

THAT DOCTOR

By "Bruce Grit"

THERE are some among the "Superior Race" who find it an exceedingly difficult matter to render unto "Caesar the things that are Caesar's." So it appears was the case of the wealthy Mrs. Flint, whose husband acquired his wealth by serious practices and saved his conscience three times a day on Sunday, by reading after his rector, the prayers and lessons in the book of common prayer, assisted by Mrs. Flint, who with a puritanic smirk seemed always to give the impression that she and her family were doing the Lord a service in devoting a few hours in praise and song once a week and in giving back some of their ill-gotten gains to civilize and Christianize the heathen in foreign lands.

The Flints kept three family servants, a cook, a maid and a butler, the former was a full black whom they had imported from the sea islands of S. C., where the sun shines hot. Their butler was also a South Carolinian with strongly marked Anglo-Saxon features, and a dialect flavored with rice and Hopping John. They kept him chiefly because he was a first class butler, and knew his business and place, and like themselves, was the personification of piety, but unlike them he worshipped in a Baptist church of which he was head deacon. His name was Silas, and when the Flints had company which was quite often, Silas furnished a good deal of amusement for his employers and their guests by his quaint answers to questions with which they plied him concerning his life in the south. He always referred to his former master as "She" and his mistress as "Him," while all white folks were "buckra." Silas had also one other good quality in the estimation of the Flints, he didn't believe in Negro doctors or in Negro lawyers. The Flints encouraged him in this for they too had small respect for either the literary or professional Negro and they considered Silas a "very intelligent ducky." Mr. Flint, who was a politician often consulted him concerning the political activities of his race and frequently advised him as to what men in his judgment his race should put forward for delegates to the local conventions. Bob Jones, the garbage man, Dan Lucas, the night watchman at the town hall; Bill Gudgins, who looked after the private residences in the absence of their owners during the summer, these he considered the most influential and intelligent Negroes in the town, and his in-jorsement of these men was usually conveyed in a letter to the pastor of the Colored Baptist church, which was sent about a week before the convention and always contained his check for \$50 and two or three full pages of eulogium of these Negroes, who also were members of this church. Thus the voters got their cue and when the time for the election of dele-

gates to the county convention arrived they knew exactly for whom to vote to represent their wishes. Now there were several other Negroes in the town, a Colored lawyer, doctor, dentist and a small merchant who ran a notion store in the Negro section, and a number of others who were fairly well to do, having saved and invested their earnings and purchased their own homes, they had built up quite a respectable community. But Silas told Mr. Flint that these Negroes were trying to be white that the doctor never visited the Baptist church, that his wife was stuck up and only spoke to certain women of the race in town and never visited among the women who worked in private families. Mr. Flint told Silas this was an awful indictment of the better class of his race, but did not tell him of course, that the same feeling existed among the better class of whites toward the poorer and more ignorant, that the wives of the white street sweeper and bar room keeper, were not considered the social equals of the wives of the white bankers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, etc. But there was a reason for Mr. Flint's silence on this point.

Silas, poor, ignorant soul, saw only one side of Mr. Flint's argument against the better class of the black race. He was willing and quick to believe that things unequal to the same things are equal to the things that are really equal to each other. In his blindness he could not see the incongruity of the social intermingling of crude and trained minds on terms of equality and that no real equality could exist between such minds—man is mind, but the man whose mind has been cultivated is the superior man, intellectually. The uncultivated man is not infrequently superior in moral stamina and in all the homely virtues to the man of intellect, for it not seldom happens that the wider intellectual knowledge gives its possessor opportunities for stepping aside from the path of right and using his knowledge to conceal his misdoings—to cover up his crime against society. It is then that his less fortunate brother looms as his superior in the qualities that make for honest and virtuous manhood.

One hundred trained soldiers can easily put to rout three hundred untrained civilians. Two educated men are superior to ten uneducated men in mentality. Silas' logic, however did not reach this height. He was unable or unwilling or perhaps both, to admit that an educated man of his own race stood on a par with those of any other race all things being equal. He himself had always been a servant, had always been taught to bow in humble submission to the will of the white man, and to look upon him as a superman, an altitude in the republic of intellect which he believed was impossible of attainment by any Negro

who aspired to excel in the professions. He believed that these high stations in life belonged exclusively to white folks.

One day while in the performance of his menial duties, he was taken sick, some invisible force struck him in the region of his kidneys, and knocked him full length on the dining room floor together with a trayfull of the Flint's costliest imported china which he was taking to the pantry. The noise of his fall and the crash of broken china aroused the household, and the first person on the scene was madame, who on beholding her servant in that position hastily concluded that he had been dallying with the family wines and liquors, with which the cellar was well stocked—when she beheld her fine china smashed beyond hope of recovery or repair she stamped her dainty foot, and said something about the stupid carelessness of darky servants. At this juncture Mr. Flint having finished his morning paper, came in, and Silas groaned.

"What's the matter, Silas?" he asked, stooping down to him, for Silas was weak.

"Mah back him broke, Sah, Mah kidney done bust."

"He has been drinking," said Mrs. Flint, "and has fallen and broken all of my fine cups and saucers."

Mr. Flint who was now suspicious stooped down again and asked Silas how it happened, and stooped low enough to get the range of his breath. Silas answered weakly that as he was taking the tray of china from the dining table to the pantry something seemed to strike him in the region of the kidney and knocked him down.

Mr. Flint arose and said quietly to madam, "There is no smell of liquor on his breath, the fellow has kidney trouble, we must send for a doctor at once."

"But our doctor is out of town," said Mrs. Flint.

"Yes, that is so," said he. "I remember he told me he was going to New York today."

"Then I suppose," said Mrs. Flint, "we will have to send for that darky doctor. We must do something quickly for Silas, as it will soon be time for luncheon and he hasn't gotten through with half of his morning's work."

Silas groaned again and turned over on his left side. This time Mrs. Flint stooped down to him and asked him the name of that Colored doctor and where he lived? Silas opened his eyes wide and said, "Ah hopes you all ain't gwine to send for dat man to ten' me. He ain't no doctor. He jest calls heself dat. I don't want no doctor 'cep'n Dr. Gray, our family doctor."

Mr. and Mrs. Flint exchanged smiles at this, and Mr. Flint told Silas that Dr. Gray was out of town and wouldn't be back till late, that he, Silas, was in a bad way and required immediate help.

"Oh, well, den in dat case yo all kin sen for him (another groan), but I clar ah ain't got no faith whatsoever in dese niggah doctors!"

Mrs. Flint looked up Dr. Dendon's

address in the telephone book and finding it called him up telling him that her Negro boy, Silas (48 years of age), was quite sick and to come at once. The maid would admit him at the basement door.

Dr. McDendon politely informed Mrs. Flint that he was a reputable practicing physician, and that he was not in the habit of accepting calls from people who directed him to kitchen and basement doors, that if she wished to engage his services for her servant he must enter her house through the same door as her own family physician, otherwise he must respectfully decline to accept the call. "My self respect, madam, impels this course."

"Oh," she said, "You may come, but please 'wipe your feet good before you enter." Dr. McDendon laughed and said, "I will be up immediately madame, good bye."

In 20 minutes Dr. McDendon was seated in the Flint reception room, awaiting the summons to go to the relief of his black patient.

Presently madam entered, he arose, bowed and said "good morning."

"Oh, you are that Dr. Dendon," she said.

"I am Dr. McDendon, madam, and am here in response to a telephone call from Mrs. Flint—you are Mrs. Flint?"

"Yes," she said, somewhat haughtily. "I'm Mrs. Flint."

"Where is the sick man?" asked Dr. McDendon.

"Follow me," she said, leading the way to her fine dining room where Silas lay on the floor, groaning with a chair cushion for a pillow under his head. The doctor asked if the man might not be placed on a large couch in the reception room as then he could examine him more satisfactorily. The maid was called and she and the doctor endeavored to lift him. Silas was a man weighing 190 lbs. They gave up the job. Then Mr. and Mrs. Flint assisted and Mrs. Flint sprained her left arm in the effort and almost let Silas' head, which she was carrying, fall as they passed with the body to the reception room where they placed it on the couch, to the infinite relief and disgust of madame. The women retired and Dr. McDendon and Mr. Flint looked after the patient. The doctor asked him a number of questions, had him describe his symptoms just before he fell, etc., and diagnosed the case as one of acute kidney trouble. He prescribed a liquid medicine and recommended a plaster, advised him to drink plenty of water and to avoid spirituous liquors. Calling for a spoon he gave him a dose of liquid out of a bottle from his medicine case, the after effect of which was good for Silas, for in about an hour he was up and around and almost as spry as he was before the catastrophe. Meanwhile the maid had returned from the druggist's with the liquid medicine and plaster, the latter the doctor applied to Silas' back, admonishing him not to remove it for several weeks, and to take the medicine regularly according to directions. The maid had to do Silas' work that day, in addition to her own, and she was not altogether pleased with the assignment.

As the doctor was leaving, madam, who had retired to her little hall sitting room, called him. She was nursing her arm which was giving her great pain.

"How much is your bill?" she asked. "I charge \$2 for outside calls, \$1 when patients call on me," he said.

She opened her purse with much difficulty and extracting two \$1 bills therefrom handed them to him. He took them and taking from his pocket his receipt book, wrote on one of the blanks in a neat hand \$2 received from Mrs. D. J. Flint for professional services rendered her servant, Silas." C. P. McDendon, M. D., and passed it to her with a polite "Thank you, madame," and took up his hat and medicine case to depart, when madame stopped him to say that her arm which had been wrenched, was giving her great pain and asked him if he thought he could relieve her?

"Do you wish me to examine your arm, madame?" asked he.

"Certainly," she replied, and you will be the first Negro doctor I have ever had to attend me. Our Dr. Grey is out of the city today, perhaps you can do something to ease the pain."

"I will try, madame," said the doctor taking hold of her arm and looking at it critically.

"This is merely a little local trouble, madame," he said, and he began to massage the arm from the shoulder down, and suddenly he gave it a sharp jerk which caused madame to emit a cry of pain, which ceased as suddenly as it came. "You have only twisted the muscles of your arm, madame. Your pain will be entirely gone in a few minutes. Then he took a small phial containing a liniment from which he took a few drops and rubbed the lady's arm briskly, kneading the flesh like dough. When he had finished she was all smiles, for he had told her the pain would cease in a few minutes and this last opera-

tion had removed every symptom of pain.

"I declare this is simply wonderful," said madame, swinging her arm to and fro as she spoke. "I did not believe I would be able to use my arm again for a week, and here comes along a Negro doctor who in less than twenty minutes has almost performed a miracle. However did you do it?" She asked wonderingly.

"Oh, it was simple, madame, it only required a common sense knowledge of physiology, a little skill in manipulating the muscles, a little heroism on the part of the patient and some vigorous rubbing to get the muscles back into their proper place."

Well you deserve great credit doctor. You are a credit to your race. I confess that I was prejudiced and that I had no faith in Negro doctors, but you have converted me. You have skill, culture and ability. I have been mistaken. I confess it."

"You are very frank, Madame, and I honor you for it. If I have been the means of changing your opinion respecting the professional capacity of my race I am very glad to have been the medium through whom the message is now to be delivered," said the doctor.

"I am going to give you what my doctor would have charged me for the same service, Dr. McDendon, \$25, and if I again need your services in my family I will not hesitate to call you up."

"I thank you madame, both for the class I represent and for myself personally. I have the honor to say good afternoon to you, as I have an important surgical operation to perform at 2:30 today."

Mrs. Flint arose, extended her hand and preceded the Colored doctor to the front door, opened it wide and bowed him out with queenly grace, holding the door open till he had reached the pavement when she said in her most cheerful voice, "good afternoon doctor." The doctor lifted his hat in acknowledgement, bowed and hastily proceeded to his next patient. At the Flint residence that day Dr. McDendon was discussed from every angle. Mrs. Flint led the discussion. Silas, who was recovered sufficiently to wait on the guests heard every word of it and agreed with the opinions expressed about this Negro because they came from the mouths of his employer. Dr. McDendon was an exception, he was different, and Silas took off his coat after that and became a McDendon booster. He even had the doctor designated as the medical examiner of his lodge and sometimes got sick accidentally on purpose so that he could call him up.

Mrs. Flint no longer alluded to him as "That Doctor," but as "Dr. McDendon, our Negro physician."

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