

It is simply one of the accidents of the humble biographical sketch herein attempted, that its subject was a slave, and perfectly content to remain so; and I mention the fact just as I should state that Mr. Greeley was a printer if I were writing of that gentleman's life.

My acquaintance with Phil began when I was a half-grown boy. Until that time I had lived in a free State; so that when I returned to the land of my fathers and became an inmate of the old family mansion, in one of the south side counties of Virginia, the plantation Negro was a fresh and very interesting study to me.

On the morning after my arrival, as I lay in the antique carved bed assigned me, wondering at the quaint picturesqueness of my surroundings, and the delightful strangeness of the life with which I was now in contact for the first time, a weird, musical sound, of a singular power and marvellous sweetness, floated through the open dormer windows, borne upon the breath of such a June morning as I had never before seen. I listened, but could make nothing of it by guessing. It was music certainly—absolute music, if Mr. White will allow me the phrase—and yet it was not music in the ordinary sense at all. It rose and fell like the ground swell of the sea, and was as full of melody and sweetness as is the song of birds, but it was as destitute as they of anything else like a tune. It began nowhere and ended no-whither. I listened entranced and wondering, but could make nothing of it. I had no memory of anything with which to compass it, and could conceive of no throat or instrument capable of producing such a sound. Springing out of bed, I made a hasty toilet and descended to the great piazza at the front of the house. There sat the master of the mansion, and of him I straightway made inquiry.

"What is that?" I asked eagerly.

"Why, that is Phil," answered my uncle.

"And who is Phil? and what on earth is he doing? and especially, how does he do it?"

"He's calling hogs," replied my guardian. "If you'll walk up to that skirt of woods, you can put your other questions to him in person. He is not shy or difficult to approach. Introduce yourself, and be sure to tell him whose son you are."

My uncle's face wore an amused smile as I walked away. He could imagine the sequel.

In the edge of the timber stood a tall, broad-shouldered, brawny Negro man, singularly ugly, but with a countenance so full of good humor that I was irresistibly attracted by it from the first. At his feet stood great baskets of corn, and around him were gathered a hundred or more swine, busily eating the breakfast he was dispensing. As I approached, his hat—what there was of it—was doffed, and I was greeted with a fabulous bow, apparently meant to be half a tribute of respect, and half a bit of buffoonery, indulged in for my amusement or his own.

"Good mawnin', young mosta; hope I see you well dis mawnin'."

"Thank you, I'm very well," I replied. "You're Phil, I suppose?"

"You're right for dis oncet, mosta. I's Phil, to be sho'; ax de dogs—dey done knew me."

"Well, Phil, I'm glad to make your acquaintance. I'm your mas' Jo's son."

"What's dat? Mas' Jo's son! Mas' Jo's son!! My MAS' JO'S SON!!! Lem me shake han's wid you, mosta. Jes' to think. Mas' Jo's son! an' Phil done live to shake han's wid Mas' Jo's son! Why, my young mosta, I raise your father! Him an' me done play marbles togeder many an' many a time. We was boys togeder right heah on dis very identumcal plantation. Used to go in swimmin' togeder, an' go fishin', an' steal de mules out'n de stables Sunday, an' ride races wid 'em, an' git cotched too sometimes when ole mosta git home from chu'ch. My, mosta, but I's glad to see you!"

All this while the great black giant was wrenching my hand well nigh off, laughing and weeping alternately, and stamping with delight, which could find no other vent than in physical exertion. I was naturally anxious to divert the conversation into some other and less personal channel, and managed to do so presently by asking Phil to give me a specimen of his hog-calling cry, which I wished to hear near at hand. I began by saying I had never heard any one call hogs in that way before.

"Dat's jes' it, mosta," he replied. "Folks don't undustan' de science of hog-callin'. Dey says, "P-o-o-o-o-o-o-r'og" when de