

# AARON IN THE WILD WOODS

The Story of a Southern Swamp.

By JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

## CHAPTER I. THE LITTLE MASTER.

If you imagine that the book called "The Story of Aaron" (so named) the Son of Ben All tells all the adventures of the Arab while he was a fugitive in the wild woods you are very much mistaken. If you will go back to that book you will see that Timoleon, the black stallion; Grunter, the pie; Griddle, the grey pony, and Rambler, the track dog, told only what they were asked to tell. And they were not anxious to tell even that. They would much rather have been left alone. What they did tell they told without any flourish whatever, for they wanted to get through and be done with it. Story tellers as they are, they knew it very well, so they said what they had to say and that was the end of it so far as they were concerned, setting a worthy example to men and women, and to children, too.

It is natural, therefore, that a man such as Aaron was, full of valuable to the man who has bought him from the speculator, should have had many adventures that the animals knew nothing of, or, if they knew, had no occasion to relate. In the book you will find that Buster John and Sweetest Susan asked only about such things as they heard of incidentally. But it was the most interesting things never mentioned by Aaron at all, so the children never asked about them.

Little Crotchet, it will be remembered, who knew more about the matter than anybody except Aaron, was dead, and so there was nobody to give the children any hints or clues as to the questions they were to ask. You will say they had Aaron close at hand. That is true, but Aaron was busy, and besides that he was not fond of talking, especially about himself.

And yet, the most of the adventures Aaron had in the wild woods were no secret. They were well known to the people in the neighborhood and for miles around. In fact, they were made the subject of a great deal of talk in Little Crotchet's day and many men (and women, too), who were old enough to be wise shook their heads over some of the events and declared that they had never heard of anything more mysterious and so it happened that this idea of mystery died and grew and made a very romantic figure of Aaron and was a great help to him, not only when he was a fugitive in the wild woods, but afterward, when he "settled down" and turned his attention to looking after affairs on the Abercrombie plantation.

All this happened before Buster John and Sweetest Susan were born, while their mother was a girl in her teens. When Little Crotchet was alive things were very different on the Abercrombie plantation, what they were before or afterward. It is true he was a cripple and had to go on crutches, except when he was riding the grey pony. But he was very active and nimble, and very restless, too, for he was here, was there, and everywhere. More than that, he was always a humorist, always cheerful, and most of the time laughing at his own thoughts or at something he had heard. For it sharpened his wit, and he was a little bit of a fellow to boot, nothing unpleasant was to come to his ears. If he found out about trouble anywhere he was to find it out for himself and without any help from anybody else.

But, although Little Crotchet was small and crippled, he had a very wise head on his shoulders. One of the first things he found out was that everybody was in a conspiracy to prevent unpleasant things from coming to his ears and he was riding the grey pony, humbugging in this way made him laugh, it was so funny. He said to himself that if he could have troubles while everybody was trying to help him, he would be a good deal for him, surely other people who had nobody to look out for them must have much larger troubles. Little Crotchet was so, although he never said much about it.

The truth is that while people thought they were humbugging Little Crotchet he was humbugging everybody else. He knew what a shrewd little chap he was. These few had found out that Little Crotchet knew about things that were his troubles that visit the unfortunate in this world than anybody knew about his troubles—and he had many.

It was very peculiar. He would go galloping about the plantation on the Gray Pony and no matter where he stopped there was always a negro, white, or colored, who would fence. How could this be? Why, it was the simplest matter in the world. It made no difference where the field hands were working, nor where the overseer was always watching for their Little Master, as they called him. They were sure to know where he was, and they would fence, no matter how high the fence was, down it would come whenever the Gray Pony was brought to a standstill.

It was a sight to see the hoe hands or the plow hands when their Little Master went riding among them. It was hats off and "howdy, honny" and "howdy, honny" and something the White-Haired Master never said unless he was riding with Little Crotchet, which sometimes happened. Once the White-Haired Master saw Little Crotchet, "My all love you because you are good, my son." But Little Crotchet went on as if he didn't hear.

"Oh, no, father? It isn't that. It's because I am fond of them."

"Now, wasn't that his age?"

He stumbled upon the great secret that makes all the happiness there is in this world. The negroes loved him because he was fond of them, and he was fond of them. Gray Pony and watch the hands hoeing and ploughing, and although they did their best to keep him from seeing, he would find out the tired ones and send them on little errands that would rest them. To another, "Get me a keep switch." To another, "See if you can find me any flowers."

One of the worst negroes on the plantation was Big Sal, and he was a scoundrel. He had a tongue and a temper that nothing could conquer. Once Little Crotchet, sitting on the Gray Pony, saw him coming away with a rag tied around her forehead under her head handkerchief. So he called her out of the gang and she came with no good grace, and only then did she see the good of other negroes shamed her into it. No doubt Little Crotchet heard her talking with the overseer, and he had a notion to it. When Big Sal came up he simply said:

"Help me off the horse. I have a headache sometimes, and I feel it coming on now. I want you to sit here and rub my head for me if you are not too tired."

"What you want, Big Sal? My han's too dirty."

"You get the headache out, and I'll get the dirt out of you," said Little Crotchet, laughing. Big Sal laughed, too, cleaned her hands the best she could and rubbed the youngster's head for him, while the Gray Pony nibbled the crab-grass growing near. But presently when Little Crotchet opened his eyes, he found that Big Sal was crying. She was making no fuss about it, but she was crying the child's head in her lap the tears were streaming down her face.

never knew then nor later what Big Sal meant, but ever afterward, whenever the woman had one of her tantrums, she went straight to her Little Master, and if she sometimes came away from him crying, it was not his fault. If she was crying it was because she was comforted and it all seemed so simple and natural to her that she never failed to express her deep desire to tear her hair out if anybody asked her where she had been or where she was going.

It was not such an easy matter to reach the plow hands. The fields were wide and the furrows were long on that plantation, and some of the mules were nimbler than the others and some of the hands were quicker. So that it rarely happened that they all came abreast down the furrows. But what difference did that make? Let them come one by one, or two by two, or twenty abreast, it was all the same when the Little Master was in sight. It was hats off and "howdy," with "Gee, Heck!" and "Haw, Rhody!" and "What you been, Little Master, dat we ain't seed you sence day 'fo' yistiddy?" And so until they had all saluted the child on the Gray Pony.

And why did Susy Sam hang back and want to turn his mule around before he had finished the furrow? It was easy to see Susy's Sam, though he was the most expert plowman in the gang, had only one good hand, the other being a mere stump, and he disliked to be singled out from the rest on that account. But it was useless for him to hang back. Little Crotchet always called for Susy's Sam. Sometimes Sam would say that his mule was frisky and wouldn't start, but the word would come, "Well, drive the mule out in the bushes," and then Susy's Sam would have a long resting spell that did him good, and there would be no more of the same kind so it was with the rest. Whoever was sick or tired was sure to catch the Little Master's eye. How did he know? Well, don't ask me, but it was a question about that you might ask how the Gray Pony knew the poison vines and grasses. It was a case of just knowing, without knowing where the knowledge came from.

But it was not only the plow hands and the hoe hands that Little Crotchet knew about. He knew about the reapers and the cotton pickers and the reapers to be looked after. In fact, this was Little Crotchet's busiest time, for many of the negro children were set to picking cotton and the lad felt called on to look after these more carefully than he looked after the reapers. Many a time he had half a dozen holding the Gray Pony at once. This made the older negroes shake their heads and say that the Little Master was spoiling the children, but you may be sure that they thought none the less of him on that account.

And then there were the reapers, the men who cut the oats and the wheat, and the binders that followed after. At the head of the reapers, and tall, black and powerful, it was fun to see the blade of his cradle flashing in the sun and hear it swing with a swish through the golden grain. It was a hummer, always humming, always cheerful, and most of the time laughing at his own thoughts or at something he had heard. For it sharpened his wit, and he was a little bit of a fellow to boot, nothing unpleasant was to come to his ears. If he found out about trouble anywhere he was to find it out for himself and without any help from anybody else.

The White Pig would grunt and Rambler would say he'd rather herd a horn, but the Fox Squirrel would chatter like mad and declare that he lost one of his ears by sitting on a limb and singing when he saw a man coming. But he was riding the grey pony, and the reapers knew nothing about the experience of the Fox Squirrel, and so they went on singing whenever Randall gave the word. And Little Crotchet was glad to hear them, for he used to sit on the Gray Pony and listen, sometimes feeling happy, and at other times feeling lonely. Indeed, it may have been the quaint melody that gave him a lonely feeling, or it may have been his sympathy for those who suffer the pangs of disease or the pangs of trouble. The negroes used to watch him as they sang and worked, and say in the pauses:

"That was the word—'funny'—and yet it had a deeper meaning for the negroes than the word 'funny' ever gave it. Funny meant the lad leaned his pale cheek on the fence and allowed his thoughts (were they thoughts or fleeting aspirations, or momentary longings?) to follow the swift, sweet echoes of the song. For the echoes had a thousand nimble feet, and with these they fled away—away beyond the river and its bordering hills, for the echoes had twanging wings, like those of a turtle dove, and on these they lifted themselves heavenward and hovered above the world and above the toil and trouble and sorrow and pain therein.

Funny when the voice of some singer, sweeter and more powerful than the rest, rose suddenly from the pauses of the song and gave words, as it seemed, to all the suffering that the Little Master had ever known. Aye! so funny that at such times Little Crotchet would suddenly wave his hand to the singing reapers and turn the Gray Pony's head toward the river. Was he

de corn off'n de cob, but sponon dey wa'n't no corn off'n de cob," "Honey, ain't it de trufe?" exclaimed Uncle Fountain.

Thus the negroes talked. They knew a great deal more about Aaron than the white people did, but even the negroes didn't know as much as the Little Master, and for a very good reason. They had no time to find out things except at night, and at night, you may believe it or not, just as you please, but at night the door of the swamp was closed and locked—locked hard and fast. The owls, the night hawks, the whippoorwill, and the chuckwill-widows could fly over. Yes, and the Willie Whittlers could creep through or crawl under when they returned home from their wild serenades. But everything else, even that red jester, the Fox Squirrel, must have a key. Aaron had one, and the White Grunter and Rambler, and all the four-footed creatures that walk on horn sandals or in velvet slippers each had a key. The Little Master might have had one for the asking, but always when night came he was glad to be on his sofa and read, or better still, go to bed and sleep, so that he never had need of a key to open the door of the swamp after it was locked at night.

THE GENERAL'S GREETING.

By Hamlin Garland.

It was midday in the battle of the wilderness and a small teamster of it was standing beside his wagon near General Meade's headquarters and close to the gory, hurried and troubled surgeons, who were



**Boys' Shoes.** Two broken lines of \$1.50 and \$1.75 Boys' Shoes—youths' sizes among them—cut to... **1.00**

**Men's Shoes.** A line of Full Dress Shoes—\$6.00 and \$7.00 cloth top congress styles—cut to... **4.00**

**Men's Shoes.** We are throwing away—that's the way it seems—a lot of \$4 and \$5 hand made Calf Shoes for... **2.98**

**Men's Shoes.** A few Solid Shoes on the new round toes—cut from \$4 to... **2.98**

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leaped furrows, sketched banks, yet the rider sat his saddle, careless, secure, graceful and erect.

His introspective eyes fell upon the boy, and he drew his horse almost to a walk. He was a careworn man, dressed in a plain blue blouse, much faded, and his hat was equally weather beaten. His face was pale, grave and unyielding as a granite mask.

The boy thrilled with excitement and awe and worshipful admiration. He knew this sad-faced, careless, splendid rider to be the great commander. In General Grant's eyes flashed a sudden look of pity and horror. As he passed he said:

"Sonny, what are you doing here?" He swept on, but his tender, paternal cadence of voice and his sad, sad face the boy never forgot.

Once, long after, when the boy was a middle-aged man and the general had been twice president of the United States, they met. In the midst of a throng of people the commander stood, and the civilian approached, said:

"I saw you once before, general. It was at the Wilderness. You passed me on horseback, and you said: 'Sonny, what are you doing here?'"

The general's impassive face darkened with the memory of that terrible day; then a slow smile crept round his lips and eyes.

"I left her, as you remember me."

"TISS ME DOOD-NIGHT."

Katey Mamma, please, tiss me Dood-Night.

"Pense, Mamma, please, tiss me Dood-Night."

My blue-eyed love with sunny curls and laughing eyes, and tears in my eyes, I said, "I can't kiss naughty girls."

I led her to her snowy cot.

"Pense, Mamma, please," she sobbed again, "I won't be naughty any more."

I left her, all her pleadings vain.

I had been reared in Spartan school, with rigid rule, nor never knew That Love with love should sway the soul.

I heard her sob, my Mother heart, with yearning, and I heard her cheer, My Baby still sobbing there.

"Was midnight, when I felt a touch— A fevered hand lay on my brow, And I saw you once before, general. It was at the Wilderness. You passed me on horseback, and you said: 'Sonny, what are you doing here?'"

"Pense, Mamma, please, tiss me Dood-Night."

**PAST THE DOORKEEPERS.**

How Two Little Children Went on the House Moor.

The cherubic insistence of childhood and its utter indifference to established forms and customs was strikingly illustrated at the door of the house on the Washington Star. Two little boys, aged about 4 and 6, were trotting around after some ladies and in the crowd got separated from their natural protectors. The children paused in front of the north entrance to the house and looked in through the doors as they swung back and forth. The doorkeepers, who were the time they had recovered from their amazement there was a good fifty yards between them and their flying prey! And that they had as for they might ride, was not easily to overcome!

After that first wild rush the Major settled in a stony pace—smooth, even run, and easy to sit that the lad relaxed his clutch upon the animal's mane and turned his eyes to the horizon, where gathering swarms of savages showed like clusters of ants against the slope of the hillside. In his track, with shrill, singing cries, like bounds upon a trail, came his pursuers. And far to the south there was a puff of white smoke from the walls of the fort and a moment later the first heavy, echoing boom of the alarm gun thundered across the plain.

**TAKEN FOR A ROGUE.**

An Actor's Experience While Visiting Francis Wilson, the actor, despite the rough roles he assumes upon the stage, enjoys the reputation of being an accomplished and refined tastes and exemplary habits, as well as an industrious student and the possessor of one of the finest private libraries in the country. Whenever he is able to escape from the exacting demands of his profession he is usually to be found with his wife and children at his luxurious home in New Rochelle. Occasionally, however, he makes a brief visit to the old world, from which he is accustomed to return with a collection of curios and presents for his friends.

In the course of one of his recent visits to London he had an experience which has afforded his friends considerable amusement. While waiting along Regent street one day, with an old acquaintance, he saw some diamonds displayed in the window of a jeweler's shop. He looked at them critically for several moments, then, turning to his companion, he said:

"I have just received an unexpected check for \$500, and don't think I can employ it to better advantage than by getting some diamonds for my wife. Let us go in."

Wilson and his friend then entered the

# DREXEL L. SHOEMAN'S SALE.

## WAY AHEAD OF ALL OTHERS.

Once a year we clean out all the odds and ends—broken sizes—broken lots—shoes where there's probably but one pair of a size or two pair of a style—this is our time of year—we clear them out at ridiculous prices even for these times—of course the store will be crowded—but that's a pretty good sign that you'd better be there.

**Ladies' Shoes.**

The French enamel and calf 20th Century Shoes that have been selling for \$5.00 have been cut right square in two for Monday... **2.50**

The new dark brown shade of the lace Extended Sole Shoes that were \$5.00—broken sizes—cut them to... **3.00**

The Box Calf Shoes, the \$4.00 and \$5.00 Wet Weather Shoes—all go at... **2.98**

All the small sizes of Shoes that sold up to \$5.00 have day at... **98c**

Shoes—all go in one lot Mon... **98c**

**Misses' and Children's**

The sizes of the cloth and kid tops that sold for \$2.50 are nearly complete—but we cut them to... **1.48**

The Misses' Lace and Button Shoes worth up to \$2.00 a pair are cut to... **1.25**

There's a broken lot of Misses' Shoes that used to sell for up to \$1.75 that we've cut to... **98c**

Some Children's \$1.25 Shoes—because the sizes are broken they are cut to... **78c**

# DREXEL SHOES CO., 149 FARM

shop. The proprietor presented himself and asked what they desired.

"You have a tray of diamonds in the window," said the comedian. "Will you let me see them?"

The stoic-faced shopkeeper surveyed his prospective customer from head to foot. He saw a sharp-featured little man, with a long nose and bead-like eyes. Despite that his face was clean-shaven, myriads of wrinkles creased his forehead, and his visage that peculiar bluish tint that Thespian foxes are wont to affect in their make-up.

"Do you want to buy, or only to look at them?" asked the suspicious Briton, surlily.

"That depends altogether upon how they please me," retorted the comedian. "I certainly will not purchase unless I am first permitted to examine them."

The shopman left his place behind the counter and, walking to the door, he quietly opened it.

"I've had that same trick played on me once before," he said, as he again surveyed his visitor critically. "I'm a bit wiser now."

"And at least 100 poorer, to boot," observed the comedian, as he left the shop. Wilson's demands were supplied a few minutes later, however, by a jeweler on the opposite side of the street.

**GOSSIP ABOUT NOTED PEOPLE.**

Captain Robley D. Evans of the United States navy—who, by the way, objects to his nickname of "Fighting Bob"—was a junior officer when the war broke out, and his Virginia mother, thinking her son had not learned his own mind, sent in his resignation without consulting him. The resignation was at once accepted and the young man was out of the navy. But he found a way to induce the department to rescind its action, and saw much service before he was retired. It was to him, as to my mother, evidently a very painful meeting. Colonel Burr deputed himself like a dignified gentleman. He was a little boy about a year old. Then I learned for the first time to impress the fact upon my memory that Colonel Burr had killed my grandfather.

**How It May Be Done.**

Chicago Post: "Is there any sure way of getting rid of the wrinkles, and the 'magazines' inquired the young man."

"There is answered the man who had been in the business of writing for a long time.

"What is it?"

"First acquire a reputation for something besides writing," answered the old-timer. "If you are a writer, and nothing more, so long as there is nothing literary about it, just get yourself known for almost anything from crime to philanthropy, and the magazines will be after everything you write."

On January 23 Mrs. John Alexander celebrated her eightieth anniversary of her birthday at her home in West Charlton, Saratoga county, N. Y. She was born in the adjoining town of Galway, N. Y. Alexander was a single application of Cuticura, and she lives within ten miles of a railroad track she has but once viewed a train of cars in motion. She is in excellent health and possesses all her faculties.

**Cuticura**

Most torturing and disfiguring of itching, burning, scaly skin and scalp humors is instantly relieved by a warm bath with Cuticura Soap, a single application of Cuticura (ointment), the great skin cure, and a full dose of CUTICURA RESOLVET, greatest of blood purifiers and humor cures, when all else fails.

**ACHE**

BACK Kidney and uterine pain, rheumatism, sciatica, aching nerves, and painful muscles, sore lungs, relieved quick as an electric flash by ACHE Col'ins' Voltaic Electric Plaster.