



## SHAKESPEARE JOHN AND JOSEPHINE JANE

BY MARY E. BRUSH

"STOP yer caperin' round, Shakespeare John! Yer fur all of de world yer stand still an' listen to yer mammy? Take dis yer basket ob clo'es to de lady at de Ebbitt House, Mis' West she is, de captain's wife. De washin' ob de clo'es comes to two dollahs. You take ker ob de money, Josephine Jane, an' don't yer lose it, 'cause if yer does, yer'll git de biggest wollopin' yer eber had. Now mind, an' be perlitte when de lady speaks to yer!" And, having given this final injunction, Mammy Linkum nodded her turbaned head and went into the cabin to resume her task at the wash-tub.

"Good-bye, mammy!" chimed her son and daughter, as they went down the road.

The Linkums (the head of the family had named themselves after "good Father Abraham") lived a few miles out of Washington, on the grassy slopes leading up toward Arlington Heights.

On one side was a grove of healthy young trees; on the other a winding road, whose red sands the spring rains had worn into ruts and gullies. Behind were the hills, the soldiers' barracks, officers' quarters, observatory, and tall flagstaff of the Signal Station. Far to the west, in front was the broad Potomac, and beyond it the cities of Georgetown and Washington.

As for the Linkum house itself, it was only a little low, white-washed building, with a tall, smoke-begrimed chimney at one end. At the further end of a little lot, enclosed by a "snake" fence, was a pen, containing two promising young pigs; and near it a rude shed, in which Ulysses Grant Linkum kept a super-annuated mule. Chickens, ducks and turkeys were plentiful, and the Linkums were regarded as a thrifty, industrious family.

Twelve-year-old Shakespeare John, accompanied by his sister, Josephine Jane, went down the well-beaten path and opened the wooden gate, with its homemade leather hinges.

Shakespeare John was tall and strong, with a wiry, well-knit figure, a wide, good-natured mouth, a pudgy nose, dancing black eyes, and a mop of woolly hair. His costume was not very elaborate—a blue plaid shirt and a pair of snuff-colored trousers that had once belonged to his father. For this reason they were large, of course, but the lad had shortened them considerably by rolling them up above his ankles. But the baggy part behind—there was no filling that out; and whenever Shakespeare John ran, which he very frequently did, there was a great wabbling flow of drapery. Perhaps, though, it was just as well that the snuff-colored trousers were not tight, because the cloth was poor and could bear no strain; and, besides, there was an ugly rent there already, which Shakespeare John had had the misfortune to make while climbing over the "snake-fence around his home.

Josephine Jane, having the well-known proclivities of her sex, was better dressed. She wore a pink calico frock, stiff and shiny with starch, and a neat sun-bonnet and ruffled white apron. She was short and fat, and clumsy in her movements.

In every other respect she resembled her brother.

It was only the middle of spring; but the weather was mild, and neither of the children wore shoes or stockings. The hot sun warmed the sand in the road, so that the twenty bronze toes, tripping along, were not chilled. Even if they had been, I do not think the children would have minded it much, they were so full of joyful anticipation over their walk.

It was not very often that they were allowed to go to Washington alone. Generally the clothes were taken over by their father; but to-day he was doing work which he couldn't leave.

"Shakespeare John, jest wish yer'de heft yer side ob de basket," said Josephine, after they had crossed the Potomac bridge; "Yer lets me hab de woist part ob it. 'Tain't bery perlitte, seein' as how yer is a boy an' older'n I is."

"Sho! But yer weigh mo'n I does, Josephine Jane! De trouble am yer is lazy. But den all ob de female persuasion is no-account critters!" Shakespeare John exclaimed, taking his hand out of his pocket and grasping hold of one of the willow handles of the basket.

"But habin' erder talk so! 'Tain't perlitte! Sides I haint ob de 'female persuasion.' Mammy am a Mefodist an' pappy am a Mefodist, an' I'se elder a Mefodist ob noffin'."

"Pooh! Yers ignerant, yer is! Didn't yer know female meant gal?"

But Josephine Jane, not paying any attention to this information, began to trill out, in shrill, piping tones:

"De mockin'-bird, him sit an' sing, an' zing  
De sky-lark him fly on de wing, de wing,  
De rice-bird—"

"Sho, Shakespeare!, what am dat?"

The two children hastily set down the basket under a dog-wood tree, and stepped up to a tall board fence on which were posted pictures, red blue and yellow, representing the animals and various attractions of Barnum's Show.

"Dat am de elyphant, Jumbo," Shakespeare John proceeded to explain. "He am de one wum swam over from England. He et so much. Queen Victoria dribe him away. Jake Sydney done tole me 'bout him."

"Did he swim 'cross, suah? I t'ought he'd drowned hisself! Why didn't ye bring him in a ship?"

"Ship! Sho! Yer is a silly gal!" Shakespeare John exclaimed contemptuously: "Whar d'ye s'pose dey get a big enough ship? Jumbo's bigger'n forty miles!"

"I never seed an elyphant 'fore. Say," hesitatingly—"say, which am his head? He has a tall at bot ends."

"Dis yer am his trunk. He gobbles up eberyting wid it."

"Oh! an' here is anuder elyphant; a little one, a missin' ob his mudder!"

"Yes; and jest see, Josephine Jane what lot ob animals. Hooses an' lions, an' camels, an' monkeys, an'—Oh, glory! Don't yer jest wish we could see 'em all alive!"

"Course I does, honey? D'ye s'pose pappy an' mammy'd let us go to de show?"

Shakespeare John shook his head doubtfully.

"No, I doesn't. Time an' gin I've heard mammy say it's wicked. 'Sides, it'll cost lots. A quarter apiece as suah as you is born."

"But can't we crawl in?"

"Git taken in by de perlice if yer does."

Reaching Washington, the children found the streets crowded; and it was with difficulty, laden as they were with the big basket, that they could make their way through. They finally reached the Ebbitt House, delivered the clothes, and received the pay for them. Just as they descended the stairs and entered the street, a blast of trumpets, loud strains of music, and the beating of drums burst upon their ears.

Shakespeare John dropped the empty basket and began to dance a double-shuffle upon the sidewalk.

"De circus am comin'! De circus am comin'!" he cried.

And sure enough there presently did appear down Pennsylvania Avenue a long train of various vehicles—gorgeous red and yellow chariots, men and women fantastically dressed, prancing horses, gay trappings, tinkling bells! Then there was the rumble and rattle of wheels, the clatter of horses' hoofs, the heavy tread of mammoths, all mingled with the roaring of the cage beasts, strains of inspiring music and the laughter and noisy chatter of crowds of spectators.

No wonder that the two little darkies, used to the quiet of their country home, were wild with excitement, and ere the gorgeous pageant had passed by, Shakespeare John exclaimed, with solemn intensity:

"Josephine Jane! Jest as suah as you an' I is bo'n, we've got ter see all ob dis yer ting. I'll bust—I'll sartilly bust, if I doesn't! I feels myself swellin' out now!"

"But, sonny, deah," said Josephine, in mild, maternal tones, "how is we to see dis circus? We hasnt got de money!"

"We has, Josephine Jane; we has!" solemnly. "I shall take two quarters out ob de pay fur de washing dat de captain's lady done gib us!"

"But what will pappy say, an' mammy?" looking frightened at the enormity of this dishonest scheme.

"Neber mind, honey!" said Shakespeare John with a wave of his hand.

"Neber mind. No use tinkin' ob dat. Time enough for hawlin' when the lash falls. Come on, gal!"

The temptation was too great, and Josephine Jane made no further objections.

The tickets to the show were purchased and the hours that followed were quickly passed in wonder and delight.

Next day the two little darkies had they seen such wonderful things!—"Brustad," the great Norwegian giant; "Chemad," the Chinese dwarf; wild men of Borneo; savage Zulus; very fat women, skeleton men, lions, tigers, bears, panthers, zebras, giraffes, monkeys, and—all, we haven't room to name 'em all!"

Tired at last the children sat down to rest in a quiet little corner. Now that the fun was over, they began to experience some gnawing misgivings as to the reception they should meet upon their arrival home.

Josephine Jane took out her dingy red pocket-handkerchief and began to count the money she had left.

"It's all here," she said. "An' I'se glad of it. I was afraid dat in de crowd it might git stole."

During this while, a shabbily-dressed lad of perhaps sixteen years, whose face and hands were black, had been white had soap and water been applied to them, was standing near one of the wooden supports of the tents and stealthily watching the two colored children.