

THE CHRONICLES OF AUNT MINERVY ANN

were Paul Conant and his father-in-law, Major Tumlin Perdue, it was natural that the fact should revive old memories.

The most persistent of these memories were those which clustered around Major Perdue, his daughter Vallie, and his brother-in-law, Colonel Bolivar Blasengame, and Aunt Minervy Ann Perdue. Curiously enough, my recollection of this negro woman was the most persistent of all. Her individuality seemed to stand out more vitally than the rest. She was what is called "a character," and something more besides. The truth is, I should have missed a good deal if I had never known Aunt Minervy Ann Perdue, who, as she described herself, was "Affikin fum 'way back yander 'fo' de flood, an' fum de word go"—a fact which seriously interferes with the somewhat complacent theory that Ham, son of Noah, was the original negro.

It is a fact that Aunt Minervy Ann's great-grandmother, who lived to be a hundred and twenty years old, had an eagle tattooed on her breast, the mark of royalty. The brother of this princess, Qua, who died in Augusta at the age of one hundred years, had two eagles tattooed on his breast. This, taken in connection with his name, which means The Eagle, shows that he was either the ruler of his tribe or