

MONT REBIE'S SWAP IN EGGS

Was a Bad Transaction From Business Standpoint.

But the Big Blue One Produced a Sturdy Gander That Was Trusty Night Sentinel.

On a bright Saturday in April Uncle Meck and Aunt Rebie walked down the big road to town.

Jo-Jim, the adopted son of this old couple, despite their injunctions, played ill-conditioned pranks along the way.

In Aunt Rebies' white oak splint basket were ten dozen eggs, nicely packed in cottonseed, with a bit of lint cotton on top.

With this she counted on buying many delicacies to add to an Easter feast, mainly to be furnished by a basket from Tolstone House. That never failing basket would contain a turkey, flanked with jams and "light-bread" and real "white folks' cake."

Master and mistress never forgot these old quondam slaves at Easter-time.

But at the first store of the short row of village shops Rebie came to fear that she could not get even the moderate price of 10 cents a dozen for the eggs she carried, for there she saw what she had never seen before, a gorgeous supply of eggs—red, yellow, purple, blue, gold and never a plain white one among them.

"For goodness' sake, Meck, what better eggs is dem?" exclaimed the old woman.

"They are Easter eggs. The Easter hen laid them," explained the young clerk facetiously.

"You don't say! Not des one hen, and you hear dat, Meck! Des one hen. Des she hatch also?"

"Well, not often. She usually rests until another Easter."

"Well, she need to."

"Can't I sell you some?"

A gleam lit up Meck's dim old eyes as he drew his wife aside to whisper:

"Bootleg blue hen want set, Rebie."

"For true!" exclaimed Rebie.

"Swap yo' eggs for some of dem, Rebie."

"Even swap?"

"Is you crazy? Dozen fer one and be glad."

"What 'bout de other things us wuz gwine buy?"

"Ain't what marse sends al'n's 'nough and mo'?"

So Rebie offered the exchange of a dozen for one. The clerk made the bargain and, perhaps pricked in conscience at so manifestly unfair a trade, threw in an extra one—a great white egg with just a tiny blue flower drawn there on its surface.

At home, in their little daubed log cabin, they carefully handled the eggs. Meck raised the large one gingerly:

"Dis must be de last of de litter, hit so different from de rest. Hit's clearer than de others too."

In fact, it was the only raw one of the number, the only one whose pores were not thick with dye.

With every precaution the boot leg blue was "set."

There were two treasures now to be guarded from the prying porcupinities of Jo-Jim—nest of many colored eggs and a certain strong box chained to the leg of the old four post bed in the cabin.

Even since the little scamp could remember he had tried to find out how that box got there and what was in it, but old Rebie did not herself know.

Meck knew its contents, he had seen the box, basked and blunderbuss. The sweet April air was all astir with flight and fluttering of bird wings. The fence corners were blue with wild violets. The golden bells of the jasmine sweetened every swamp and field.

At last the white pillars of Tolstone House came in sight. The poor old people were admitted, and Rebie presented her gift—Easter.

Easter behaved very handsomely. He turned up one bright eye on the master, the other on the mistress, who wept at the gift of her former slave. Master, too, must wipe his glasses.

Meck put the box on the table before the colonel. From his neck he took the key on its leather string. Old master had given it to Lim long years before, when the now staid old colonel was a wild spendthrift.

After much ado it opened. The lid was lifted. The glow of gold and the sparkle of jewels shone before the amazed eyes.

A yellow letter told a part of the story. The colonel's recollections of his early escapades filled up any blanks.

"And Easter save us all dat money," cried Rebie, and she reiterated the story of how the sagacious gander had awakened them in the night.

"Easter shall never be eaten," declared mistress. Indeed, Easter's age had already given bond that he should never be eaten with pleasure.

So it came about that the colonel's young son visited a home of rejoicing instead of one of sorrow.

The two old people went but once more to their cabin in the lonely

swamp, and then only to move all their belongings to a house of their own in sight of Tolstone Place, a gift of young master.—New York Evening Post.

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At the last New Year's reception Mrs. Custer, known for her own charming personality as well as because of her gallant husband's fame, stood beside Mrs. Miles and received with her during the afternoon.—Mary Breckinridge Hines in Woman's Home Companion.

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