



HER "RIGINAL EGG."



road, "an' runnin' like a w'f turkey!"

A moment later the door flew open and Chloe Ann rushed into the room.

"Aunt Deb," she gasped, "dem gals up ter de school house—"

"Look yer! I wants ter know w'at you mean, bustin' inter de house dis way."

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Jane. I done sot dar ar hen dis mornin'."

Not in the least abashed, Chloe Ann bounced out of her chair and clapped her hands, declaring that she knew "zackly w'at ter put in de inside o' dat aig, an' she shouldn't as nobody, kase dey was all b'longin' ter her."

"You'se bou'n' ter speckerlate fudder'n dat, ehle," said Aunt Deb. "Dat aig's 'bleeged ter have mo'n insides. Go 'long an' do some o' yo' flourishin' roun' de wood pile. Atter we'll set roun' de stove an' proje'e 'bout dat 'riginal aig."

It was after 10 o'clock when Aunt Deb and her niece rose from their seats before the fire.

"An' att'er all dis 'spercin' an' contendin'," said Aunt Deb, despondently, "we aint make out ter kiver dat aig! I k'n ax Miss Cole fer de ole boxes— you'll git yo' pas'boan' outen dem— an' like 'nough she'll gimme de strong w'ite muslin. But I dunno w'at you gwine ter do fer de outside."

"Don't you be troubled in yo' min' 'bout dat, Aunt Deb. Law! I'se bou'n' ter in' kivering' fer dat aig. 'Taint gwine out in de world naked, cert'n sho'. I aint nebb'er got lef' behine yit, Aunt Deb!"

With this cheering assurance Chloe Ann jumped into bed, and was soon fast asleep.

Aunt Deb spoke truly when she said that the girl was "clar grit." Until the last eighteen months of her life she had always been ill-fed and overworked.

When she was 11 years old her sickly mother became a helpless invalid, and upon Chloe Ann were laid burdens far too heavy for one so young.

Many a time she lay awake all night with hunger that the mother might not suffer. Many a time she stood between her drunken father and her mother's bedside, warding off the blows intended for the sick woman, and receiving them at last upon her own shoulders.

When the mother died, two years later, and her father declined to support her, Chloe Ann begged and worked her way from Georgia to a small town in Pennsylvania where Aunt Deb lived. Her aunt had sent money to pay the cost of the journey, but the father had discovered it and gained possession of it.

The poor child could neither read nor write when she entered the village school; but being "clar grit" she ignored the ridicule of the little children with whom she was obliged to recite, and worked with all her might to make up for lost time.

Mrs. Dodd, a wealthy and benevolent woman, was at this time greatly interested in raising funds for the orphan asylum which she had been the means of starting in the village. She conceived the idea of interesting the schoolgirls in the enterprise, and proposed that they should have an exhibition of Easter eggs of their own invention.

She would give a prize of \$10 for the most singular and unusual production. Ten cents admission fee should be asked at the door. The ladies should provide refreshments, and after the committee had decided on the "most original egg" there should be a grand sale of the eggs for the benefit of the asylum.

The teacher permitted the girls to interest themselves in so deserving a cause, and presently the whole village became very much interested in the "exhibition."

No one was more thoroughly excited than Chloe Ann. She talked about eggs—she dreamed eggs. Her hope and courage never failed, not even when it lacked only four days of the appointed time, and her egg was still without an outside.

Aunt Deb was not so sanguine, and expressed her surprise at Chloe Ann's cheerfulness.

"Law, Aunt Deb! Aint I brung up 'long o' tribulations? Aint I allers made out to fetch up at de head? I'se gwine out dis minute ter 'vestigate de stove w'inders. 'Spee' 'I'se kiver smap'n' fo' I comes home."

"So saying, Chloe Ann put on her hat andshawl and started off, singing in a high key: Hump, yo'se! ter de head an' forget de bustin' w'at dey say. Go 'long an' fetch in a 'riginal o' light 'oo' an' shot de obich'k'n'—w'at do' an' look fer Black

In less than half an hour she was back again. There was a package in her arms, and a look of solemn joy on her face.

"Come in de nder room," she said in a hoarse whisper, and Aunt Deb went into the other room without a moment's delay.

When the two emerged from the little bedroom, they quivered with the awfulness of the secret in their possession.

"'Spee' you got to sew de fus' lot ter de clof," said Aunt Deb. "Atter dat dey'll stick fas' 'nough."

"You'se sho' you kin make dat ar?" inquired the girl, rather anxiously. "Aint I use ter make balls fer Marse Ellis's chilun, long 'fo' you was borned? Does yo' 'magine dat dem days an' dem doin's done drap outen my min'?"

"Bless gracious! I kin tell dem d'rections wud fer wud, an' I kin spang em, too. But yo'se got to do some 'sper'mentin', Chloe Ann, kase you aint had no 'sper'unce wid sech doin's. I'se mighty glad dere aint no school dis week."

Chloe Ann's delight knew no bounds. She danced and capered about the room until Aunt Deb was thoroughly out of patience.

The eventful day dawned at last, but it seemed to Chloe Ann the longest day of her life. She was dressed for the evening long before the time, and as soon as the clock struck seven she ran to the schoolhouse.

When she opened the door she was dazzled with the sight. The boys had trimmed the large room most tastefully with evergreens, and had arranged flags and other draperies with charming effect.

The Easter eggs were displayed on tables near the wall. There were emerys, almost "as small as sparrers' aigs," with a rosette and loop of very narrow ribbon at each large end; eggs of dainty satin, filled with tempting candies; eggs covered with swan's-down, containing bottles of perfumery, or waiting to receive a lady's jewels; and eggs resplendent in blue and red velvet or plush, large enough to hold comfortably the elegant dolls that lay within.

Chloe Ann drew a long breath. "Lan' o' glory!" she exclaimed at last. "Dey's han'some! Co'se twas all mighty foolish ter make calculations on dat ar ten dollar. But sakes 'live! I aint gwine ter bodder 'bout dat. Somebody'll buy my aig, cert'n sho'."

Chloe Ann smiled cheerfully upon the rival eggs and went her way, ostentatiously tossing over her shoulder the long scarlet ribbons that depended from a tight braid which stood out at right angles to her head, and was exactly three inches long.

An hour later she met Florence Evans, whom she had described as "dat gal wid de long yaller curls."

"Where's your egg?" inquired Florence. "Reckon hit's at home," was the cool response.

"Reckon you've ashamed to show it," said the girl, mockingly. "Like 'nough," replied Chloe Ann, with apparent indifference.

"Why, Chloe Ann! Isn't your egg here yet?" exclaimed Mrs. Dodd. "All the eggs were to be here at 5 o'clock."

"Dat's a fact," said Chloe Ann very gravely. "But Aunt Deb's mighty special wid dat aig. She's gwine ter fetch hit herself."

"But it ought to be here now," urged Mrs. Dodd. "Something must have detained her. Run and bring it yourself, that's a good girl."

"Law, Mis' Dodd! You cudn't 'pen' on me, nowhow, fer ter git 'dat aig' fum de house ter de school safe and soun'." "Spee' hit's kase I'se 'lakin' in repose ob manners," she added, with a chuckle.

"Well, it's very strange if a girl 14 years old can't be trusted to carry a parcel!" said Mrs. Dodd, impatiently. Just as the committee who were to award the prize were about to withdraw for their conference, Chloe Ann opened the outside door and thrust a very anxious face out into the darkness.

"Here I is!" panted Aunt Deb. "An' you kin praise yo' sta's dat I'se come. I aint never on'er tuk no sech skittish job as dis afo'. An' you aint never yere no sech racket as come fum de inside o' dish yer aig! I clar ter goodness! 'Twas wus'n totin' a clock! An' I'se 'mos' 'feard some er dem kunnels dun drap off in de road."

"Here, Judge Carleton!" said Mrs. Dodd, taking the huge bundle from Aunt Deb's reluctant arms, and giving it to a gentleman standing near her. "It is so late that you will have to exhibit this egg from the platform."

Judge Carleton proceeded to the platform, closely pursued by Aunt Deb, who removed the wrapping of tissue paper as he mounted the steps.

"Hullo!" shouted a small boy. "A pop-corn egg!"

A pop-corn egg sure enough, and shining and sparkling as if Jack Frost had breathed upon it! A murmur of surprise and admiration ran through the room.

"Look out dar, Marse Carleton!" cried Aunt Deb, excitedly. "You'se gwine ter keel hit over. Keep hit de leetle end up, sho'!"

Mr. Dodd stepped upon the platform and assisted Judge Carleton to raise the upper half of the great egg.

When Black Jane, Aunt Deb's favorite hen, was disclosed, sitting on a nest of white cotton-batting, everybody began to clap. Then a dozen fluffy little black heads thrust themselves out from under the wings of the old hen, and the applause became deafening. At this all the little black heads disappeared, and everybody laughed.

Of course Chloe Ann's egg took the prize. The committee were not absent from the room more than five minutes; and as soon as the sale began, Mrs. Dodd was sorely perplexed, for it seemed as if every one wanted to buy Chloe Ann's egg.

What a jolly time they all had! How the people laughed and cheered when excited individuals bid against themselves!

At last "dat 'riginal aig" was knocked off at \$15 to old Mr. Clapham, who had been very much opposed to the asylum.

"Chloe Ann, how did you ever happen to think of putting that brood of chickens into your egg?" inquired one of the ladies.

"Law!" said Chloe, "I allers 'bserved dat chickens was a natchul ting to be inside o' aigs!"

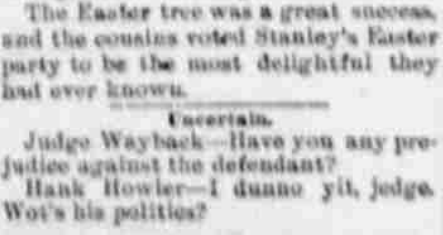
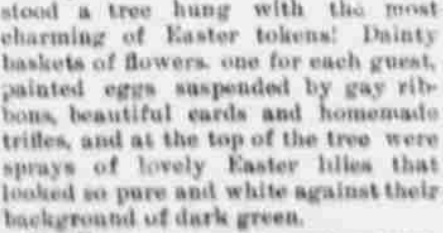
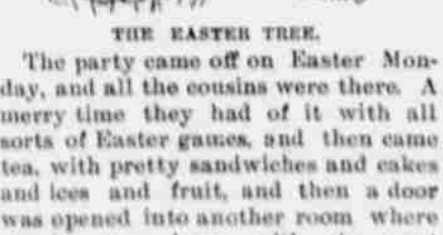
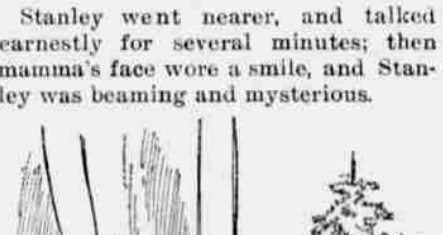
There was a great shout then. Chloe Ann laughed louder than any one else. Judge Carleton patted the woolly head approvingly.

"Chloe Ann," said Aunt Deb, as they were walking rapturously home in the moonlight, "you'se de outdoin'est gal in dat ar schoolhouse! I's proud on you, honey, I cert'nly is."

"Law!" exclaimed Chloe Ann with a little tremble in her voice. "Aint I done tole you I'se never lef' behine?" SUSAN CURTIS REDFIELD.

A Surprise. Stanley Ober stood at the window looking across the meadow at the small evergreens that skirted the wood beyond, and wishing it were Christmas time again—for the tree had been such a delight; but it was nearly Easter, and there would be Easter eggs and Easter cards, and a small party, when all the cousins would be there.

"Mamma!" he cried, suddenly. "Well?" asked mamma. Stanley went nearer, and talked earnestly for several minutes; then mamma's face wore a smile, and Stanley was beaming and mysterious.



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