

PETE'S RABBIT PLANTATION

Mystery of a Reservation That Brought Freedom and Riches to a Slave.

BY MARIAN BREWSTER.

(Copyright, 1895.)

One bright December afternoon in the year 1859 Pete and Jim were out rabbit hunting in the piney woods of Arkansas. Pete was the likeliest young negro on the plantation and Jim was the smartest. Pete was being a faithful dog, was allowed considerable liberty, and even at times honored by the team of Mrs. John's gun. As for Jim, he had his own way in everything, and whenever Pete, grinning from ear to ear, shouldered the coveted gun and started off for the woods the dog always had a mind to go hunting too.

Sooner or later they were always successful, never failing to bring back enough birds, rabbits or squirrels to win a smile from Mrs. John's wife and the promise of another hunt for the coming dog always had a mind to go hunting too.

This afternoon the companions had wandered far over the pine straw, through thickets and along branches, before Jim announced by a shrill bark that he had started a rabbit from the grassy cover. The dog bounded after the bounding rabbit and Pete followed as fast as his long legs could carry him.

The evergreen needles of the pines were glancing overhead, but the dead leaves had fallen from black jack and gum bushes, so that Pete could see a long distance between the straight pine trunks and the tangled branches of his usually nimble feet were caught in the meshes of a dewberry vine and he fell flat just as the rabbit disappeared in the hollow trunk of a hollow tree. The aperture had been for Jim neither rabbit nor fortune would ever have been found by him.

Jim, however, had no intention of the hobbling trail of the rabbit and was half way into the log himself, the visible half of his body quivering with excitement and his tall waving fringe of hair flying in the breeze. A death watch on the rabbit, while from within the hollow tree arose his shrill throat smothered importunities to the doomed beast it represented.

Pete, instantly on his feet again, came running with cocked gun, but seeing that the rabbit was sure game, like the prudent darter that he was, he determined to save his shot and secure his game by a simpler method.

He cut the straight branch of a holly tree, stripped off the prickly leaves and sharpened one end of the primitive weapon. Then he pulled Jim from the hole, and kneeling down, peered into the hollow tree. The aperture was quite dark, but hardly an arm's length within he perceived a white glimmer which he naturally took to be the rabbit. Without the least hesitation he thrust his arm and hand to grapple with the creature. But to his surprise, instead of meeting with soft fur and sharp teeth, his hand struck a substance of considerable weight and he drew forth a sharp metallic jingle.

Instinctively his hands closed on the object and he drew it forth. It was a small, oval bag of no great size, but of considerable weight, containing shifting metal bits that struck muscally together as Pete turned the bag over and examined its contents.

"Lords!" muttered Pete, his teeth chattering and his face turning gray with fright, "this yea am money, gold!"

Now Pete had no intimate knowledge of money. Indeed, he had never owned a piece in his life, but he had seen money and he had handled it, and he could guess something of its value from the very scarcity, and he knew, moreover, that he himself was valued at \$2,000.

The thought that occurred to the startled darter was that he had found the hoarding place of some white man, perhaps the overseer himself, and he looked sharply through the woods to make sure that he was not observed.

He was about to thrust the money back into the hole and run away, but Jim's shrill insistence and his own hunter's instinct impelled him to secure the rabbit. To do this was the work of a short moment. Then having snatched the bag to where he had found it he took to his heels.

Pete did not return immediately to the plantation. He was too agitated by his discovery to dare to look a white man in the face. He wandered about the woods until he had tired his quarry, and when he returned he had been somewhat composed by the natural excitement of securing it.

However, the darter was as disturbed by the consciousness of his secret, that the marks of trouble were on his face when he went to the great house to put up the gun and the rabbit and the squirrel to the overseer's wife.

Miss Sally, being a woman of discernment as well as of great good nature, added an extra dimple to her genial face and asked cheerily:

"What all you, Pete? Do you want a hot tooth?"

"No, thank, Miss Sally," replied Pete, shifting his eyes and hanging his head.

"You look so down in the mouth and unnatural like, I know you might be sick," said the good woman.

Pete raised his eyes and looked at her wistfully. He had a half notion to confide in her then and there, but he would think that part of the woods as if it were haunted, but if, on the contrary, nobody claimed the treasure, then why should he be afraid of it? He had a half notion to confide in her then and there, but he would think that part of the woods as if it were haunted, but if, on the contrary, nobody claimed the treasure, then why should he be afraid of it?

She did nothing of the sort, however, but informed her husband of the strange story as soon as he came in from the plantation.

The overseer, who had no doubt under that sentiment said at once that the money must be turned over to his employer, Pete's master.

When Pete brought the money into the house the overseer counted the gold and the silver coins, which were sterling United States money, and announced that there was the round sum of \$11,000, considerably more, Pete had wit enough to know, than the sum at which he was valued.

The next morning, with the money in his saddle bags and Pete on an old mule, in his wife, Mrs. John rode to town and delivered the money to Pete's owner. He told the story of his discovery, stating, in accordance with the promise made to his wife, the desire of the negro to purchase his freedom.

The master, who was a keen-headed northern man, examined the coins curiously.

"I shouldn't be surprised," he said, "if the money were the money that the government paid to the Indians for the reservation where my plantation lies. The red rascals not knowing the value of money, probably stored it out of their way in the hollow tree. I see what comes of that there'll be time ever I'll advise the money, and when we enough to talk of other things."

Time passed and no claimant came for the mysterious bag.

his hand among the cold, hard coins. Then, leaning forward, he let the moonlight play upon the glittering wealth.

The touch and the sight of the money overcame all fear and scruples. With a chuckle of delight he thrust the precious bag under his arm, and started off for the cabin, where he hid it on a beam under the loose plank floor.

His strange mood was the wonder of the other darters.

"I clare to goodness, Pete, dar ain't no countin' on yo' dese days. Some time yo' will be a Lord of all creatures, an' doan' yo' want to speak to lak' a thief an' don't 'il' yo' sneaks around 'em?"

"I reckon yo' all bound ter mek yo' yo' own 'il' yo' sneaks around 'em?"

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boy, I can't let you go for that money. It's a big sum, but I want to see you get it. You buy you, come now, tell me what you want your freedom for."

The negro shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, but he said nothing.

"Don't they take good care of you down yonder?" persisted the master.

"Yes, mars."

"Give you plenty to eat?"

"Yes, mars."

"Work you too hard?"

"No, mars."

"Then you want your freedom?"

"Yes, mars."

"No, you don't, you fool. You wouldn't know what to do with it if you had it. Now, listen, I'm going to do the handsome thing by you. I'll let you come up to town once a week. Come right to my office and I'll make you a present of something to spend with. Don't be afraid to spend it. I'll see to it that people know that you come by it honestly."

The master clucked the coin enviously and professed it to the slave with a complacent smile. But Pete withheld his hand and shrank back.

"The money bag am all mine, Mars," he faltered.

"Yours!" thundered the master, his smile changing to a menacing frown. "See here, you fool nigger, you don't know what you're talking about. What are you hounding for, anyway, the world?"

"I wants my freedom, Mars," said Pete, sullenly.

"Well, go on wanting it," roared his master, brutally, "and go on wanting this money!"

He checked the rejected coin back into the bag, which he tied with an energetic twitch of the string and carried toward the safe.

Pete's mind suddenly changed. From a sullen darter he straightened up a strong and determined man. The mist of abject fear that had clouded his eyes was burned away by the fire of manhood and daring. The prick of resentment had freed the struggling soul. With one impulse the intellect burst through the veil of suppression and the man threw off the shackles of his degradation.

With a quick blow of his fist Pete struck his master senseless. He seized his money bag from the slackened grasp and stalked forth in search of him, did people remember that, about an hour before, they had seen him mount his mule and ride leisurely away toward the plantation.

And that was the last seen of Pete in those parts. For though they searched for him far and wide they never could drive the wily woodsman from his lurking place nor trail him far through the swamps, and at last, he was generally supposed that he had escaped with his fortune to the north. His real whereabouts, however, was never discovered, and the disappearance of the money bag remains as great a mystery as its first appearance in the hollow log.

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In the summer of 1818 the good ship Dido sailed from Mauritius, bound for Madagascar, with a cargo of French manufactures, which were to be used in barter for spice and coffee with the nabobs of the island.

After bowling along right merrily for a few days the vessel was beset by a storm, and she remained in this condition that the supply of meat, fruits, chocolate, flour and other provisions began to grow low, and the passengers and crew had to be put on short allowance.

Of the live stock there remained nothing save a patriarchal rooster, who spent most of his time perched on the mast, and a few of his devastated brethren. Being something of a pet, his execution was delayed as long as possible, but the cravings of the passengers for fresh meat became at last so strong that sentence was passed upon him, and he had fallen beneath the cruel hatchet of Neptune the cook.

The Neptune was a Madagascar negro, a fairly intelligent fellow, with, however, an amazing fondness for napping. And it is one of his naps that is responsible for the story.

As the savory odor of the sizzling rooster penetrated the ship, the hungry passengers could scarcely restrain their impatience. By a sort of tacit arrangement, they had all remained in the cabin, keeping each other in sight, lest some of them should be tempted to seize the luscious bird with violent hands.

All of a sudden a loud knocking was heard, and the alarming message that all was not right, and simultaneous with this dispatch there came a cry of terror and despair from the cabin. At the all hands raised on deck to find the unfortunate Neptune ringing his hands in agony and shrieking for while he slumbered at his post, lo, the precious bird had been snatched by the cook.

Naturally, the disappointment and anger of the passengers was very great, but it was not to be compared with that of the mate. A passionate man, and a man somewhat of a dandy, he had converted him into a fowl. Uttering a fearful oath, he seized a large knife and made a leap for the covering creature before him.

"Don't kill him! don't kill him!" cried a sturdy young fellow, and he rushed forward just in time to save the negro from the descending stroke. In doing so, however, he received a severe wound in the wrist, from which the blood streamed copiously.

The murderous mate was seized by the crew and disarmed, and he was so badly frightened that he fled away, and he was not seen again.

A day or two after this episode, a breeze sprang up and the Dido soon arrived at her destination.

Four years later, Louis Bergaz happened one day to be dining at an English boarding house in Batavia. Opposite him at the table were seated two gentlemen who had been sent out by the British government to inspect the countries lying near the equator.

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aprons for dolls of five or six inches, delicately finished off with tiny bows. Pocket handkerchiefs, not more than half an inch square, with initials embroidered in red silk and open buttoned. There are chapelets of white and gold beads, so minute that they almost slip out of one's hands. The dexterity of the little fingers, the amount of patience, the care, the attention, the precision, the extreme nicety lavished by the youthful fashioner of these dainty treasures strike one with astonishment. We evoke the scenes which excited her imagination, and in these childish achievements we see the same qualities of self-reliance and self-dependence, and the same womanliness which have constantly been exercised by Queen Victoria in the latter part of her life.

TOUCHING HER COURT ETIQUET.

Baroness Lehzen had the happy thought of turning the dolls to account, and by their means to initiate her pupil in the forms and ceremonies of the court. Receptions and presentations were arranged, and the numerous retinue of puppets dressed in full court costumes, with feathers and lappets. A long board full of pegs which fitted into holes in the wall, and the puppets were hung on as if they were real. The young princess learned unobtrusively to perform with ease and grace the functions of her high position.

Princess Victoria, until she was twelve years old, utterly ignored her prospect of her presumptive to the throne. So far her mother was intent on guarding her from notions of the crown, and she was kept in the nursery, which Louis remembered having given to Neptune, the cook, gazing on his wooden self a representation of a man in European costume, wearing a head a wide straw hat. He was standing in the attitude of one who interprets a blow, and his right hand was stained with red. The features were not exactly flattering, though in a rough way some attempts had been made at imitation. The dress also resembled that worn by Louis at the time of the incident on board the Dido, and around the neck was tied a scarf, which Louis remembered having given to Neptune, the cook, gazing on his wooden self a representation of a man in European costume, wearing a head a wide straw hat.

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to subdue the violence of her emotion, she laid her head upon her mother's shoulder and sobbed aloud.

It has been said that the princess seldom appeared in court. She was seen at two or three drawing rooms and occasionally at the theater. In