

held the large family bible, the spiritual comfort of which probably emanated from its mere presence, since none of the household could read. A four-post bedstead, furnished with a puffy feather "tick" and adorned with a bright-hued patchwork quilt occupied half the room, and beyond, through an open doorway, was visible a stout pine table, a lofty shelf sustaining a water bucket and drinking-gourd, an ironing-board, a spinning-wheel, and, in the yawning fireplace, a pot and three-legged skillet, hobnobbing among the ashes.



JINSY AND PALMYRE.

"'Tain't much, Gawd knows," acknowledged Aunt Haly pathetically, "but hit's all ourn, whut us done sweat en wrassele for, en look like hit jes' tear out de nachel heart-strings to gin hit up. Lawd! Lawd!" And big tears fell among the crimson holly berries, as Aunt Haly gathered up her wreaths and started for the lonely burial plot.

After a while the children, who had remained at home, decided to build a fire. "Ginst gran'paw come from lookin' atter he traps; den granny mout make some coffee, bein's es how dis here Chris'mus Eve," Palmyre, the second girl, suggested.

"I'm sustonished at you, Pellmy, well es you done heard granny say us ain't got no coffee 'tall," corrected Jinsy, the eldest.

"Wull, den, a hoe-cake," said Palmyre, retrenching; "dat's fillin', anyhow, en I'm des holler es a gode, I sho' is!"

By this time Jinsy, Palmyre (phonetically, "Pellmy") and their brother Tom, nicknamed "Bud Chug" as a contraction of "sugar," had sprawled before the hearth, where the newly lighted pine-knot blaze threw weird glints upon their pudgy, good-natured features; but Patsy, the youngest, sat silently in the shadow.

"Whut you study'n 'bout now, Patsy?" asked Jinsy. "You de cu'ouses' human being in creashun, anyhow!"

"I ain't no human being, I'm des folkses like you all is," cried Patsy, indignantly rejecting her sister's term as one of suspected opprobrium.

"Dat's de same thing," explained Jinsy; "but whut is you study'n 'bout, dar in de dark? You look like you done fell off de roos', chile."

"I des turnin' over in my mine whut granny done 'low 'bout Sandy Claws," confessed Patsy, rubbing a tear from her eye with a grimy fist, "en I des study'n ef all un us wuz to git toge'r en pray, seem like de Lawd mout sen' ole Sandy Claws to we all house atter he done wint de round. Unk' Sampson, over to Fog Level, 'low folkses allus got to 'pend on de' Lawd. He say dat how-come de buzzard ain' pestered 'bout nothin' like tur' beastsesses is, eaze he allus lookin' to Gawd," declared the little creature with all a child's simple faith.

"Umph, how at?" inquired the more skeptical Jinsy.

"He say, de buzzard en de hock 'ureed to jine pardners for vittles. De hock mighty brash, en flewed back'erds and for'ards, wid his eye sot for a squ'l or a chicken, whil-t de buzzard, he des -ail round sorter sleepy, wid his eyes half shot, like he ain' keerin' to bother hisse'f 'bout nothin'. De hock up'n 'low, 'Brer Buzzard, look like you ain' hustlin' yo'se'f 'bout dis business.' 'Don' hatter, Brer Hock,' says de buzzard. 'Vittles don' never bees no botherment to me, for I pen's on de Lawd, I does.' 'Dat mout do for you, de hock say, 'but I looks to myse'f for all I gits,' en wid dat de hock tuck'n drap down into Mr. Man's chicken yard, en grab holt er one de fattes' Dominicker pullets. Den de man runned out wid a gun en kilt de hock. Atter while, here come de buzzard. En time he seed de hock layin' dar in de fence cornder, he tuck'n hit, en he hop up to de cyar-kiss, en he 'low, 'Po' Brer Hock, you'd better 'pended on de Lawd, like I does'; en he 'gun eatin' wid dat."

"Nigger, you sho' is got sence like a mule," declared Palmyre admiringly, upon the story's conclusion.

"Cose us kin 'pen on de Lawd, but us don' know how to lif' no prayer."

"I does," cried Patsy eagerly; and plumping upon her knees, she began, "Lawd, sen' Sandy Claws to—"

"You ain' got to go bodaciously into prayer like dat," interrupted Bud Chug authoritatively. This young person, with an aim for future ministerial honors, had devouted much thought to such matters, and had stored his memory with choice cullings from the negro pastor's perorations.

"You commences, 'Mussyful Father en glorable Gawd, us po' sinners is 'sembled here dis' night to ax en explore yo' probearingness for our backslidin' en onchristianness.' Dat de way Brer Brown make a start over to Mt. Zion,"

So instructed, Patsy began anew, and progressed smoothly until she entered the field of individual wants. "Send Pellmy," she prayed, "a new calker coat—"

"Shucks!" broke in Bud Chug, "you cain' come at de Lawd so familiar-like, I done tole you. You oughter say, 'Gressious Gawd, turn yo' incounenance onto dis po' sinner, Pellmy, whut's in de low grounds er sorrow.'"

Along this line the prayer continued down to the final clause, when Patsy, having set forth the family needs to her perfect satisfaction, suddenly ended.

"Dat a turble onrespectful way to cend," remonstrated Bud Chug severely. "Ax for

whatsome'dever you wants, mighty perlite, en den drap off wid plain 'Amen'! You hatter slope long sorter easy, like Brer Brown does. Des say, 'En now, homni-presents Father, us have ax yo' attention to dese humble words of ourn, dough us ain' crackin' ourselves up to 'serve nothin' of thee, 'cept'n' thoo de blood of de Lamb.' Dat kin' of cend sorter like hit ought to be."



"DES STUDY'N."



LIFTING PRAYER.