

# Fellow Mortals

By LYDIA PERKINS

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"You are a worthless nigger, George."  
 "Yes, little mistiss."  
 "And your master and I will have to go to the atmhouse."  
 "Yes, little mistiss; spec yo' will."  
 "Then what will become of you, George?"  
 "Go dar too."  
 "Do you think they would take in a nigger? You are more likely to get on the chain gang."  
 "Te, he, he, little mistiss!"  
 "What are you giggling about?"  
 "Dee ain't no chain gang. We goes on de fahm."  
 "You have been there?"  
 "Yes; I got sent dar 'bout a yeah ago."  
 "George, have you been a criminal?" His mistress looked at him with shrinking disgust.  
 "Spec I has," he returned glibly. "I been mos' eberty'ing—crap shooter, buck dancer an' de res', an' crimnel," he added, with a touch of pride.  
 Mrs. Custis was paying no heed to the negro now. She looked dreamily out through the window at the mellow sunlight of spring. A longing came over her for her old home. She had endured the long and cruel winter with a stoical patience, but the reluctant spring made the sap of yearning rise in her veins. Suddenly she buried her face in her handkerchief, and like a faithful dog George began to whine:  
 "Dar, little mistiss; jes' yo' wait till de udder side de cloud flummux over, an' yo'll see 'nough silver to mek a braid pan."  
 "Oh, go away, you worthless nigger!" Mrs. Custis exclaimed, putting down her handkerchief, and he jumped extravagantly just for the delight of hearing her sweet old laugh, like the ringing of pure thin silver.  
 "But, George," Mrs. Custis resumed, with renewed dignity, "it is true that your master and I are seriously thinking of seeking public assistance." Her delicate cheek flushed at the admission; but, seeing his look of childish horror, she proceeded firmly:  
 "As simple as our living expenses are, we cannot longer meet them, and we must ask for help."  
 She threw up her little figure and proudly left the room, but she stumbled on the threshold, and the negro, with intuitive devotion, knew that her eyes were blinded with tears.  
 He stared with a dropped jaw at the open door through which she had gone. Then, with a voluble grin, he jumped to his feet and, performing a skillful clog dance, seized his disreputable hat and bolted from the house.  
 About a year before this Mr. Custis and his wife had drifted to the great city of New York. They came from Georgia, leaving their home desolate in order to be near their daughter, who had married a clever young artist. It did not take the parents long to discover that their son-in-law had difficulty in supporting his little family, so they, protesting grandly that they had an ample income, moved to a cheap little flat on the east side and in the frightful closeness of a few narrow rooms began an existence that was slow torture to their pride.  
 One day George Harries, one of the most unregenerate negroes in all New York, sidled up on their front steps and pulled the bell. A negro is not naturally a tramp, but he was idle and thought he could bully something from these forlorn old people.  
 Mrs. Custis opened the door and looked her wrath at his presumption.  
 "Does yo' hab any wuk fo' a po' culud man?" he drawled insolently.  
 "No; I don't want any niggers to work for me!" she blazed out. "Get off my front steps!" She was preparing to slam the front door when he jerked off his filthy hat and burst out:  
 "'Fo' de Lawd, I didn't know yo' wuz a south'n lady; 'deed I didn't, little mistiss. Kin yo' give a po' niggah a bite o' somethin' to eat, an' I'll wuk my fingahs to de bone; 'deed I will."  
 And that was the beginning of a strange household—George Harries, crap shooter, low comedian and natural singer and dancer, and these poor, fine old southern people. And he was as faithful as though he was their slave—they as autocratic as though he was theirs by right of purchase.  
 So on this sunny afternoon in spring he shuffled along the street, dipping into old haunts that had not known him for a year. When he reached one of his former stands, he looked shrewdly about for a policeman and, not seeing one, began with great vigor and skill what is known to the initiated as a "buck dance." By the time he had danced for five minutes the crowd was so dense about the performer that it took a tall man to peep over the heads.  
 George paused in his dancing, took off his hat and, singing in a musical voice, "coon, coon, coon," went around collecting. This was all very well, but a policeman snatched up. Finding the attraction was a live negro and not a dead horse, he virtuously redistributed the coins to the amused crowd, and George took a free ride to the police station.  
 By the time he was hustled before the desk his most reckless look had settled over his hardened face. The magistrate, who was looking bored, roused slightly when the officer explained that the negro was indulging in a disorderly dance.  
 "Why were you dancing?" he asked, with a yawn.  
 "'Cause I wuz," was the sulky retort.  
 "George," said the magistrate severe-

ly, "I had hoped you had stopped your evil living. It has been nearly a year since you were arrested."  
 A subtle change passed over the home-ly features.  
 "'Deed, boss," he stammered, "I been livin' all right an' wuzn't doin' nothin' today 'cept a little dancin'. I ain't shot no craps in a yeah mos'—no, sah. 'Deed, jedge," the fellow suddenly blubbered, "I don't know what my po' ole marster an' mistiss is gwine to do if you sen' me down. It wuzn't fo' me I wuz dancin'; it wuz fo' dem—fo' Gawd it wuz. Dey's quality folks, an' dey'd sta've befo' dey'd baig."  
 "That's a likely story," began the policeman contemptuously.  
 The magistrate motioned him to be quiet as he said more kindly:  
 "George, suppose you show me what sort of dance this was."  
 The negro's face broke into sudden smiles. Like so many of his race, he had a childish smile and beautiful teeth. He stepped forth willingly, and it was a pleasure to watch the posturing and gestures so absolutely African and yet dramatic.  
 The magistrate watched him intently. When he had finished and leaned panting against the desk, his honor shot a sarcastic look at the policeman and rapped out, "Case dismissed."  
 George lost no time in putting the police station behind him. He was hustling along toward home when a sharp faced, theatrical looking man overtook him and briefly explained that he had seen him dance and wanted to engage him for his company of minstrels.  
 George had been in New York too long to make an easy bargain, and at last the theatrical manager reluctantly came to his terms. George even got an advance on the strict promise that he would report that night for orders. Then he flew over the ground to the Custis flat.  
 He fell up the steps and burst into the kitchen, where Mrs. Custis was cooking a meager supper.  
 "Law, little mistiss," he ejaculated, not forgetting to pull off his hat, "'deed de Lawd has flummuxed dat brack cloud over, an' dar's some o' de silver linin' right dar." And he triumphantly gave her \$5.  
 Then he told how he got the money. The poor old lady's tears were streaming and he himself was sobbing like a child.  
 "George," she said brokenly, "the ways of Providence are past finding out."  
 And he answered humbly:  
 "Dat's so, little mistiss; dat's so."

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### Not an Optical Illusion

He was positive that he bumped his head when he fell.  
 "You see, it all happened just as I stepped off the porch," he said as he rubbed the back of his thought repository.  
 "My heel touched the corner of the step, and I was gone. I nearly fractured my skull. The stars loomed up like a constellation. I never saw stars as plainly in my life."  
 "But, papa"—his young son attempted to interrupt, but the stern parent would not permit it.  
 "Don't contradict what I say, Frank, because you know I am older than you are," said the pater.  
 "But, papa"—  
 "Frank!"  
 "But, papa, I know you didn't bump your head. And you didn't see stars either. It was the ashes from your pipe. I guess I saw you."  
 And Frank was reprimanded for having his say.—Indianapolis News.

Yielded to the inevitable.  
 Bilson—So you have a titled son-in-law. I suppose you consider him a high honor.  
 Tribbler—Well, yes, he did come rather high, but Carrie seemed sort of set upon buying him.—Boston Transcript.

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### Blonds in History.

It is certain that blond, long headed men once played a great role in history, for it was they who colonized Galatia and brought home the treasures of Greece and Italy to Toulouse, who overthrew the Roman empire in the west and won England from the Britons. It is equally certain that this physical type was once much more dominant and widely distributed than it is now and that it is tending to die out. This is especially true of that pronounced form of blonds which is distinguished by red hair. Red haired persons do not now constitute the majority in any known tribe or nation, but one authority sets forth grounds for thinking that red hair was once much more prevalent.

It must have occurred, for instance, among the Brahmans, since they were forbidden by the laws of Manu to marry red haired women. There is no doubt that blonds and red haired persons are still encountered about the Hindoo Kush, among the tribes from whom the Brahmans are supposed to have been immigrants. But obedience to the law mentioned would, in the course of time, annihilate the tendency to their reproduction.

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