

IN A TRANCE.

I scarcely know how it happened, but a timber must have fallen and struck me on the head.

The first thing that I realized after it was that I was straight and still on something hard, and when I tried to move myself and speak, I found it impossible to do so.

"Well," said the cheerful voice of Hopkins, "he'll never open his mouth again."

"I heard to look at him, Bob; he was so mortal homely, alive, he must be frightful, dead."

I ground my teeth in imagination, as I remembered how often she had gone into raptures, or pretended to, over my noble brow, and expressive mouth; and how she had often declared that if I were taken away from her she would surely pine away and die.

"But you loved him," remarked Bob. "No, I didn't! My affections were wasted long ago upon one who never returned my love."

"Well, you somers near," assented my dear affianced. "Now, Jerusha, you don't mean to insinuate that I—"

"I don't mean to insinuate anything, Bob Smith!" and the angelic sweetness of her voice was somewhat sharpened.

"Now, see here, Rasha, I've loved you ever since you were knee high to a gopher, but I thought when you came home that you was sweet on that other chap; but I swan I believe you loved me all the time!"

"Oh, Bob!" said my was-to-be, in a gushing sort of way. "Mine own Jerusha!" remarked Bob.

"Then I heard a subdued rust, accompanied by violent lip explosions. I tried to kick, or grate my teeth, or do something to relieve my outraged feelings, but not a kick nor a grate could I raise."

"Now, that particular suit of clothes was just the neatest one I ever owned—arm holes, collars, wrist bands, buttons, all just the thing, and my blood boiled to hear them talk so coolly of using them for stripes in a rag-carpet. They kept on talking as they swept, dusted and cleaned up the room."

"Bob says he will take the Martin farm to work this year," said Jerusha, cheerfully, "and as soon as we are married we shall go to house-keeping in that little cottage close to the road. Now I must get my carpet done, just as soon as possible, for I want it in that nice little front room. These duds of Ben's will make out enough rags, I guess. His folks live so far away they will never inquire about his clothes. Now, if it wasn't for the looks of it, we could ask old Mother Smith about coloring yellow; she's sure to be here to-day."

"Yes," he said, rather absently, "bad, rather—that is—ahem!"

"I thought as I looked at Jerusha. "Go and speak with him," said her father, in stage whisper. "He's got the stamps, and you had better marry him after all."

"O, I am so glad!" she said, sweetly, without appearing to notice what I said about clothes—that you are not dead, Benny dear. My heart seemed all withered and broken to see you lying all cold and white. I wept bitterly over your pale face, my beloved."

"I rather think I could come," I replied. She looked toward the door, but it was crowded full, so she made a drive for the open window, and went through it like a deer.

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Uncle Billy Objects to Civil Rights. "I interviewed" Uncle Billy, a good colored friend of mine, the other day, on the question of civil rights.

"Don't want nuffin more," said Uncle Billy. "Got too much already fur dis niggeral."

"How is that, Uncle Billy? Is it not a good thing to be equal before the law?"

"Now, Marsa Boss," grunted Billy, plaintively, "dakar jest war de misery comes in. We're eal before de law, an' dar yer hit our weak pint. Before de war, er niggah stole chicken an' pig, yer jeked him up, giv him thirty-nine lashes an' let him go. But jest let a cullud pussion try it now! Yer hauls him 'fore de court and sen's him to de penitentiary; just like he was one of yer poor white trash. Dat's what 'tis to be eal 'fore de law!"

"I suggested to Uncle Billy that this might be obviated by being a little more honest.

"Marsa Boss," interrupted Billy, "we can't run agin natur. It's nat'ral fur niggah to steal pig and chicken, fryin' size. Yer know it is, an' 'taint no use tryin' to stop us. Now we ups are willin' to let you ups alone, and you all jest let us alone on this pint. We're powerful weak on dis pint, Marsa Boss."

Just here a perverse and disloyal spirit tempted me to hint to Uncle Billy that the colored people were indebted to their Republican friends for this change in their status.

"Well, den, Marsa Boss," said he, "all I's got to say is, do law's got to be changed. Mus' hab a law for de white man and a law for de black man."

Strange as it may seem, some of our best citizens echo Uncle Billy's sentiment. They are inclined to view the negro's minor transgressions in a lenient light, and I know that some of our Democratic Judges impose lighter penalties upon colored men for small offenses than they would do in cases where the guilty parties were white.

Before Uncle Billy left I asked him how he would like to sit down at the table with white folks at the hotels.

"Great Goddammighty," exclaimed the good old man. "I allow youse tryin' to make fun o' dis chile. Why, you knows yourself dat no cullud pussion ober lets a white man see 'em eat if dey kin help it."

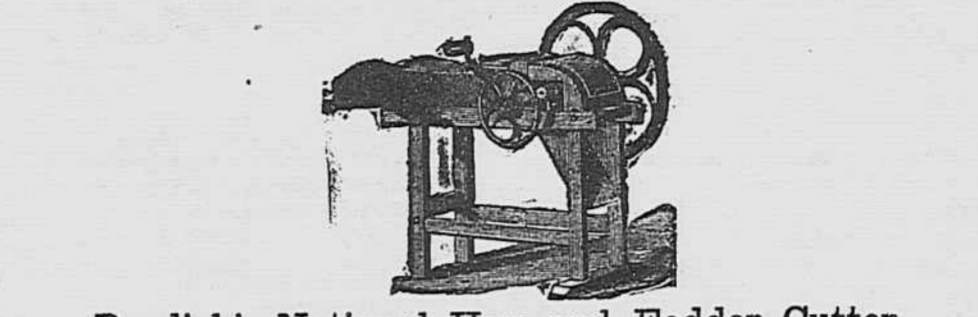
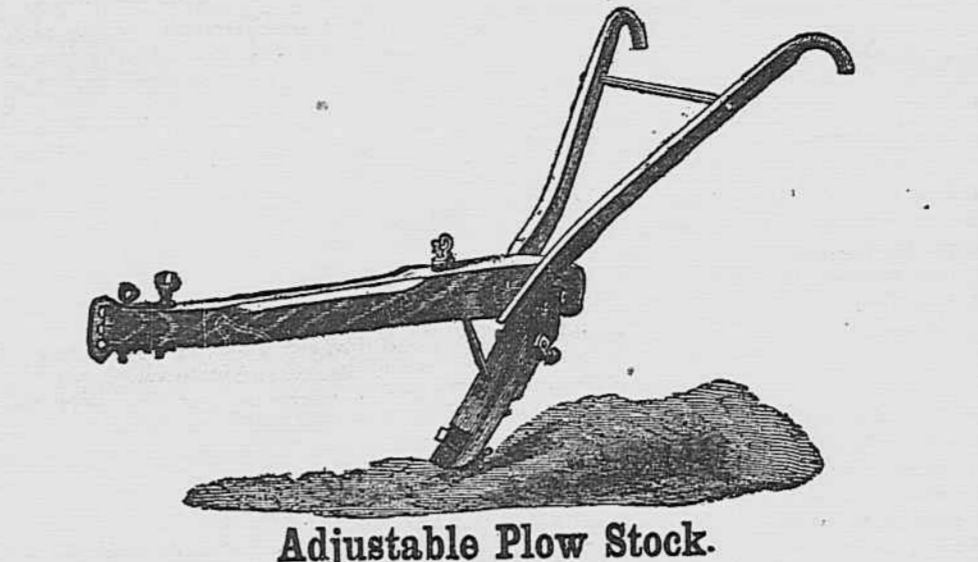
This is strictly true. The ordinary Southern negro will not eat in the presence of a white spectator.

"Well, Uncle Billy," I said, "it is very evident that you do not want any civil rights."

"Not anything more, I tank you," replied Billy. "Nearly done ruined now. Hev to pay my own doctor's bills, lost all my money in the Freedmen's Bank; neber got no forty acres an' de mule dey promised me; an' can't help myself to a little chicken, fryin' size, widout gwine to de penitentiary. I's got 'nuff cibil rights!"

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