at his funny stories and jokes all the way, but while I was working to get the boat out of the channel and away from the bank, and everyone was busy watching me, John was forgotten. A few minutes later I got the boat where I wanted it; then somebody said, "Where is John?" Everybody looked, but all they saw was the handcuffs, ball and chain and the long chain which the officers still held in their hands, but John was gone. When or how he got away, nobody knowed. We made landing and the officers, sick as well as scared, went up-town and reported their loss. They thought they might be accused of drowning John, but was only laughed at. Arrangements were made for going back home that evening on a passenger boat. I got home about eleven o'clock. I had to pass John's house to reach mine, so thought I would see if he had returned. I knocked on the door and a minute later John opened it, and, when he saw me, began to laugh. He said he got home about eight o'clock.

John had often told me that, if I would follow his instructions, he would make me just as good as he was. After

that piece of work I made up my mind to let him teach me, providing I did not have to kill anybody. It looked to me that if he had sold himself to the devil, as the people said, his owner took better care of him than God was taking of many that claimed to be his children.

A few days after the river escape, he told me what I would have to do. First, I must get a full-grown black Tom cat, tie him in a sack and plunge him into a pot of boiling water in my own home and boil him until the flesh left the bones; then take the skeleton to John and he would take a certain bone out and fix it for me. That bone would make me invisible to the natural eye. Second, I was to wait until some one died in the neighborhood, then on the third day after burial I must dig up the body, cut off the little finger from the left hand, the left knee cap and get the flesh from around the left seventh rib.

Well, I got the cat and fixed him up just as John said. Some weeks later, a young boy died and was buried about two miles from my home. On the third night John came after me, bringing a shovel with him. It was a very bright night, with not a cloud in the sky. I took a big drink before starting and put a bottle in my pocket to guard against losing my nerve. When we got to the grave yard, John took a seat on a grave nearby and told me to dig up the coffin. Taking another big drink, I started to work and soon had all the dirt out.

Purty soon my shovel struck the lid of the coffin, and just then things began to happen. I heard something like a strong windstorm coming and could hear it blowing through the trees, although I had not noticed a tree bigger than my arm anywhere.

"What is that, John?" I asked.

"Nothing, keep working," he said with a string of oaths.

I took another drink and started again. I unscrewod the lid, picked up the left hand and cut off the little finger. A loud clap of thunder almost made me jump out of the grave. The wind seemed to be so strong that I could hear trees breaking off and dashing about. I called John to find out what was the matter, but he only cussed me and told me to go on with my work. Another drink which tasted like water; then I raised the left knee and soon had off the knee cap. By this time it seemed that all the stars in the sky was shooting directly at me. I could see flashos of forked lightning and as I looked up to see where John was, I saw something as big as a mountain tumbling right toward me.

"John, I can't stand this," I yelled, and that was all I remembered; for when I came to my senses, I was lying on the floor at home, with my wife and a neighbor woman and John putting cold wet rags on my head and holding my feet in hot water.

It was nearly two hours after I left the grave yard. In my hurry, I had run through the picket fence around the yard

and knocked it flat; also busted the door in. John stayed and put the lid back on the coffin and filled up the grave, before coming to find me. He said, if I had kept my nerve ten minutes longer, I would have been all right, but I didn't think I was worth as much as the devil thought I was.

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THE CONJUR WOMAN.

Everybody in the parish hated and feared old Aunt Becky. They said she was a conjurer, a witch, and some even called her a hell-cat. To look at her was enough to cause one to believe everything that was told about her. She was less than five feet tall; jet black; very skinny, with arms and hands that seemed too long for her body. She had a big hump on her back and walked half bent. She usually walked with a stick which was generally a broom-stick, with a part of the broom left to it to keep it from slipping. Her eyes were small and bat-like; the part that should have been black was a glassy green, and what should have been white was red. When she opened her mouth, which was almost hidden between her nose and chin, the snags of four dog-teeth could be seen, two above and two below, the last of her third set. Nobody knew how old she was, nor did she know, but she remembered being brought from the Guinea coast of Africa on a slave ship while the African Slave Trade was being carried on, so must have been somewhere in the eighties at the time I knew her--1874.

One time, while picking cotton, she left several bolls of cotton on her row that she failed to see. Her master saw them and struck her with a black-snake whip that he had in his hand. Turning toward him with eyes flashing fire, she exclaimed:

"Devil take you, Mas' Jim. I picks no mo' cotton and you hits me no mot. De Devil is callin' yo' name and you is gwine to answer him in three days."

Throwing off her cotton sack, she left the field and went to her cabin. No one said a word or tried to stop her. Some of the pickers she passed said they saw sparks of fire flash from her eyes and could smell fumes of sulphur. A few hours later her master took sick at the stomach and was driven home in his buggy. About twelve o'clock that night he jumped out of bed and began running from room to room, yelling, "scat, scat, hiss-cat", and throwing books and other things at what he declared to be a big black cat that woke him up by calling his name and trying to get in bed with him. He soon had everybody on the place aroused, but nobody could see the cat which he tried to show them. He was finally put to bed and a doctor called. The doctor found him to be in a very nervous condition and gave him medicine which put him to sleep.

It was noticed that all the slaves on the place were there to see what they could do for their master except Becky. Her absence caused some comment which led to a slave telling what took place in the field. Two sons and the overseer of the plantation went to Becky's cabin to see what she meant by talking to her master the way she did. Her door was slightly open, so they pushed it open and stepped in. Instantly, all three staggered back and fell like drunk men in the yard,

choking and coughing for breath. A cloud of smoke and fumes of sulphur followed them out. When they recovered enough to investigate, they found Becky lying on a pallet on the floor, with a little clay pot full of fire and some kind of sulphur mixture smouldering and filling the room with smoke that floated about two feet above the floor. When asked why she had the room full of smoke she replied:

"To keep de skeeters, nippers and other things fum pestering me."

When she was asked to explain why she had not come to see if she could be of any help to her master, she said:

"Mas' Jim got too much comp'ny now."

Everything went all right for the rest of the night and during the next day. The master slept most of the time; but about twelve o'clock the second night, he again leaped out of bed and began chasing the same black cat and acting in the same way that he did the night before. He was again put to bed, given medicine to quiet him and carefully guarded the rest of the night and next day. Nothing out of the ordinary happened until the following night shortly after twelve, when he suddenly awoke, saying that he heard somebody calling him outside. In order to satisfy him, he was allowed to go to the door and answer. As soon as he opened the door, he dashed out, yelling:

"All right, I am coming," and away he went at full speed to the river, which was about three hundred yards from the

house, and jumped in before anyone could catch him. His body was not found until ten the next morning.

The death of the master left the plantation in possession of an old-maid sister and his two sons and two daughters--his wife having been dead for some years. The children looked upon their aunt as the head person on the place and obeyed her orders in every way. This aunt and the oldest boy felt that Becky deserved a good flogging for the way she had talked and acted, so ordered the overseer to give her a black-snake dressing. The overseer made her strip herself to the waist and, while the aunt and oldest boy looked on, gave her about twenty lashes on the naked back with his whip. Becky took the flogging without a whimper, though great welts as large as one's finger covered her back. But during the next ten days the entire parish was talking about the strange things that were happening at the Riley plantation. The old-maid sister had jumped in the river and drowned herself; the oldest son of the master had suddenly disappeared and no trace of him could be found; the overseer had suffered a stroke of paralysis which had left him speechless and his right arm useless; every hen on the place was crowing just like they were roosters, and some of the best cows were giving bloody milk. In the midst of these awful happenings, the younger son and his sisters had locked themselves in the house and were almost scared to death.

Old Parson Jake, who had preached to the slaves of the plantation for nearly forty years, and who was a great favor-

ite of the children, hobbled up to the big house on Sunday morning, with his Bible under his arm, and knocked on the door. He was let in and at once began talking to them. Said he:

"Some pow'ful cu'i's things is happening roun' heah and I has come to tell you chillun what to do to keep mo' cu'i'ser things fum happenin'. Ev'ybody knows dat dese things is de work of de Debbil, 'cept you white folks, and ev'ybody, 'cept you, knows dat de Debbil owns Becky, body and soul, and helps her to fight her battles. Now, you can't beat de Debbil or none of his imps, when you fights him wid his own weepins, any mo' den you kin put out fiah by fightin' it wid mo' fiah. Dat's what you alls been doin' wid Becky and de Debbil, and jes' look what's done happen. Dis Bible say you can't ovahcome evil wid evil, but mus' ovahcome evil wid good. It say if you do good to yo' enemy, it am jes' like putting hot coals of fiah on his head. Now, if you do what I say, you kin ovahcome Becky and stop all dese cu'i's things dat's gwine on heah. All you has to do is to send for her to come up heah in yo' parlor, and when she comes, tell her you is glad to have her come, kase you wants to give her some presents. Den give her some of yo' fine silk dresses, one of yo' best hats, some gold jewelry, some silk stockings and a fine pair of shoes. Tell her dey is all hers to keep and wear and dat you will give her mo' if she wants it. Do dis, and you won't have no mo' trouble wid Becky."

Parson Jake's advice was followed carefully and in a few days the hens stopped crowing; the cows gave no more bloody milk; the overseer's tongue got so he could use it, but his arm remained useless, and although no trace of the missing son was found, everything about the plantation got back to normal.

People said that Parson Jake was the cause of Becky's back being humped and bent. They said that when she was a young woman, she fell in love with Jake and boasted that she was going to marry him. Jake did not care anything for her, but found more pleasure in learning to read his Bible, than in courting her. Being slighted in this way made Becky mad, so she swore that if he would not make her happy, she would find happiness in making him miserable.

One Saturday night, Jake was seated at a table in his cabin, slowly spelling his way through a chapter of the Bible, that he wanted to preach about Sunday night. The room was dimly lighted by a small candle. His attention was attracted from his reading by a big yellow cat entering the open door and sitting down near him, where it began to lick its paws and rub them on its face. Jake liked cats, if they were not black ones, and believed they brought good luck; so he spoke to it kindly.

"Bless de Lawd, kitty, whah did you come fun?"

He knew all the cats on the plantation, but had never seen this one before. The cat mewed softly and walking to him, began rubbing himself against Jake's legs. Soon it climbed

upon his lap and started to purring. Jake stroked its back gently for some time, then pushed it to the floor and started to spelling out his lesson.

The cat was not ready to get down, so immediately jumped back on his lap, sticking its claws into his thighs slightly as it did so. Jake again pushed it to the floor, saying:

"Now, stay dah, or I'll put you out de do'."

The cat looked at him a moment, switching its tail, then leaped right on the open Bible and started to spitting, growling and striking at him with its claws.

"You imp of hell, I'll kill you," he exclaimed, grabbing it by the back of the neck. Rushing with it to the door, he slung it as far as he could out in the yard, then shut the door and returned to his Bible.

Sunday morning the whole quarters were in an upcar of excitement. Something was the matter with Becky, and she would not let any of the slaves do anything for her, nor tell them what was the matter. Some one went for the doctor and when he came and examined her, he said her back had been dislocated in some way and could not be put back in place without running the risk of killing her in the effort. When she was asked how she got it hurt, she replied:

"Jake hurt my back when I was a cat."

She got well, but was always bent over and had a hump on her back afterwards.

SISTER PHYLLIS AND THE PANTHER.

Fifty years ago in Labuke, Arkansas, (White County), on White River, Sister Phyllis was sent to one of our neighbor's houses several miles away to carry half a hog. It was customary in those days to exchange meat at hog-killing times. It was in the late fall. She was strapped on a fast saddle-horse and the meat was tied to her saddle, behind. She wore a sunbonnet and a red shawl.

When she came within two miles of the house, she heard a panther scream. She looked back and saw that it was gaining on her fast. She lashed the mare and gave her all the reins. The panther continued to gain on her. So she pulled off her shawl and threw it down. The panther was so vicious that he stopped to tear it to strings and Phyllis got a good distance ahead. When the panther finished the shawl, he started for her again. So she threw off her bonnet. By this time the mare had crossed the creek and Phyllis gave a yell for help. Dogs, men and guns came to meet her. When the horse jumped the fence and made for the stile, the panther jumped right behind her and grabbed for the meat and was shot. It took the third shot to kill him. He measured five feet and six inches from nose to tip of tail.

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HUDSTON AND THE PANTHER.

Years ago in Yellville, Arkansas, old man Hudston took his ten-year old son to the river bottoms to prepare bark to smoke meat. The boy was about one hundred yards from him when a panther jumped on the old man from behind a log. He had his butcher knife and when the panther jumped, he held his knife so that it stabbed him. Every time the panther jumped he got weaker and the old man never moved toward him. The fifth jump, the panther fell at his feet just about ready to draw his last breath.

The old man yelled for the boy to come at once and help gather up the bark so they could start for home before another panther smelled the dead one. They got home all right and sent back for the panther. The old man was in bed six weeks from his fight. It was too much for his nerves.

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CHICKEN THIEVES.

There was once an old man. He was a cripple. He lived near a graveyard. His son was coming to visit him one night. When he got near the graveyard, he stopped because he heard someone in the graveyard counting:

"Here is one for you, one for me; one for you, one for me."

It was chicken thieves in the graveyard counting their chickens. The young man ran to his father's house and told him God and the devil were counting out the souls. His father wanted to hear for himself. His son took him up to the graveyard. At the gate the thieves lifted two dead chickens. The father and son didn't see them. They sat down at the gate and listened.

"Here is one for you and one for me; one for you and one for me."

Soon they finished. Then one of the thieves said, "What about the two at the gate?"

The old man thought sure the Devil was coming after him. He jumped up and forgot he was crippled and outran his son.

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DINAH'S PROOF.

The houses of the Negro slaves in Virginia on the plantation of John Carter were rude. They were set apart from the master's big house or mansion. They were constructed with sides of small logs, split logs for a roof and earthern floors. The slaves were well-fed, but their social activities were somewhat retarded because they were not supposed to have banquets or picnics as this would require a large amount of the master's provisions. This did not keep them from having an occasional feast, however. They would steal or slip from the master's larder the necessities for their celebrations.

Aunt Dinah, the old Negro cook was trusted and respected by all, because of her honesty. Dinah rarely, if ever, took part in the activities among the slaves. The master, John Carter, called by all the slaves, "Marse John," believed in and trusted Dinah, as she could always give proof for her statements.

Marse John took a trip to the then small city of Philadelphia. Having the greatest confidence in Dinah, he said:

"Dinah, I trust you, and I am going to leave the keys to my various store-rooms with you. See that every one obeys the rule as far as the food is concerned."

Dinah replied, "Marse John, you knows Dinah am been with you white folks long 'nough for you all to know that Dinah can be 'pended on. I gives proof, Marse John, I gives proof."

A group of the Negroes formed a conspiracy and stole the keys from Dinah's hiding place. They went into the smoke-house and took one of the largest hogs. Dinah missed her keys, but after a few hours' search, she found them returned to her secret hiding-place. The hog was cooked and all of the Negroes gathered to make merry. Dinah became suspicious and joined the group of merry-makers. The first object to attract her attention was a fat roasted hog in the center of the group. Every plantation branded its stock on the ear, and each had their own brand or mark. Dinah did not wish to report a story to Marse John, which she could not prove, because she knew he depended on her proof. She joined the group of merry-makers and told them that her favorite piece was the ear. She was invited to help herself and with great care to keep from attracting the attention of the others, she took a small portion of the ear at a time until she had a complete ear.

When Marse John returned, he missed his hog and asked Dinah about it. She told him of the feast. He called all of the Negroes together and told them that Dinah had told of their actions in his absence. The Negroes became frightened, but Tom Clay, a burly Negro, came boldly to the front and said:

"Marse John, you knows Dinah can always prove what she says, if she tells de whole truth."

He felt that eaten hog could not talk and that they were therefore safe.

Marse John said, "Dinah, can you prove that they ate my hog?"

Dinah smiled triumphantly and produced the bits of ear and put them together. The Negroes shook with fear when the ear of the dead hog was produced with Marse John's brand on it,

BOOK STORIES

MR. FOX AND MR. CRANE.

Once upon a time Mr. Fox and Mr. Crane were friends. But one day Mr. Fox made Mr. Crane very angry, so Mr. Crane made up a plan to get even with Mr. Fox. His plan was to invite Mr. Fox to dinner because he knew that Mr. Fox could not eat out of a long-neck bottle, and that was the way he thought he could get even. He invited Mr. Fox to dinner, but Mr. Fox could not understand why Mr. Crane did not fix him a plate. But Mr. Crane told him he did it to get even with him.

"All right," said Mr. Fox, "but you do not know how to prepare dinner for your guest. You just come over to my house and I will show you, tomorrow."

On the appointed day, Mr. Rabbit showed him how to place the plates and where everything belonged. Of course, Mr. Crane could not eat out of a plate because his bill was too long and he had to go home hungry.

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THE RABBIT AND THE DEVIL.

The Rabbit and the Devil agreed to raise a crop of corn in chaos\* together.

" You take all that grows under the ground and I take all that grows above the ground," said the Rabbit.

The Devil agreed. The Rabbit fell in love with the Devil's daughter. At the end of the harvest of corn, the Rabbit took all that was above the ground and the Devil took all that was below the ground.

The Devil didn't feel as if he was getting a good deal. He decided to pay the Rabbit a visit. The Rabbit made another proposal:

"We'll raise potatoes and you take all above the ground and I'll take all under the ground."

The Devil agreed to that. At the end of the year the Devil still was the loser. The Devil decided to run the Rabbit from chaos to the upper world. The Devil's daughter possessed a mystic power that warned the Rabbit while the Devil was asleep to make the flight.

They got two shabby horses. She told the Rabbit to get her some sand, a small-size rock, a blade of grass, a drop of water. Then they began their journey. The next morning the Devil found his daughter gone, the Rabbit gone and his two horses gone. He decided to overtake them. Then she foretold:

"Father has awoke and found his horses gone and is about to overtake us. Now, drop that sand!"

It made a large desert and the Devil had to go around this desert. He did so and he was about to catch them again when she told the Rabbit to throw down the rock, and a mountain sprang up. By this time, the Devil's horses were hungry and she said:

"Throw down the grass."

When the Devil's horses got to the grass, they began to eat and he could hardly drive them on. After they had eaten they became thirsty. The Devil's daughter coaxed the Rabbit to drop the water and an ocean was formed. By the time the Devil got to the ocean they were at the top of the world. She sent the Rabbit to the well to get some water and he never returned; so she went back to chaos.

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\*Chaos is a word not commonly found in the Negro vocabulary. An Indian told me that it was a concept common among the Indians. It is essential to this story and I cannot account for an aged Negro's using it.

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A DREADFUL HOUR.

Once upon a time, there lived in the woods of Hollewood Swamp, a mother sheep and her five little ones.

Mother sheep had to work very hard to make a living for her and her little family; to keep from begging from her neighbors. Her five little babies were girls, and their names were, Molly, Polly, Folly, Sally, and Mary.

Every day when she would go away and return, she had a certain way of speaking and a certain way of knocking; that there would be no way of misunderstanding of just who to let in the house, for fear some of her enemies might come in on them and eat them plumb up.

So one day as she took her little basket, put her little bonnet on, called them all in and kissed them good-bye, she told them to be very careful of whom they let in; for she felt in her bones that she was coming back home and find her whole little family gone. And they all said:

"We will, Mother."

"All right," she said, "I'll take your word for it." So she went.

Out in the woods lived Brother "John Wolf", whose mouth had been running for some of little Molly, Polly, Folly, Sally, and Mary. So on this particular morning his food line was low, so he decided to go and try his luck with Mrs. Sheep's family. He got up and ran and ran and ran until he came to

the edge of the woods. There he laid and waited and watched for Mother Sheep to leave so he could have his feast. By and by Mother Sheep did go.

"Ah!" he said, "how good, how good!"

And when she had gotten out of sight he ran to the gate, eased it open, tipped upon the porch and knocked on the door. Molly said in a shrieking high voice:

"Who is it?"

"It's Mother, darling," he said in a low voice.

Polly said, "Stick your head around the corner. Let us see your head." And he did so.

Then Polly said, "Oh! No, no! No-o-o! Our mother had on a white bonnet and her feet are white."

"All right," he said, "I'll go get my bonnet." So he went and got him a white rag and fixed it like a bonnet and put some flour on his feet. Then he went back and knocked.

Then Sally asked, "Who is it?"

He answered, "Oh! It's Mother, children."

She said, "Come to the edge of the porch." So he did, and Mary peeped out and said:

"Oh! No-no! No-no, your face is too black."

Then he said, "All right," and he went back and powdered his face. Then he came back and tried again, but they said:

"No-no-no-o-o-o, please go away."

He said, "No, you shall open this door; or I'll break in."

"Break in, we don't care." But the door was so well fixed that he couldn't do that.

So he said, "Now, children, open the door."

But they said, "No, your voice is too heavy and my mother is white and not black." So he goes back and jumps into a barrel of flour, then eats some charcoal to make his voice light. Then he went back and knocked on the door and said the same thing.

Mary, the youngest one, looked out the window, and said:

"Oh, yes, there she is," and ran and opened the door. In opening the door, that threw her behind the door. He grabbed Polly first; Molly ran under the bed, but he got her. Polly ran under the table; he got her. Sally ran under the dresser; he got her. Mary ran up in the clock and he hunted and hunted for her, but couldn't find her nowhere. So he left.

Finally, Mother Sheep did come. Mary came down out of the clock and told her story. Mother Sheep frowned and murmured:

"Oh-o-o-o! Brother 'John Wolf', Why, he hasn't got any teeth! Get my scissors, needle, thimble and thread, and we'll go and see if we can find him. So they did.

Brother Wolf was lying down on the creek bank asleep. She slipped down to him, ripped him open; all her babies were alive, and when they saw their mother, they jumped around her, crying with joy.

"Mother, Mother-----"

But mother said, "Sh-h-h."

Then she told each one to go and get a brick apiece, and they did; and she so fixed them that they would move

forward whenever he leaned forward. Then they all ran and got behind a tree to watch him when he awoke.

So he awoke and stretched and stretched and said, "What a fine dinner. Ah-h-h, I believe I'll take a drink," and when he went to take a drink he leaned forward. The bricks moved forward in him and pushed him head over heels and he drowned. And Mother Sheep and her little ones lived happily ever afterwards.

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BROTHER BEAR'S WOOD-CHOPPING.

Once Brother Bear invited all the animals of the forest to come and help him chop wood. All the animals came and brought their lunches and put them in the bushes to keep them cool until noon. Br'er Rabbit thought about the lunch in the bushes and began hollering:

"Br'er Rabbit! Oh, Br'er Rabbit!"

Then he said, "Brother Bear, my wife's calling me. I got to go."

Brother Bear told Br'er Rabbit he could go. And he started through the bushes until he came to the lunches. He sat down and ate half of the lunches. He went back to work and Brother Bear asked what his wife wanted.

He said, "She wanted me to name the baby."

"Well," said Brother Bear, "what did you name it?"

"I named it Half Gone."

In fact, he was thinking about he had eaten half of the lunch. He started back to work.

After he had worked a little while he hollered again:

"Br'er Rabbit! Oh, Br'er Rabbit!"

"My wife's calling me; I got to go."

Brother Bear told him to hurry back. He went back to the bushes and ate all of the lunch that was left and came back to chop wood. They all worked very hard till noon time. Then they went to the bushes for their lunches. They found the milk pails empty, butter all gone, and the candy papers empty.

Then they all began to wonder who ate the lunches. Finally, they planned to dig a large pit and build a big bonfire and have all the animals jump over. The lion jumped over, then the bear, the fox, the wolf, and then the tiger and the leopard. Then Br'er Rabbit with his long legs jumped way over the fire; next the poor little fat 'possum leaped right in the middle of the fire and was burned to death. All the animals believed that Brother Possum had eaten their lunches.

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A FISHING TRIP.

On a warm summer day Br'er Rabbit met Brother Bear. They greeted one another and started a long conversation. Finally, Br'er Rabbit said:

"Brother Bear, do you want to go fishing? You know winter's coming afterwhile."

Brother Bear said, "Go fishing on a hot day like this and set on the banks and scorch? No, not I."

Br'er Rabbit went on thinking how dumb Brother Bear was and how the winter would teach him a lesson. Br'er Rabbit got his pole and line and started fishing. He built a little house of boughs and straw on the bank of the river. He had wonderful luck and before dark he had a basket full. He went skipping home and cooked some for supper. The next day Brother Bear came by and saw some of Br'er Rabbit's fish drying and said:

"How silly he is to set up there and scorch after a few fish."

After a while, winter slipped upon Brother Bear. On the first cold day he came over to Br'er Rabbit's house and asked if he would teach him how to fish. Br'er Rabbit said:

"I fished last summer. I'll tell you how. You go down to the river, walk out about seven feet from the banks and sit down, and when it grows dark, get up and pull the fish from your tail."

Brother Bear did as he was told. He went to the river, walked out on the ice until he found an open space just large enough to sit over. He sat down and stayed until it was real dark and, since it was very cold anyway, he said:

"I know I have a plenty."

He tried to get up, but his tail had frozen in the ice. He pulled and pulled, but couldn't get up. After a while he got angry and said:

"I wish some of these fish would fall back in the water. I don't need all of these anyway."

So he pulled real hard and his tail broke, leaving him until this day with a short tail.

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ANALYSIS OF THE AMERICAN FOLK-TALES

As man progresses from one stage of culture to another, he holds on to his folk beliefs.<sup>1</sup> Whatever changes are made in the stories handed down they are only modifications of the original form. Even where changes are made by wholesale immigration or subjugation, memories of the older life are preserved and related to the rising generation to be related to future generations.

The African made a great change in coming to the United States. The tales that were told in his old home where jungles and forests were common had a much more striking background than the cotton plantation of the South. Hence, in the retelling of his stories, much was lost. The close contact of the Negro with his white master caused the Negro to take in much of the folk-tale of the white man. We might truthfully say that the American Negro folk-tale is a medley. Sometimes a part of a story that belonged to one African tribe is grafted without much regard to consistency upon a part belonging to another people, while they were still further complicated by the infusion of ideas derived from communication with the white race.

The predominant traits of Negro character compared with the traits of African folk-lore will show the fitness of each to the other.<sup>2</sup> On every side can be found evidence of chatting and visiting or of pleasure requiring little exertion of

1. Gomme, Handbook of Folk-lore, page 5;  
2. Lippincot's (1887) Vol. 20.

body or mind. There is also evidence of a pliable and easy temper, of a quick and sincere sympathy, and a remarkable dexterity of the Negro on satisfying himself that it is right to do as he wishes.

The American-Negro folk-tales are here grouped into animal stories, ghost stories, character stories, and anecdotes, and book stories. Some of the stories have their book variants, but the versions here given seem characteristically Negro. The language of the narrator gives a real hint of the dramatic imagination of the Negro and embodies the quaint and homely humor which is one of his prominent characteristics. The language also expresses a picturesque sensitiveness and a peculiar exaltation of mind and temperament hard to define by words.

In the analysis of the tales their certain definite literary characteristics become very evident. The stories show unusual power of dramatic presentation, much descriptive art, imagery, psychological background, definite localization, dialect and humor. In the background there is evidence of understanding of psychology. There are a number of basic incidents which govern many of the stories. These incidents form the background for basic plots that are used in various ways. There seem to be not so many plots, but they appear in various guises.

The Negro shows unusual power of dramatic presentation in these tales. He portrays the more ordinary pictures with telling contrasts. One reads the story and sees what he reads.

The story, "How Mr. Fox Lost His Gal," is artistically dramatic. It shows a contest of love and strategem. It progresses in an orderly fashion from beginning to conclusion. Definite pictures are painted and it is full of striking episodes that suggest what the culmination will be. The pictures in this and other stories stand out in bold relief. The Negro paints them on appropriate backgrounds. The total expression, whether serious or ludicrous, is formed with an unchangeable definiteness.

His imagery is assisted by the use of suitable adjectives and phrases. A word which would mean little or nothing if used alone, becomes a concrete picture when connected with an adjective or phrase, and it is just this happy combination which makes the Negro tale so fascinating. Childlike thought employs adjectives that give the most direct and vivid description. In the American-Negro folk-tale the adjective does the work. Such phrases as the following form typical word pictures: brown-skin man, a bad man, old corn whiskey, the cussines' man. With this deft use of phrase the persons in these tales are visualized with accurateness and vividness. In his portrayals the Negro seems to have no heroes to praise; so he pours forth all his power of words on notorious characters. There is not one opportunity lost to make John Devil John what his name suggests. Then the Negro softens and shows Dinah sweet and honest and portrays her so vividly that one can almost see her untying her handkerchief which held the pig's ear.

In many of the stories there is little need for scientific investigation as to why the Negro selects as his hero the weakest and most harmless of all animals. It is not virtue that triumphs but helplessness; it is not malice but mischievousness. It is very evident that in many tales Br'er Rabbit represents the ideal hero of the Negroes' primitive dream world--an individual who through craft and downright trickery gets the better of a master class seemingly unbeatable.<sup>1</sup> The ideals of the rabbit are the Negroes' ideals. Br'er Rabbit likes the same kind of food as his interpreter does. He has the same outlook on life, and his possessing a responsibility for his family is a part of the Negroes' spirit. Br'er Rabbit is neighborly, has a prying disposition and is addicted to petty thievery. These are common qualities of the old Southern Negro. Some of the stories are mere laudations of Br'er Rabbit's shrewd human traits. Br'er Rabbit speaks of being weak, unable to walk, and desirous of riding. These little traits show the Negroes' primitive outlook on life.

Time and place in these stories have both a definite and an indefinite significance. To the Negro, "long years ago", may be "a watch in the night". He shifts from one locality to another; however, in each story, time and place are distinct. The Negro always knows the time and the exact circumstance that his imagery paints for that moment. He has a general standard of designation rather than an exact

<sup>1</sup>. Nelson, "The Negro Character in Amer. Lit., page 116.

measurement, but his imagery transposes each point into its proper visual setting. The Negro localizes everything when he desires to do so. Altogether, his imagery of place is much like his imagery of time. The place may be anywhere before he designates the word; when once designated, the place becomes an exact, concrete picture. The place matters little in the effectiveness of the picture; the circumstances of the moment make the occasion. When once the occasion is associated with the place, that place is fixed. Again, heightened imagery to the superlative degree is evident.

<sup>1</sup>Negro dialect in America is a result of the effort of the slave to establish a medium of communication between himself and his master. This he did by dropping his original language and formulating a phonologically and grammatically simplified English, that is, an English in which the harsh and difficult sounds were elided and the secondary moods and tenses were eliminated. The dialect spoken in the islands off the coast of Georgia remains closer to African form than the dialect of any other section, and still contains some African words.

The dialect used in a Negro Folk-tale is one of its attractive features. <sup>2</sup>There are four main varieties of dialect spoken among Negroes of the United States. They are:

1. Johnson, I. W., Book of American-Negro Spirituals, Introd.  
2. Krapp, Geo. Philip, English Language in America.

Virginian, the Gullah, known best in South Carolina, the Creole, and, what might be called, the Uncle Remus dialect.

While there are these four main varieties of dialect, none of the four is fixed and uniform. The idioms and pronunciation of the dialect vary in different sections of the South. Not even the dialect of any particular section is pronounced the same. It may vary in the next breath from the mouth of the same speaker. How a word is pronounced is governed by the preceding and following sounds. The following will serve to illustrate: "dat" is changed to "das". "Is dat all you got to say?" The answer is "Das all". The Negro elides as far as possible the troublesome consonants and sound combinations. The dialect used in these tales might well be called the Uncle Remus dialect.

There has been a decline in the vigor and picturesque-ness of this dialect, because of the opening of schools for Negroes, and the passing of the plantation life. Yet, this dialect is spoken today by the older Negroes in the country districts of the far South. This dialect is an adaptation of existing English words and endings, not an introduction of new words and endings. There are no plural nouns formed by internal vowel change. Instead of "feet" the old Negro would say "foots". The relative pronoun "who" is not used; "which" takes its place, and "what" is replaced by "dat".

Another noticeable feature is the use of the present tense of the verb. The narrator's conjugation is: I sings,

you sings, he sing (sometimes, he sings). Now this suggests that this dialect is an ear dialect, the eye having little or nothing to do with it. The explanation for this would be: the Negro of the far South could not read or write, so the printed page meant little to him.

Many persons are interested in Negro folk-tales because the dialect used is amusing. This to the reader is humorous, but that is not what is meant here by humor. To the Negro his form of speech was all right, but characteristically the Negro presents much humor in his folk-tale.

The population of the South naturally would be a source of humor. There were three main types, differing greatly from each other: the aristocratic planter, the shiftless folk known as "poor whites", and the Negro, born either in Africa or America. There was the Spanish blood in Florida and South Carolina and the French Creole in Louisiana. There were all these and others. Every community had its planter, its poor white, and its Negro; and their respective traits were known and easily recognized by all.

Many of the conditions were conducive to fun making, and the South may indeed be called the home of laughter. The eccentricities of one class were highly amusing to the other. The Negro was always the most amusing and the most amused, for two reasons. First, his dialect was amusing; second, he wanted to make fun of the planter and the poor whites, but he was afraid, and so he resorted to telling tales. He is always letting the weakest outdo the strongest, and let-

ting common sense and trickery outwit reason and learning. His humor is broad and not sharp. Such a humor always produces a whole-souled laughter, and even where it does not possess rare excellence it is more than good and admirably natural.

The foregoing analysis has dealt mainly with the animal stories with only an occasional reference to the character stories.

There is perhaps no permanent interest in a character sketch. They are given here for the purpose of conveying a phase of Negro character wholly distinct from that given in other tales. In this type of story one sees best the shrewd observations, curious retorts, homely thrusts and humorous philosophy of the race. Such stories may in time become legendary and be regarded as folk-tales.

"John Devil John", "The Conjur Woman" and "Dinah's Proof" are stories which show the definite characteristics mentioned above. John Devil John represents the shrewd rascal while Dinah's humorous philosophy is not to be overlooked. There is perhaps more color in John Devil John than in the "Conjur Woman", but in both tales the Negro is at his best in character sketch.

"Phyllis and the Panther", "Hudston and the Panther", and "Chicken Thieves" are associated with these stories not because they are entirely stories of character but they are interesting anecdotes which bring out the idea of fear and the usual successful escape that the Negro puts into his story.

The ghost stories, though few in number, give an idea of one type of story that the Negro liked so well to tell. The stories tell us in no uncertain language that the immortal soul lives on in the ghost world.

These stories are divided into two groups. There are three, "The Curious Ball of Fire", "Story of the Turkey Head", and the Story of Jack-o'-lantern," that seem to have their germ in the *ignis fatuus*,<sup>1</sup> sometimes known as Jack-of-the-lantern, Will-o'-the-wisp and similar terms. The basic idea is that these wandering flames belong to the souls of persons dead. The Jack-o'-lantern seems to be most common of this type of ghost known to Negroes. Some of the conceptions of the Jack-o'-lantern are very grotesque. He is sometimes a hideous creature, but more frequently a firefly or a ball of fire. The other ghost stories are of the haunted-house type. Negro humor with its tendency to laugh off the fearful often clusters around the spirit visitants, generally taking the form of reflections upon white men, the picturization of the terror of meeting ghosts, or the skill of the Negro in avoiding them. These ghosts were not always evil, for they sometimes directed the way to hidden treasures. "The Haunted House" represents a story of this type.

The tales reveal that ghosts may appear in any form; yet there is a tendency toward the human ghost with the animal ghost linked with him. Ghosts, to the Negro, are the souls of definite dead individuals. Ghosts were so terrify-

<sup>1</sup>. Puckett--Folk Beliefs of Southern Negro, Page 133.

ing to him that he spent a large part of his time warding them off. It was once a habit among Negroes to disguise themselves as ghosts, if they were bent on mischief; then they were sure that they would scare away investigators. This, perhaps, accounts for the fact that the stories have a realistic turn.

The ghost story as told by the Negro of today, is uncanny and is related principally for the thrill it gives. They are usually related with a deadly seriousness and sincerity.

As stated earlier in the analysis, many of these stories have their variants. In making the classification I found five stories variants of which had found their way into print. In some cases the stories given me personally or through the questionnaire are very similar to the stories in print. In cases where the contributor was close enough for personal interview I found out whether or not the story was a book story to the narrator. "Mr. Fox and Mr. Crane" is an adaptation of the Aesop story, "The Fox and the Stork". In both stories retaliation is the basic principle. In the "Mr. Fox and Mr. Crane", Br'er Rabbit is introduced. In Negro folk-tales the fox stands out as a perfect type of rogue with but little wit. Br'er Rabbit is used to supply that much needed characteristic. "The Rabbit and the Devil", I classified as a book story because of the use of the word chaos. This English word is known among the Indians, so an Indian told me. The narrator of this story had lived originally in Tennessee, but moved to Oklahoma when the land

was opened by the government. He said that he heard the story in Tennessee and that it was a commonly told story in Oklahoma.

"A Dreadful Hour" is plainly borrowed from Grimm's "The Wolf and the Seven Kids", the only difference being that in the Negro tale sheep instead of kids are used. The same plot is used throughout. The narrator of this story said that he had heard it from the "whole folks", but he couldn't remember it just as it was told to him; so he mixed it with a story that he once heard in his own home. He also said that he told it to the little white boys and girls just as he has given it here.

"A Fishing Trip" I called a book story because of the common use of the plot.<sup>1</sup> In the African folk-tale the fox fools the bear into using his bushy tail for a fish line, and something in the water bites it off. In the American-Negro folk-tale the rabbit fools the bear. In European tales the wolf is substituted for the rabbit. This story was retold to me. The narrator knew of no other version. Since there is an African version, and since this Negro was only a slave who stayed in the field and had very little contact with the whites, one might conclude that, perhaps, it was not a book story to him, but that he substituted his ideal hero, Br'er Rabbit, to show his power to outwit the bear.

The fifth of these stories, "Brother Bear's Wood Chopping", is an adaptation of Grimm's "The Cat and the Mouse in

I. Journal of American Folk-Lore, Vol. 25.

Partnership". The one similarity is the name "Half Gone". The story has a different setting, yet the basic principle is the same. This story came to me by questionnaire, and I am not able to say that it was not a book story to the narrator.

Negro Folk-tales are still being told by Negroes of today. Here and there we find collections of tales related by Negroes. Joel Chandler Harris' stories of Uncle Remus must live. He has made a contribution to literature; yet, in the writing down of these stories, the literary touch of the white man is evident. The growing opportunities for higher education and the growth of special schools where the Negro is finding expression for himself are making him unwilling to help in the preservation of the stories of his race, which should be held as sacred as his songs.

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III. TRAITS COMMON TO THE TWO GROUPS.

TRAITS COMMON TO THE TWO GROUPS.

After reading the African-Negro tales and the American-Negro tales, knowing that the American-Negro is of African origin, I began to look for common traits in the two. "It is true that the physical characteristics of a people affect their folk-beliefs, but only in a general way."<sup>1</sup> It is natural for man to notice that which affects him most and interpret the world in terms of himself; thus physical qualities must be kept in mind in bringing out traits in common between the tales of the two groups. Psychologically there are points in common and there is a similarity in the details of handling. The animal stories in each group point out the physical characteristics of the Negro both in his primitive home and in his home in America. The very fact that the American Negro was working under pressure and against his will kept the real joy out of the work and much of his time was spent in trying to shirk. In the story of "The Python, the Leopard and the Tortoise", both the python and leopard are too lazy to do the thing they want done and impose the responsibility on the tortoise, an animal much weaker than either. Br'er Rabbit does practically no work, but depends upon his wits to bring him to his desires. A lively sense of humor characterizes the stories of both, yet it is more apparent in the American story. In the four African stories surprise is the

I. Puckett, N. N., Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro, Page 4.

only element of humor, but in the American tales many elements are in evidence, such as outwitting the enemy and then seeing him ridiculed. This is shown in "How Mr. Fox Lost His Gal" and in the Tar Baby story.

In the stories of both groups the animals represent persons. They talk and reason and scheme for their welfare just as the Negroes were wont to do. Why did the tortoise trap the leopard and the python? The tortoise wanted to keep friendships, and if they did not agree after being trapped they would have to stay in the pit, and the tortoise would not be harmed. For the same reason Br'er Rabbit tells Mr. Fox not to throw him in the briar patch. The rabbit seemed to know that the fox would prefer to give him what would displease the rabbit most. In fact, Br'er Rabbit uses psychology all the time.

In traits of handling, judging from the four stories given, the African Negro as a story teller has the advantage over the American Negro. In color effect and device the African is superior. The American story is more like "The Python, the Leopard and the Tortoise"; economical and to the point. There is an element used in the American tale that makes it less economical, that is, the element of repetition. In the American tale the rabbit is like the American child. He asks for something, and if it is not granted he begs for it. The African does not take time to do this. Harris himself says,<sup>1</sup> "One thing is certain, the animal stories told

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1. Harris, J. C., Uncle Remus, Introduction, P. XII.

by the Negroes in our Southern States and in Brazil were brought by them from Africa. Whether they originated there or with the Arab or Egyptian, or yet more ancient nations, must still be an open question."

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Note: The contributors are listed so as to give a geographical survey. The number of contributors from Kansas City, Missouri, stands out conspicuously. The population of Kansas City, Missouri, has been increased in the past few years. This increase has been largely due to the number of Negroes coming from the South. When I chose my pupils to help me, I was able to select those--since I had access to their enrollment cards--who were in position to come in contact with these new-comers.

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