

MISS MINERVA and WILLIAM GREEN HILL

By FRANCES BOYD CALHOUN

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CHAPTER I.

A Scandalized Virgin.

The bus drove up to the gate and stopped under the electric street light. Perched on the box by the big, black negro driver sat a little boy whose slender figure was swathed in a huge rain coat.

Miss Minerva was on the porch waiting to receive him.

"Mercy on me, child," she said, "what on earth made you ride up there? Why didn't you get inside?"

"I jest wanted to ride by Sam Lamb," replied the child as he was lifted down. "An' I see a nice fat little man name Major."

"He jes' wouldn't ride inside, Miss Minerva," interrupted the driver, quickly, to pass over the blush that rose to the spinster's thin cheek at mention of the major. "Twant no use fer ter try ter make him ride no-whars but jes' up by me. He jes' fussed an' fussed an' sputed an' sputed; he jes' tuck ter me f'om de minute he got off'm de train an' sot eyes on me; he am one easy chile ter git 'quainted wid; so I jes' h'isted him up by me. Here am his veritise, ma'am."

"Good-by, Sam Lamb," said the child as the negro got back on the box and gathered up the reins. "I'll see you to-morrow."

Miss Minerva imprinted a thin, old-maid kiss on the sweet, childish mouth. "I am your Aunt Minerva," she said, as she picked up his satchel. The little boy carelessly drew the back of his hand across his mouth.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Are you wiping my kiss off?"

"Naw'm," he replied, "I's jest a-rubbin' it in, I reckon."

"Come in, William," and his aunt led the way through the wide hall into a big bedroom.

"Billy, ma'am," corrected her nephew.

"William," firmly repeated Miss Minerva. "You may have been called Billy on that plantation where you were allowed to run wild with the negroes, but your name is William Green Hill, and I shall insist upon your being called by it."

She stooped to help him off with his coat, remarking as she did so: "What a big overcoat; it is several sizes too large for you."

"Darned if 't ain't," agreed the child promptly.

"Who taught you such a naughty word?" she asked in a horrified voice. "Don't you know it is wrong to curse?"

"You call that cussin'?" came in scornful tones from the little boy. "You don't know cussin' when you see it; you jest oughter hear ole Uncle Jimmy-Jawed Jup'ter, Aunt Cindy's husband; he'll show you somer pretties cussin' you ever did hear."

"Who is Aunt Cindy?"

"She's the colored 'oman what tends to me ever sence me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln's born, an' Uncle Jup'ter is her husband an' he sho' is a stinger on cussin'. Is yo' husband much of a cusser?" he inquired.

A pale pink dyed Miss Minerva's thin, fallow, face.

"I am not a married woman," she replied, curtly, "and I most assuredly would not permit any oaths to be used on my premises."

"Well, Uncle Jimmy-Jawed Jup'ter is jest natchelly boun' to cuss—he's got a reputation to keep up," said Billy.

He sat down in a chair in front of his aunt, crossed his legs and smiled confidentially up into her face.

"Hell an' damn is jest easy ev'ry day words to that nigger. I wish you could hear him cuss on a Sunday jest one time, Aunt Minerva; he'd sho' make you open yo' eyes an' take in yo' sign. But Aunt Cindy don't 'low me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln to say nothin' 't all only jest 'darn' tell we gits grown mens, an' puts on long pants."

"Wilkes Booth Lincoln?" questioned his aunt.

"Ain't you never hear teller him?" asked the child. "He's ole Aunt Blue-Gum Tempy's Peruny Pearlina's boy; an' Peruny Pearlina," he continued enthusiastically, "she ain't no ordinary nigger, her hair ain't got nare kink an' she's got the grandes' clothes. They ain't nothin' s'ide 'bout her. She got ten chillens an' ev'ry single one of 'em's got a diff'unt pappy, she been married so much. They do say she got Injun blood in her, too."

Miss Minerva, who had been standing prim, erect and stiff, fell limply into a convenient rocking chair, and looked closely at this orphaned nephew who had come to live with her.

She saw a beautiful, bright, attractive, little face out of which big, saucy, gray eyes shaded by long curling black lashes looked winningly at her; she saw a sweet, childish red mouth, a mass of short, yellow curls, and a thin but graceful little figure.

"I knows the names of aller ole Aunt Blue-Gum Tempy's Peruny Pearlina's chillens," he was saying proudly: "Admiral Farragut Moses the Prophet Esquire, he's the bigges'; an' Alice Ann Maria Dan Step-an'-Go-Fetch-It, she had to nuss all the res'; she say fas' she git 'thoo nussin' one an' 'low she goin' to have a breathin' spell here come another one

"What is that you have tied around your neck, William?" she asked, as the little boy rose to his feet.

"That's my rabbit foot; you won't never have no 'sease 't all an' nobody can't never conjure you if you wears a rabbit foot. This here one is the left 'fin' foot; it was ketcht by a red-headed nigger with cross-eyes in a graveyard at twelve o'clock on a Friday night, when they's a full moon. He give it to Aunt Cindy to the 'roun' my nake when I's a baby. Ain't you got no rabbit foot?" he anxiously inquired.

"No," she answered. "I have never had one and I have never been conjured either. Give it to me, William; I can't allow you to be superstitious," and she held out her hand.

"Please, Aunt Minerva, jest lemme wear it tonight," he pleaded. "Me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln's been wearin' us rabbit foots ever sence we's born."

"No," she said firmly; "I'll put a stop to such nonsense at once. Give it to me, William."

Billy looked up at his aunt's austere countenance and lovingly fingered his charm; he opened his mouth to say something, but hesitated; slowly he untied the string around his neck and laid his treasure on her lap; then without looking up, he ran into his own little room, closing the door behind him.

Soon afterward Miss Minerva, hearing a sound like a stifled sob coming from the adjoining room, opened the door softly and looked into a sad, little face with big, wide, open eyes shining with tears.

"What is the matter, William?" she coldly asked.

"I ain't never s'lep' by myself," he sobbed. "Wilkes Booth Lincoln always s'lep on a pallet by my bed ever sence we's born an'—an' I wants Aunt Cindy to tell me 'bout Uncle Piljerk Peter."

His aunt sat down on the bed by his side. She was not versed in the ways of childhood, and could not know that the little boy wanted to pillow his head on Aunt Cindy's soft and ample bosom, that he was homesick for his black friends, the only companions he had ever known.

"I'll tell you a Bible story," she temporized. "You must not be a baby. You are not afraid, are you, William? God is always with you."

"I don't want no God," he sullenly made reply. "I wants somebody with shod' nough skin an' bones, an'—an' I wants to hear 'bout Uncle Piljerk Peter."

"I will tell you a Bible story," again suggested his aunt. "I will tell you about—"

"I don't want to hear no Bible story, neither," he objected. "I wants to hear



He Chanted "Now I Lays Me Down to Sleep."

Uncle Jimmy-Jawed Jup'ter play his 'corjun an' sing:

"Rabbit up the gum tree, Coon is in the holler
Wake, snake; Juney-Bug stole a half a dollar."

"I'll sing you a hymn," said Miss Minerva patiently.

"I don't want to hear you sing no hymn," said Billy impolitely. "I wants to hear Sanctified Sophy shout."

As his aunt could think of no substitute with which to tempt him in lieu of Sanctified Sophy's shouting, she remained silent.

"An' I wants Wilkes Booth Lincoln to dance a clog," persisted her nephew.

Miss Minerva remained silent. She felt unable to cope with the situation till she had adjusted her thoughts and made her plans.

Presently Billy, looking at her shrewdly, said:

"Gimme my rabbit foot, Aunt Minerva, an' I'll go right off to sleep."

When she again looked in on him he was fast asleep, a rosy flush on his babyish, tear-stained cheek, his red lips half parted, his curly head pillowed on his arm, and close against his soft, young throat there nestled the left hind foot of a rabbit.

Miss Minerva's bed time was half after nine o'clock, summer or winter. She had hardly varied a second in the years that had elapsed since the runaway marriage of her only relative,

the young sister whose child had now come to live with her. But on the night of Billy's arrival the stern, narrow woman sat for hours in her rocking chair, her mind busy with thoughts of that pretty young sister, dead since the boy's birth.

And now the wild, reckless, distasteful brother-in-law was dead, too, and the child had been sent to her; to the aunt who did not want him, who did not care for children, who had never forgiven her sister her unfortunate marriage. "If he had only been a girl," she sighed. What she believed to be a happy thought entered her brain.

"I shall rear him," she promised herself, "just as if he were a little girl; then he will be both a pleasure and a comfort to me, and a companion for my loneliness."

Miss Minerva was strictly methodical; she worked ever by the clock, so many hours for this, so many for that. William, she now resolved, for the first time becoming really interested in him, should grow up to be a model young man, a splendid and wonderful piece of mechanism, a fine, practical, machine-like individual, moral, upright, religious. She was glad that he was young; she would begin his training on the morrow. She would teach him to sew, to sweep, to churn, to cook, and when he was older he should be educated for the ministry.

"Yes," said Miss Minerva; "I shall be very strict with him just at first, and punish him for the slightest disobedience or misdemeanor, and he will soon learn that my authority is not to be questioned."

And the little boy who had never had a restraining hand laid upon him in his short life? He slept sweetly and innocently in the next room, dreaming of the care-free existence on the plantation and of his idle, happy, negro companions.

CHAPTER III.

The Willing Worker.

"Get up, William," said Miss Minerva, "and come with me to the bathroom; I have fixed your bath."

The child's sleepy eyes popped wide open at this astounding command.

"Ain't this here Wednesday?" he asked sharply.

"Yes; today is Wednesday. Hurry up or the water will get cold."

"Well, me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln jest washed las' Sat'day. We ain't got to wash no mo' 'till nex' Sat'day," he argued.

"Oh, yes," said his relative; "you must bathe every day."

"Me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln ain't never wash on a Wednesday sence

CHAPTER IV.

Sweetheart and Partner.

Billy was sitting quietly in the big lawn-swing when his aunt, dressed for the street, finally came through the front door.

"Boys don't churn," he said sullenly; "me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln don't never have to churn sence we's born; 'omans has to churn an' I ain't a-going to. Major Minerva—he ain't never churn," he began belligerently, but his relative turned an uncompromising and rather perturbed back upon him.

Realizing that he was beaten, he submitted to his fate, clutched the dasher angrily, and began his weary work.

He was glad his little black friend did not witness his disgrace.

As he thought of Wilkes Booth Lincoln the big tears came into his eyes and rolled down his cheeks; he leaned way over the churn and the great glistening tears splashed right into the hole made for the dasher, and rolled into the milk.

Billy grew interested at once and laughed aloud; he puckered up his face and tried to weep again, for he wanted more tears to fall into the churn; but the tears refused to come and he couldn't squeeze another one out of his eyes.

"Aunt Minerva," he said mischievously. "I done ruint yo' buttermilk."

"What have you done?" she inquired.

"It's done ruint," he replied, "you'll hatter 'thow it away; 'tain't fitten fer nothin'. I done cried 'bout a bucketful in it."

"Why did you cry?" asked Miss Minerva calmly. "Don't you like to work?"

"Yes'm, I jes' loves to work; I wish I had time to work all the time. But it makes my belly ache to churn—I got a awful pain right now."

"Churn on!" she commanded unsympathetically.

He grabbed the dasher and churned vigorously for one minute.

"I reckon the butter's done come," he announced, resting from his labors. "It hasn't begun to come yet," replied the exasperated woman. "Don't waste so much time, William."

The child churned in silence for the space of two minutes, and suggested: "It's time to put hot water in it; Aunt Cindy always puts hot water in it. Lemme git some fer you."

"I never put hot water in my milk," said she, "it makes the butter puffy. Work more and talk less, William."

Again there was a brief silence, broken only by the sound of the dasher thumping against the bottom of the churn, and the rattle of the dishes.

"I sho' is tired," he presently remarked, heaving a deep sigh. "My arms is 'bout give out, Aunt Minerva. Ole Aunt Blue-Gum Tempy's Peruny



"What I Done Now?" Asked the Boy Innocently.

Instead of saying 'I sho' is hongry,' you should say, 'I am very hongry.' Listen to me and try to speak more correctly."

"Don't don't!" she screamed as he helped himself to the meat and gravy, leaving a little brown river on her fresh white tablecloth. "Wait until I ask a blessing; then I will help you to what you want."

Billy enjoyed his breakfast very much. "These muffins sho' is—" he began; catching his aunt's eye he corrected himself: "These muffins am very good."

"These muffins are very good," said Miss Minerva patiently.

"Did you ever eat any bobbychurn rabbit?" he asked. "Me an' Wilkes Booth Lincoln been eatin' chit'lins, an' sweet 'taters, an' 'possum, an' squirrel, an' 'hoe-cake, an' Brunswick stew ever sence we's born," was his proud announcement.

"Use your napkin," commanded she, "and don't fill your mouth so full."

The little boy flooded his plate with sirup.

"These here 'lasses sho' is—" he began, but instantly remembering that he must be more particular in his speech, he stammered out:

"These here sho' is—am—are a nice messer'lasses. I ain't never eat sech a good bait. They sho' is—I aimed to say—these 'lasses sho' are a bird; they's 'nother sight taster'n sorghum, an' Aunt Cindy 'lows that sorghum is the very penury of a nigger."

She did not again correct him.

"I must be very patient," she thought, "and go very slowly. I must not expect too much of him at first."

After breakfast Miss Minerva, who would not keep a servant, preferring to do her own work, tied a big cook-apron around the little boy's neck, and told him to churn while she washed the dishes. This arrangement did not suit Billy.

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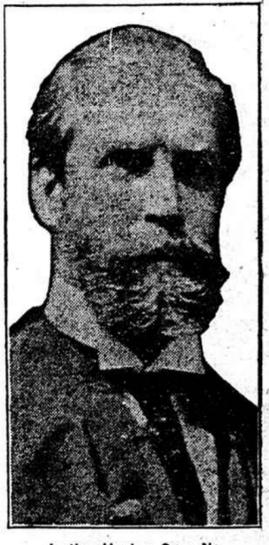
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CHARLES EVANS HUGHES



Justice Hughes Says No.

Lake Placid, N. Y.—That his decision not to permit the use of his name before the Republican national convention at Chicago is final, was made plain by Associate Justice Charles E. Hughes of the United States Supreme Court who is spending the summer here. Justice Hughes confirmed a report from New York that he had telephoned friends in New York and telegraphed others at Chicago that he will not, under any circumstances, permit his name to be used and asked that all mention of him cease.

WILLIAM B. MCKINLEY



McKinley Claims Control.

Chicago.—Taft managers privately admitted the vote on the election of Senator Root was "too close to be comfortable," although they insisted they would maintain control of the convention.

"The days vote showed unmistakably that we have control," said Director McKinley.

"Will you be able to keep the delegations in line?" he was asked.

"Certainly, the line-up will be preserved and we will gain more votes. The defeat today will discourage the other side," was the reply. Every effort of the Taft campaigners was directed toward holding firmly that narrow majority of 18.

HERBERT S. HADLEY



Addressed Convention First.

Governor Hadley of Missouri, the Roosevelt floor leader, was first to get the attention of the chair.

Disorder Eliminated.

Chicago.—Aside from the practical absence of the "rough house" tactics which had been so elaborately prepared for by the heavy police guard and the extraordinary pains of the national committee officers to guard against outbreaks of any kind, there were several remarkable things about the convention. It was desperately serious business from beginning to end. There was none of that long continued uproar, extending into minutes, even hours, which have lately become a feature of political conventions.

Make Bitter Fight.

Chicago.—Colonel Roosevelt and his leaders decided Tuesday night to make the contest over the report of the credentials committee Wednesday a decisive test of strength. Most of Tuesday evening was given over to discussion of the plan to be adopted. Governor Hadley of Missouri, received a commission to exercise a free hand in directing the fight. Talk of a bolt as the result of a decision to disregard the action of a majority of the convention unless it be composed of uncontested delegates was unfounded.

Roosevelt Encouraged.

Chicago.—Colonel Roosevelt addressed a caucus of Roosevelt delegates for a quarter of an hour Tuesday evening. He said the situation seemed to be most encouraging, and he felt that the convention would not support the national committee and seat delegates who, he asserted, had no rights in the convention. In emphatic language he told the delegates he would not abide by such action and he felt sure they would not. He said nothing about the cries of "bolters" at his delegates.

Electric Hotel for Paris

Current Will Do Everything in the Proposed Structure Except Pay Guest's Bill.

The interesting news comes from Paris that a hotel will be built there in which all the domestic service will be performed by electricity. If the promoters of the scheme keep their promises, everything will be done by electricity except the guests' payment

of their bills. Even then they can give the cashier a shock by refusing to pay.

There will be no waiters, no bell boys, no coat boys, no chambermaids, and consequently no tips. If a guest arrives home at 3 a. m. all he will have to do is to touch a button, which will turn an electric sun, and then he can say to his wife:

"My dear, you're really getting lazy. Look at me. I'm up and dressed!

If he feels that he needs a cocktail, he can touch another button. One touch brings a martini, two whisky, three a Manhattan, four vermouth, five an ambulance. In answer, a dumb waiter rises through the floor either to bring the desired brace, or, when need be, to lower the guest to the ambulance.

The hotel promoters lay much stress on the fact that all their waiters are dumb. In place of the ordinary Swiss who only stand and wait, instead of running and serving, there will be automats run by electricity and guaranteed not to spill soup down your back or creamed asparagus in your lap. The dining table will be decorated with flowers raised by intensive electrical culture in both winter and summer, for there will be no seasons in this hotel; push a button and you're warmer than when you see another fellow walking with the "only dear one on earth," push another button and you're colder than when

the other fellow frigidly asks, "What the devil are you doing here?"

One of the features of the hotel will be an electric orchestra, in which all kinds of stringed instruments will apparently play of their own accord.

The inventor, a Frenchman named Georgia Knap, who has spent years experimenting with the various devices, asserts that they are now all absolutely perfect, and has formed a company under the name "Societe des Hotels Electriques" for the purpose of building electric hotels in every big

city throughout the world.—New York World.

Proof.

"I suppose there is no other street in the world that is just like Broadway," said the man who was always despondent when he had to be away from New York for a few minutes.

"No," replied the soulless person, who was able to exist in a small town. "I guess there isn't. Which proves that there are some foolish things people don't imitate."