

"In De Miz": A Story Of The Creation

By Mrs. General George E. Pickett.

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Will those of my readers who do not know the ways and hearts of my colored people of the old south kindly read first this preface in explanation, or extension, as it may be, of my old black mammy's origin of her race?

As I wrote "In De Miz" memory took me back across the years to the time when life's water was wine, tinted golden with the sunlight of morning, sparkling with the jewels of youth and love. It made me a child again, looking up into the dear, dusky face of that beloved black mammy, listening with my unburnt, unclouded faith to the folklore of her speculative mid-night race, as she solved in her own random, creative, giving expression to thoughts that strike reason dumb, while her passiveness, obedience, wise submission, loyalty and love made no quittance of wrongs to right.

There was no word held in more reverential love and fear by the faithful southern slave than the one word "Master." The divided service of his soul was between his Master and his God. His religion, fraught with the supernatural, was as broad as the narrow grasp of his poor mind could compass. His conception of the greatness of God was measured by his crude and untrained brain.

In his eyes the taking of a "chaw" of tobacco was a dignified, luxurious custom, and one liberally indulged in, as a rule, by his paragon of perfection, the southern master.

To have said "Lord," in speaking of Him to little children, without the prefix of the word "Mars" (Master), would have been unwonted familiarity with the omnipotent, all-wise all-merciful Great Being. Nor was the old-time slave wanting in respect and reverence, in the frequent use of His name when speaking to those of his own age, always calling upon it to emphasize or verify a statement or express surprise.

There was no want of reverence in his comparison of his Heavenly Father with his earthly master, and the rapt copartnership which he conceived to exist between those two almost equally sacred beings; but, instead thereof, a sublime recognition in his simple heart of the fellowship of God and man, and an intuitive conception of two-ness as one-ness, of the incompleteness of man apart from God—verifying the poet's thought:

"So close is glory to our dust;
So near as God to man."

"Deed, Honey, hit am de gossol trufe, leas wuz dat's de way I yearn hit tole, en I haint nebbur yearn hit 'spued. 'Tain't no use er deze yer niggers bein' so a'rifled 'bout hit needin'. En w'at I yearn you gits straight jis. En lak I yearn hit, en dat is—Dat of 'twant' fer de w'ite folks dar would'n be none ter year tell er).

"'Twuz a long time ago, way in de beginnin', w'en dar want' no fundamen on no plantations, en dar want' but jis' only one pusson a libin' ober yer den, en he wuz Mars' Jesus' pa. En he, mun! w'an't only de goodes' in de greates', de out'n'es' mos' surrivig'es' but He wuz mos' strong'es' mos' swif'es' pusson ebber wuz. Ebby't'ing den wuz His'n, en dough He wuz dat rich en had so mud peresshuns b'ongin' ter 'im, he could tu'n his nan' en mek any'ing He sot His mine 'pon (en mek hit out er nuttin', at dat).

"De firs' en fo'mus' t'ing He mekt dough wuz His bes', en co'se hit ought ter be, w'en you comes ter dat, kaze 'twuz His own home—Heaben.

After dat, He mekt de earf en de sea en all dat—in de Miz, en den res'ed hisse'f de Sebent day en hallow'ed hit.

"But dar haint nobody nebbur year'd nuttin' 'tall 'bout dem t'ings dat's 'in de Miz'. Fer, you see, 'twuz lak dis, w'en Mars' Lord sp'iled any'ing He wuz a mekin' er, no matter w'at-some-ebber hit wuz, He flung hit ret smack 'in de Miz', kaze er He had'n, He could'n a said w'en He wuz dun en tuoo wid all His wuk dat He saw 'twuz good.' Well, hit wuz gittin' todes de eend' er de week en mighty nigh on ter Sunday, en Mars' Lord 'gin ter study 'bout w'at He wuz gwine ter mek naix, en a terminin' in His mine w'ite He wuz a studdyin' dat His last piece er wuk should outshine all de yudder pieces. Well, w'ile He wuz mekin' up His mine en ponderin' 'bout w'at 'twould be, He tuck de pail en went 'long ter de well ter draw some water, w'en jis' 'fo' He lit de bucket down, lo-en-beholes! He seed Hisse'f 'flected. Ez soon ez ebber He got ober His 'miration en 'stonishment at de mighty grangerments en grandditt-cents er de handsome beufel 'flection dat He seed a layin' dar flat on de top er de deep, cool, smoothe water, He stop studdyin' en 'low dat, ez long ez He tu'n'n, out so many good jobs, He b'leebed He'd try en justifyate dat lakness dat He jis' seed 'flected er Hisse'f.

"Den I s'pose He t'ink, too, w'en He look 'roun' 'im, en seed all de laus en chatte state en yudder prop'ity dat b'longs ter 'im dat hit's a mighty po' bee, dat doan' mek mo' honey dan he wants fer hisse'f. But dat's needer yer needer dar, fer 'twant' mo' an 'cided 'tween Hisse'f en His own mine 'fo' He stop foolin' en lookin' at Hisse'f en tuck an drawed de water up quick, en went 'long in a trot en ondo de wuk-shop do' en git out His tools ag'in, en tuck some er de ve'y ea'f

whar He mekt a We'nesday, en rollt up His sleeves en slobed His hat oack off'n His forehead—tuck a chaw er terbacker en went ter wuk. En den en dar He meked a couple er In-iz-Images, meked 'em jis' lak de one t'ee seed 'flected in de well (He allers meked two er de same kine er t'ing you know) en he meked dem In-iz-Images perzackly fer de wurill jis' lak he wuz Hisse'f—jis' ez purty—en jis' ez fat en plump, en jis' ez lakly lookin' too. Kaze de Lord aint got nar' sumptious, stingy'fied, jealousome bone in His whole dusky.

"Bimeby, atter He git thoo, He call Mars' Gabe (dat wuz His oberseer, de haid man 'bout de place w'at bosses de han's) en toll 'im ter g'long fot'ch de w'eelbarr' en tek bofe dem dar In-iz-Images en sot 'em in de sun whar dey could be a dryin' dars'fa. Dey wan't name mens w'en Mars' Gabe firs' seed 'em, dey wuz name In-iz-Images, you know, t'wel atter dey'd dried dars'fa.

"Well, suh, de way Mars' Gabe open His eyes en mek 'miration w'en he seed w'at he did see, gin 'im pop eyes fer de res' er his life, but he knowed his place, dough, en he aint say nuttin', sep'n jis' ter totch his hat en scrope his foots en bow his haid, kaze he wuz mighty aspectful, en say, sezsee: 'Yas, suh, yas, suh.'

"Den Mars' Gabe tuck up de two In-iz-Images jis' ez keurful ez he kin, bu, he wuz skeered er 'em, dough, en tarried widin a inch er his life, leas-wise his knees wuz mighty sheky en he had a mighty funny feelin' in de naanhood er his gizzard (ef he want skeered en tarried), but he tuck 'em, dough, en lay 'em down easy en mile in de bottom er de w'eelbarr; den he spit in his han's en amble off in a kind er pace-trot-ca-pluck-a-te-pluck-ca-pluck-a-te-pluck-ontwel, he comed up 'long side er de apple dryer, whar de sun wuz hottes'. Den he tuck 'em out, jis' ez gingerly en keurful ez ef dey'd been a pyar er sneks, en sot 'em up 'g'inst de behime side er de apple dryer en lef 'em, den went 'long 'boutn his yudder bizness—a sorter foolin' en dallyin' roun' ontwel he Mars' lay down ter tek His nap (lak He mos' gen'ally do ebby ebenin').

"His Mars' wan't feared er ober-sleepin' Hisse'f needer. No, suh! He knowed p'intedly dat he wuz gwine ter wek up perzackly ter de ve'y m'it-ut dat his In-iz-Images wuz dry 'nuff fer 'im ter wuk on ag'in, w'ich he did, sho' nuff.

"Den he call Mars' Gabe en tole 'im fer ter g'long en fetch dem In-iz-Images fer 'im ter put some bref in, en finish up. Mars' Gabe tuck off his hat ag'in, pull his fo'lock en scrope his ret foots backards en bow low, jis' lak he did 'fo, en say, 'Yas, suh, en amble off ag'in w'ile de w'eelbarr, ca-pluck-a-te-pluck. But Law's-er-mussy' 'pon us: W'en Mars' Gabe git ter de place whar he knowed he lef' dem In-iz-Images, dar wan't but one er 'em dar. He look ebbywhar, but 'tain't no use, he kyan fine but jis' barly one dat he seed w'en he firs' driv hisse'f up. He look en he look en he look, den he scroth his haid en he look, en look ag'in, monst'ous pestered 'boutn hit, too, en a w'alkin' in his thunkin' machine fer all he knowed.

"He fotch bofe, en der wan't but one en w'ile he wuz a kalkulatin' how dat could a poserable happen, w'edder some er dem varments, er beastees, er kropin' t'ings, dat wuz meked dat same Saddy maw'nin' could er kotch de missin' one, en wuz a jawin' ter hisse'f en sayin', dat folks w'ats allers pesterin' en bodderin' 'long w'at aint dar'n en w'at dey haint got no bizness wid, ougter ter nebbur beastees en varments z ter dat, no mo' dan real pussuns, en w'ile he wuz a jawin' en a lookin' he year'd Mars' Lord's woice a callin' out loud:

"'Gabe, G-a-b-e, you-u-u Gabe, come 'long dar wid you, you lazy raskal you! W'at you tromplin' 'long dar fer, suh, a was'in' all my time? You gwine ter tek all day ter fetch my wuk ter me, suh? You beter come 'long 'fo' you find out who is w'ich, en w'ich is who!'

"Mars' Gabe tromble all ober lake a askin' leaf, but he know he aint got no time ter fool 'long das losted one no mo', he knowed he was 'bleeged ter git up en git. So he tuck de one dat wuz lef' en tuck hisse'f off en kyard 'im 'long jis' ez fast ez he kin trot. He wuz fyarly kivered wid mud en mighty nigh out er w'a' w'en he brung an 'long side er de wuk-shop en hist 'im out.

"En I tell you he lay moughty low, en haint say nuttin' 'tall 'bout de yudder one whar he could'n find kaze he thunk mebbe Mars' Lord mought er fertit hisse'f 'bout dar bein' two er 'em, but he did'n. No mun, dat he did'n.

"W'y dey say dat Mars' Lord is dat 't'ekular, dat he tuck a count er all de sparrows en number de ve'y hyars er dar haid, w'en he mekt 'em. En w'en he seed dar wan't but one er de In-iz Images whar he'd jis' done en mekt he klered up his th'out, en talk biggerty, jis' lak he did once 'fo', long time atter dis time do'. Dey wuz out er doors den in de gyarden, in de cool er de day, en twuz dat same day dey said dat Mars' Adam en his wife hid dars'fa, en dey say, too, dat dat time you could year his woice a walkin'.

"Well, he crowdin' his eyebrows up tarredder, sorter shot up bofe eyes kinder surrivig'es en fieres lak, en said, sezsee: 'Boy! W'hat it dat yudder one? Mars' Gabe look moughty sheepish and slunk back'ards. 'Twuz

tetch-en-go, mun! wid 'im, I tell you. So he spuk moughty humble en feeble lak, en say, 'Wuz dar two er 'em? Well, de wu'd want mo' dan out er his mouf, w'en he seed 'twant' no use projeckin' wid Mars' Lord, kaze, 'Twixt de Bug en de Bee-martin, 'tain't hard ter tell w'ich is gwine ter git kotch', so he up en tell all 'bout hit, how 't'ekular he wuz, how he sot bofe er 'em down tergedder, tetchin' wunner-nudder, sides by sides, en how he went 'long den, 'tendin' ter his yudder bizness, en how dat w'en he come 'long back ag'in ter fetch 'em bofe (jis lak he wuz tole) dar wan't but jis byaryly one ter behole, en he 'low dat he wuz gwine ter keep on a lookin', dough, ontwel he's foun' de yudder one, w'en he year'd hisse'f call'ed.

"Den Mars' Lord look dignant, he woice roe de earf shuck, en he 'spon' out loud: 'Gabe, Gabe, go fetch dat yudder missin' one.' Den Mars' Gabe say, jis lak de patteroller wuz behime 'im, 'Yas, suh, gwine ret 'long, suh,' en he huddle hesse'f up tergedder sorter skittish lak he wuz a dodgin' sump'in', en went 'long back en tuck all de pains he kin. He look first one side en den de yudder, den he bat his eyes en hong his haid down monful en perfected en wuz jis gwine ter gin up de s'arch, en hump hisse'f en g'long back (en git w'at he knowed dar wuz fer 'im), w'en he onbat his eyes en drapped 'em down en looked, en lo-en-beholes! dar crouched all up in a lump ker-flap 'pon de groun' wuz dat yudder missin' one. W'y, a lit' mo' en he'd a trompled on 'im.

"Den he 'skivered dat he wuz bu'n't brack ez a coal, mouf wide open, w'ite teef a shinin' en jamby a pou'n' er wool on his auid whar de sun done all kink up. Fas' asleep, too, I 'clar t'er grashus, sezsee, I s'pose he'd done git ter noddin' en fall ober, er he mought er git kotch wid a emptiness in de pit er de stumck w'at a hoaning atter sump'in' t'eat. But anyhow, dar he wuz, jis lak I tell you, en some folks do say, dat dat's de 'kazion er niggers bein' so sleepy haided ter de day, dat dey wuz mekt dat-a-way at firs'. Well, Mars' Gabe, he krope down on his all-fo's en tuck de po' brack t'ing up en put 'im in de w'eelbarr, en amble off ag'in en kyard 'im 'long ter Mars' Lord jis ez fas' ez he kin trot, ca-pluck-a-te-pluck, ca-pluck-a-te-pluck.

"Now, den, w'en Mars' Lord look en seed dat His wuk had all sp'iled en ruind, dat de sun had dun en bu'n't hit ez brack ez a charcoal, He shuck His haid en bat His eyes en tu'n up His nose a kinder disgustin' lak 'n say: 'He aint wuff foolin' away n'y time wid, en a bodderin' ober, so tek 'im, Gabe—tek 'im, en g'long en ting 'im 'in de Miz'.

"By dat time Mars' Lord wuz done a th'oo wid polishin' up en puttin' bref in dat firs' one, en you know mun! he wuz a-stan'in' up dar 'long side er Mars' Lord a lookin' pariently lak he thunk he wuz in a crowd, wid his han's in his britches-pockets—hat cocked on one side—smokin' a seegyur. En he wuz talkin' moughty uppity en moughty family lak ter Mars' Lord, too. Yas, suh! jis lak he wuz somebody considerbl' a ready, a puttin' on a'rs en a wigglin' de ashes off'n de e'en' er his seegyur wid his lit' finger. En mo' dan dat, suh; he tuck en bo-faclusly open up de confab hisse'f wid Mars' Lord ('boutn his parner-ner whar wuz a lyin' dar in de bottom er der w'eelbarr' en whar in a min'it mo' Mars' Gabe would er had 'im flung smack 'in de Miz'), en spuck up en say jis' ez 'sumptions, too, ez you please, bowin' en a smilin' en twistin' his merstach: 'Ah! 'skuze me, Lord 'skuze me,' sezsee,—but, ah—doan' 'stroy 'im, please; doan' fling 'im 'in de Miz,' ah—go on—go on en finish 'im up, en gi' 'im ter me ter wait on me.'

"En so de Lord did. He rechte ret up, en gin his kya'vin' knife down ag'in, en kya'ved off'n de looses' er de bu'n't po'tions en den tuck some san' paper en polished 'im, en fix 'im up de bes' he kin out'n a bad job en gin 'im ter de w'ite man ter wait on 'im. Dey named 'im 'Nigger' (dey spuck de Greek foren langidge in dem days, en brack wuz 'nigger'). En Mars' Lord gin dis nigger In-iz-Image ter de w'ite man ter wait on 'im den in de beginnin' en he's been a waitin' on 'im ebber sence, fum dat time forre'd ontwel dis presen' day. En hit's one er dese yer jobs w'ats gwine ter last a long time—yas suh, jis' ez long ez de Ham-begats kin Ham-begat mo' Ham-begats, en doan' you fertit dat off yo' mind, needer. Hit's 'bleeged ter be dat-a-way. 'Twant' none er we-all's choosin'. We wuz boun' ter mek de bes' er hit. De moon may shine, but a lightered knot is moughty handy ter hab roun', en Gord knows, chillun, hits better ter be sump'in' dan nuttin'. 'En hits all jis' lak I tell you, honey, en dat is dis—Ef it had'n been fer de w'ite folks dar would'n be no niggers—dat is, dar would'n be none ter year tell on, fer dat firs' nigger In-iz-Image would er been fung 'in de Miz.'"

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