A POET'S GRAVE.

As now I pass you by hallowed ground,
Where slanting sunlight through the tinted trees
Flashes to the soul shimmeringly green,
And seems alight every forest scene,

I pause, uncertain of this earthly ground
By visions glorified, and these mien.
Be not heaven's portal that now opes and frees
My captured soul from all this mortal round.

It was a poet who once slumbered here.
And poets' dreams remain when they have slept.
The dreaming men call them immortality
Then come to charm my thoughts to-day
Heroic minstrels of olden and other days had kept
Tall shrived watch and say aye or nay.
—Clifford Lanier in Harper's Bazar.

TREASURE IN THE PIT.

It was in the very thick of the cotton picking season. The crop was large and the planters were driving ahead to gather it before any misfortune befell it.

The members of the Order of the Chosen Sons of Identity had an entertainment at the Black Arbor meeting house. The society was wealthy, for the members got from fifty cents to $1 a day picking cotton—a large sum in the country. In giving their entertainment the Chosen Sons of Identity were assisted by the Daughters of the Golden Rocker. A large crowd attended, as it was a Saturday night and they had all day Sunday in which to rest.

The entertainment was a great success, owing to the good management of Silas, the chief grand sachem or lambkin, as he called his of the order. Merriment and jollity reigned when old Juba entered the house and applied for membership into the order.

Old Juba was a strange negro tramp whom Mr. Sam Rodgers had hired in the great dearth of cotton pickers, and whom the regular plantation hands viewed with suspicion and dislike, and his claims for membership were scouted by Silas, chief grand lambkin.

"You wants to be a Chosen Son ob Identity? Have you genuine gis, lay identification, lay—lay—lay—ob?" "No, no, you identity cotton, dat's all de identification you kin do!" said the chief grand lambkin, superciliously.

The crowd roared with laughter, but the mirth of the company ceased when old Juba, unnoticed by their peers, began to tell them that a spirit had appeared to him and bidden him to go in search of buried gold, and he would do it.

"De spirit tell me yer," cried the old man, "'ere, yer, yer place. He say tuh me, 'Juba,' said I go, 'Go home for a branch that not nuff and scaff de spring of which to switch a reuder cram; follo' de branch till you all tuh tree peaters, den follo' till you come tuh a clump ob sweetgums on de far side, half an' 'dief'."

Old Juba's manner had altered, his head was thrown back, his eyes fixed, and his voice assumed a singsong tone like a kind of rude preaching. The superciliousness grin vanished from the face of the chief grand lambkin, and the crowd listened in speechless awe to this revelation.

"Ah! my Lawd!" muttered they, as he ceased speaking. "What's Marse Sam Rodgers spring branch?" "I knows de tree peaters." "An' de clump ob sweetgums," cried one and another of the company. The entertainment broke up and the crowd followed old Juba as he went out to cut a witch hazel divining rod by the light of the moon.

Sunday saw quite a long procession of superstitious negroes accompanied by old Juba, at the clump of sweet gums and began to try to locate the spot where the gold lay buried. Shutting his eyes, the old man whirled round and round with the divining rod held in each hand, but no bent a little and seemed to indicate a particular spot. The crowd covertly watched him out of the far, and Juba, opening his eyes, paced the measure off the ground for about twenty feet. This was all they could do Sunday, so they returned to the Black Arbor meeting house and probably spent the day preaching about the "diddles of the spirit."

Early Monday morning they all assembled at the plantation house and asked permission to dig for gold. Mr. Rodgers was greatly surprised at the request, for he thought they were all out in the field picking cotton.

"Dig for gold down for the sweetgum trees? No, indeed! Take yourselves off to the cotton field; that's the place to gather gold."

"Dere's seventeen an' a half bushels been taken," cried old Juba; "an' I's will 'a', sah, tuh 'vide wot you, w'en we git it."

"I expect you are, but there is no gold there."

"It wuz buried dere fo' hundred years ago, so de spirit says."

"Well, the spirit lies. This country was settled 100 years ago. But there is millions of gold in the cotton field; go back and pick it out."

But the excited negroes refused to budge, and at last Mr. Rodgers was forced to compromise. They might dig for a week, at the end of that time, if they found no gold, they must separate and go back to picking cotton. They left him fumbled and fretting, for money loves economy, he was conscious of the fact that the mere heads of his neighbors' farms work also to take part in the search for gold, a sum sum being when it them if they found it.

Accompanied by his followers Juba proceeded to lay off the spot where the hole was to be dug; it must be done with suitable ceremonies "or," said he "mechal spirits will wrath us." He accordingly drew a line at right angles some twenty feet square by 40 feet in.

"Now I wash," said he, "de black cat ob a red mouse."

Silas had become so impressed with the great sum of seventeen and a half bushels of gold that he forgave for the time being the crookedness of the office of chief grand lambkin, and was now a most earnest gold seeker.

"Run, Tishy," said he to his son, "an' pull out Marse Sam's gamecock tail."

Tishy departed and very willingly, for the cock was fleet and hard to catch.

"Now," said old Juba, "jointedly mus' say a wad on de line."

The crowd seated themselves breathlessly as he, with a stick in hand and a garden pick, proceeded to mark off the spot.

"He work that line crooked," muttered a straight eyed sycophant.

Old Juba stopped. "Who dat spoke?"

No found no one.

"If I knowed wot dat spoke I'd chop 'em down wid de hoe pick!"

The crowd looked reproachfully at the speaker, who sank away.

"Now," said old Juba, "yer dem fedders."

They were principally on the rooster, but no one spoke. A runner was dispatched to tell Titus to hurry up. The messenger found Titus skulking about Mr. Rodgers' house lot, trying to drive the rooster before him.

"Dey say some quick wit dem fedders," said the runner.

"Dey better come git 'em themselves, den. Disher rooster spises a cullud pusson wusse'n pisen, an' he'll spur you quicker an' nuttin'. You better stop trowin' atter disher rooster; ef Marse Sam ketch you a-chunkin' him he'll lay his buggy whip ober you 'fo' you know way you stan'."

The two now drove the bird into the lock of the fence, where, armed with their hats, they made a rush at him. The angry cock flew at the runner, who ran, but Titus made a grab at the coveted treasure and the bird flew away, leaving his tail behind him. The two now returned in triumph to the gold seekers.

Old Juba seized the feathers. "Now," cried he, "w'ile I bun dese yer fedder you all kin tek it by tun to pray. Each man pray so long as a fedder bun, wen it bun out dat pusson mus' een. Many prayers is a great discouragement tuh ebil sperits, an' so is bu'nt fedders."

Silas Chief Grand Lambkin was first called on, and in some trepidation he began to pray and his feather to burn. "Oh, Laud, we beseech thee tuh perteck us frum dese yer ebil sperits, we dat's found disher great treasure, so dat of we ain't sole all we had to buy it, leaseways we's let all Marse Sam Rodgers' cotton a-wastin' in de fiel' tell we fine"——

"Stop, suh," said old Juba; "yo' fedder dun' out. Nex' one."

Israel, one of the Chosen Sons of Identity, began: "Oh, Laud, we baig ob thee help agin dese ebil sperits; let us not waste our time liker we waste Marse Sam's cotton dar's a-sheddin' ober de groun' liker onainely snow"——

"Yo' fedder dun bun," said old Juba; "annuder one try."

By the time the rooster's tail had been consumed some fifteen or twenty most flourishing prayers had been nipped in the bud. Some of the feathers being longer than others of course affected the length of the prayers which all were anxious to make; so it fell to the lot of Eli, the last man, to speak only while the last and shortest feather burned. In great excitement he began. "Oh, Laudy! Laudy!" he cried, as his feather began to fiz, "Laud-ee-dy!"

"Dey, it dun bun!" broke in old Juba.

"Chuh!" muttered Eli, crestfallen; "I nebber had no showin'. Dat leetle tail fedder wunt woth talkin' 'bout. Tain't nuttin' but pen fedder nubow."

"It smell," said Juba, "an' mek sperits swink."

In case these fragmentary petitions were not successful old Juba supplemented them by muttering divers incantations against evil spirits, offered in words of his own invention.

The evening ceremonies being now over, the negroes commenced digging, and made the dirt fly. No sooner was one man exhausted than another took his place from the ranks of the anxious bystanders. As they got deeper they rigged up a bucket and windlass and lifted the earth with great speed. While they were doing this Juba continued the fight against evil spirits by burning a Bible from Silas, which he set on a pile of old horseshoes, after opening it and laying a white stone across a page, and he pretended to read in a lamentating voice as they sang.

Silas led the diggers; he had been seized with a thirst for gold, and every time he threw out a shovelful of dirt he looked anxiously for the coveted treasure. Under his lead the Chosen Sons of Identity did mighty deeds of valor. As he worked his imagination took fire, and—

"Juby, gosie yit, suss!" asked an anxious, anxiously.

"No, yit," said Silas. "Ef terrectly I'm'll been tuh slide. I flows at least tun gis a bucket an' when I does de cotton roll 'll know me no mo'. I gwinter buy Marse Sam fo' boss an' buggy an' dribe roun' same liker I wuz white. I'll draw de cups ober Flyin' Boss an' say, 'Git up, suss!'"

At the mere idea of this grandeur Silas surrendered to joyous laughter, and Witches Clinking he spat, for he was an avid tobacco chewer. Old Juba looked up from the Bible he was pretending to read.

"Dey now! you gone an' spit. Wha' you spit tuh? Spittin' is a sign of encouragement to ebil sperits—jis cause dat mek-sah an' sit way from hah."

Silas sorrowfully arose and retired crestfallen, and another man, with an unruly mouth, took his place.

As Silas returned from the scene he made a vague effort to establish his present social status. "I wuz a man who peared tuh be bluse it, an' not anudder pusson." He shook his head, he failed to recognize himself and he went over that same ground. "I wuz a man who 'peared tuh be bluse it, an' not anudder pusson; dat I knows fo' a fac." Here he met his wife, who had been the witness of his disgrace.

"You need tuh be ton kind. But now you's kin ob nuttin."

Overwhelmed by this cutting remark, Silas sunk away.

Old Juba now formulated a new set of rules and regulations under which they were to act. They were not to go in a whole at work, nor within a certain distance of the excavation, neither should they chew tobacco. They were to work night and day, nor could they stop work during the time allotted them, lest it cause the evil spirits to overpower the good spirits under whose guidance he acted. These evil spirits had it in their power to remove the gold at any time they might gain the ascendancy.

All of this information the negroes implicitly believed, and day after day the work went on. After digging some forty feet the gold seekers struck a bed of rock, and now their progress was slow, but they stuck to it, nor could any one persuade them that it was impossible for buried gold to be hid in solid rock.

"Dey sperts tell us sig," said they, and dig they would, while the fast opening cotton field and wasted. It seemed to the exasperated planters more than they could stand.

The weather was hot and sultry, storms had been frequent in the vicinity, and they lived in constant dread that their time would come next and their crops be ruined. A cyclone also had visited the adjoining county and blown people and houses about in a lively manner. The terrible reports of its havoc had set the negroes wild. Those who were not interested in the gold digging were full of terror of the cyclone, and wished to stop work and go to digging cyclone pits—that is, the wicked ones were the more pious insisted that it would be resisting the will of the Lord.

Chief among these was Aunt Bina, Mrs. Rodgers' nurse. This godly woman maintained the extreme sinfulness of taking any precautions against the convulsions of nature, as they were instruments of the Lord's vengeance, and should be so received.

While the negroes thus wasted their time and their employers' crops the planters fumed and fretted. As for Sam Rodgers, he used more ugly language than he had in a twelvemonth, consigning the diggers of pits and gold to unmentionable localities. He was moreover much provoked by the disfiguration of his pet gamecock, and he attacked Silas and his son Titus, whom he found disconsolately lounging about his horses' lot.

"Who pulled out the tail of my rooster?"

"Ef I could find the fellow I'd lay my buggy whip over him."

"I dunno nuttin' 'bout it," said Silas. "I think too much ob myself to bodder wid rooster, 'specially gamecock, which is a vice ob Satan, an' nuttin' for me, a Christain man an' de chief gran' lambkin ob de Chosen Sons ob Identity tuh meddle wid."

"Silas," exclaimed Mr. Rodgers, "I never suspected you before, but I believe in my soul that you and Titus had something to do with it."

"Me, Marse Sam!" cried Titus, as Silas stood dumb and conscience stricken. "Fore Gaud I nebber tetch dat rooster; he'll spur yoe ef he get a chance. He too 'spise a cullud pusson for me tuh fool wid 'em. He's better 'an a watch dog in de chicken coop. De moment you try ter get in he crow."

"What have you been trying to break into my chicken house?"

"Laud! no, suh! nebber t'ink ob sicher thing. I only try de do' tuh see, jis' by way ob' speriment. I year de niggers say so, so I tried, not dat I'd demean myself tuh steal, an leastways yo' chickens, Marse Sam. But fo' Gaud jes' as I put my han' on dat do', dat rooster riz up an crow', coo-coo! go-go-go! jes' same as he could talk."

"Well, now his tail is gone he don't crow."

"No, suh, seems like all his pride in life is gone! His hea at is broken."

"I wish I could break the head of the fellow that robbed him."

"Yes, suh, I wish you could," said Titus, smiling sympathetically.

Mr. Rodgers, having heard of Silas' downfall, determined to make use of him in overthrowing old Juba. The chief grand lambkin was now an altered man. As he stated it, "he was now nowhar." While he was in this forlorn condition, Mr. Rodgers unexpectedly came to his relief by offering him $2 to break up the gold digging fever.

"There is no gold down there in that bed of rock," said Mr. Rodgers. "That old darky is crazy, and you negroes are a pack of fools to believe him."

Silas smiled in silence. He did not believe Mr. Rodgers, but still he thought it would be a good plan to run off old Juba and get the gold in the pit himself, and at the same time recover his lost prestige as chief grand lambkin.

Mr. Rodgers was a wamish man, so he took great pleasure in preparing Silas and Titus for the parts they were to play. Accordingly at midnight the gold diggers, who were working in profound silence, were startled by strange sounds and groans that proceeded from the woods. Two tall, white phantoms, each supplied with two heads, adorned with fiery eyes and mouths, appeared, followed by another that looked like a gleaming skeleton.

"Who meddles with my gold?" cried they.

"Laud hab mercy!" cried the negroes, and began to pray. Old Juba leaped up.

"Some hands hab a spiteful?" he yelled. "An' sarah ebil sperts."

"Debil of debil! I come after you!" cried a hoarse voice.

With another wild yell Juba fled, followed by the mob in frightened terror.

"Now I'll get my cotton picked," said Mr. Rodgers, and he went to bed with a contented mind.

But with daylight the negroes' courage returned, and they swarmed about the pit full of excitement. In the bottom of it was found a paper on which was written: "I have taken the gold and left you the hole."

Curious to see how matters were progressing at the gold diggings, in the afternoon Mr. Rodgers took his wife for a stroll and walked in that direction. Aunt Bina accompanied them with the baby. He was a big fat fellow, more than a year old and quite a load for an old woman, but she doted on him and thought him a wonder of the earth.

Hot day was hot and oppressive. A strange saltiness filled the atmosphere.

"We'll have a shower before long," said Mr. Rodgers. "It's coming."

This observation started Aunt Bina off, as she wanted behind with the baby. She had long wished to ask Mr. Rodgers his opinion concerning the discussion which raged between her and the cyclone pit diggers. Now was her opportunity.

"Marse sem," said she, "don't you think Gawnor tuh run frum de Lawd?"

"Why, I do."

"You does. Why does you?"

"Because it is a useless waste of time; you can't get away, you know."

"Well, then, don't you think a diggin' ob cyclone pits is wrong?"

"I don't know. What makes it wrong?"

"Why, it looks tuh me liker tryin' tuh resist de will ob de Lawd. Ef de Lawd wuz pointed tuh 'stroy you by a cyclone, wouldn't it seem liker fyin' in his face, ur runnin' from Gawd, tuh go dig a cyclone in an' hide frum him?"

"I don't know," said Sam. "I don't think I'd spend my time digging a pit, but if there was one handy I think I'd jump in if there was a cyclone about."

"But didn't you jis say you wouldn't run frum Gawd?"

"Well, I don't, only from the cyclone."

"Well, ain't dat again his will tuh 'stroy you by a cyclone?"

"If 'twas his will to destroy me by a cyclone it would overtake me before I could reach the pit, and if it was his will that I should escape I'd get there ahead of the cyclone."

"Ki! Marse Samuel! dat ent de way tuh talk. It mus' be ole right ur wrong tuh jump in de pit. Now, I bleiv it's wrong."

"Then I'd keep out," said Mr. Rodgers.

"Yes, suh, dat's jes what I'se gwinter do, de Laud bein' my helper. I'se gwinter stan' right up an' say, 'Yer, Laud, yer's a-suh.'"

In the meantime the crowd of negroes about the gold pit were in a state of great excitement, which was actually lashed to fury by Silas, anxious to recover his influence. Old Juba seemed dazed. All he could do was to remark time and again

"Sumbaudy spit! Sumbaudy spit!"

"He mus' be ebil sperits—dey'll'a' wise w'en dis hab de chill," opined Israel.

"He crow wus de Bible," said Silas, contemptuously. "Dey way de ebil sperit stump 'em!" and he pointed to the marks of Mr. Sam Rodgers' boots, where he had accidentally trodden on the book.

"If he wasn't frah trowd away de Bible no ebil sperit could mek gis de sole," argued Silas. "All de you hab tied yo' wuk tuh puttin', sides losin' yo' dollar a day pickin' Marse Sam's cotton. You's bin yern week, an' you's got nubdin' tuh show fuh it, but disher big hole in de groune, an' annudder in yo' pockets."

This artful speech roused the crowd to fury. Propositions to hang Juba by the more excited, or to beat him by the milder men, were freely expressed. Old Juba made but one defense.

"Sumbaudy spit!" he muttered. "Sumbaudy spit!"

As the day went on, the near approach of Sunday and the fact that there was no week's wages to buy supplies, caused them to wax hotter and hotter. The Chosen Sons of Identity formed themselves into a band of regulators, and each armed with a hickory, they seized upon Juba, and were about to give him an unmerciful beating when a sound, an awful sound, smote upon their ears.

"'Tis de ebil sperits!" yelled Juba.

The sound came nearer. The trees began to wave and bend, then to crash, as they were uprooted and hurled to the earth.

"A cyclone! a cyclone!" screamed Silas, and leaped into the pit, followed by the others.

Mr. Rodgers and his family were still sauntering down the road, and Aunt Bina was still declaring that she would never run from the Lord, when that sound smote upon their ears and an awful sight appeared to their eyes: for away across the great cotton field could be seen a strange looking sight—a gigantic inverted cone, whether of aggregated dust or descending clouds the beholders had no time to decide. It approached with a fearful velocity, and with an awful sound that terrified the boldest. As it passed everything fell prone to earth; trees, fences, houses disappeared. It seemed death incarnate; the fell destroyer visible!

"My God! it's a cyclone!" cried Rodgers, appalled. "Run for the gold diggers' pit! Run, Laura! Don't faint!" as his wife staggered. "Run, Bina, run!"

But Aunt Bina needed no urging. Throwing the fat baby to her shoulder she darted ahead of Rogers and his wife, and flew like the wind.

"Not for myself, Laud," she screamed as she ran, "not for myself! I ent a-runnin' frum you, but 'tis disher chile, Mars Sam's baby, I'se 'sponsible fer!"

Indifferent to the crowd in the pit, Rodgers hurled himself and his wife in. Aunt Bina was already there; she had lit on the back of Silas. The next second, with its fearful whirrings and moanings, the cyclone swept by. The three sweetgums were uprooted and fell across the pit, shutting them securely in.

In five minutes the strange storm had swept by, and all was calm and still save for a shower of rain.

But in the improvised cyclone pit hubbub reigned; groans, cries, prayers rent the air till Mr. Rodgers commanded silence. They were packed like sardines in a box, so that they could not move. It seemed strange that they could make so much noise.

After some consultation Israel, who was tall and slim, mounted the back of Silas, who was very broad, and after many struggles and failures managed to scramble out between the branches of the trees. Finding an ax hard by he chopped a hole among the limbs, through which they all finally succeeded in escaping after a rude ladder had been improvised for them to ascend on.

While these preparations were going on the imprisoned crowd indulged in some lively passages. Silas could not refrain from twitting Aunt Bina by asking how she came there in the pit.

"I cum yer," said she boldly, "kase I bleegter fetch Marse Sam's baby. You think I gwinter 'low Marse Sam's baby tuh be knocked tuh pieces?"

"I thought you was one dat wouldn't run frum Gaud, an' yer you cum plid de junk in disher hole. Please Gaud, ef I hadn't scrouged tuh one side you'd hab knocked I my head off."

"You think I gwinter tek de 'sponsibility ob disher chile an' 'low hurt'ing tuh happen tuh he. No," cried she, hugging up the fat baby, "mammy loves her toy."

"Ef it's all fery well 'bout de chile," pursued Silas, "but how, I wunter know, you gwinter escuse tuh de Lawd for runnin' frum him? He ent a-gwinter tek no sicher 'sense as dat. He'll say, 'You trittin' runaway nigger.'"

"Silas, hold your tongue," said Mr. Rodgers coming to the aid of woman's courage. "I think God Almighty knew a good deal more about the matter than any of us, and if we had followed our own wills we should have been killed."

"Yas, the Lord will say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,'" said Mrs. Rodgers, very dryly.

"Yes, I'd like to see you get tuh say tuh dat!" said Aunt Bina triumphantly.

"Tisha, Miss Laura," said Silas, "I berry glad Aunt Bina sake de chile, Gaud knows I'd hat tu stand by fo' she an' myself. Aunt Bina bein' a [illegible] of quality on grass, dese tu hit. Bin run yern as times I'se successin' her duty, but as a sinner wonder she should run from the Lord."

By this time between faith and duty Aunt Bina was in quite a maze, but Mr. Rodgers cut the matter short.

"Nobody can run from God, for he is everywhere, and so was that territory and hunt a place where he isn't, but it's perfectly right to run from a cyclone like fury."

When the prisoners were released they saw that a storm raged for feet wide had been cut through the cotton field and the weeds as far as the eye could reach by the cyclone in its awful course.

"My friends," said Mr. Rodgers, as he looked around, "this cyclone was a lucky blow that you dug this pit else we all might have been swept into eternity. And our lives are the treasures that we found in that hole."

That night Juba disappeared. By times Monday morning the hands were in the field gathering in the remainder of the cotton crop.—Paul Grant in Atlanta Constitution.

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