

UNCLE JERRY'S PLATFORM.*

REVIEWED BY E. H. WILSON.

This finely illustrated little volume contains three brief stories—"Uncle Jerry's Platform," "Pops," and "A Daughter of the Revolution." The scene of each of the stories is in Virginia. The first two stories and one or two incidents in the third remind us of the interest, the affection, the intense loyalty shown by slaves of the better class to the various members of their master's family. This feature of the book will commend it more particularly to those who in bygone days had an opportunity to witness the kindness of humane masters towards their heedless, helpless, and improvident dependents and the warmth of affection felt by the latter for the former.

The author's success as a writer of dialect may be seen from two or three brief extracts. Uncle Jerry describes his master's character thus:

"Nothin' mean 'bout Marse Randolph neider, eberyting open an' 'bove-board, an' nothin' underhand, cuz I knew all his ways. I was his body sarvent, an' what me an' Marse Randolph *was*, *we was*; what oder people was, *dey wasn't*! Now, Deacon Fisher tuk his toddy unbeknownst to nobody, an' neber axed a soul to jine him; an' ole Lawyer Corbin, he got on spreeds when he wen' to town, an' kep' it moughty close; but dat was not de way wid me an' Marse Randolph: *what we was*, *we was*; *what we wasn't*, *we wasn't*!"

The Randolphs had six little girls but no boy to perpetuate the name. At last, however, on Christmas day the master rode down to the quarters and told Jerry to call all the hands out to drink the health of the fine boy that had come to make glad his parents. Uncle Jerry may tell how the negroes received the announcement:

"'Bless de Lord,' sez I, 'you don't say so!' sez I. 'Dat's a Christmas gif' to be proud of, sure 'nuff. an' right from de han' ob de good Lord Hissef! Here, Sam; here Dan'l; here, boys, come, 'gratilate Marse Randolph. Bring out your cups.'

*"Uncle Jerry's Platform. and other Christmas Stories," by Gillie Cary. Cloth; price 75 cents. Arena Publishing Company, Boston, Mass.

"Dey all crowded roun', an' Marse Randolph called little Jim, who was totin' de big jemijohn, an' poured out a plenty for all, an' den I gin' de toas': 'Three cheers for big Marse Randolph, an' three cheers for leetle Marse Randolph; de los' is foun', de dead is cum to life agin; le's kill de fatted cyarf.' An' Marse Randolph larfed right hearty, he did, an' said, sez he, he hoped de baby wouldn't be no prodigal son nohow.'"

"Marse Randolph" was wounded in the Civil War and brought home to his Virginia estate to die. On his deathbed he charged Jerry to take good care of his family, and particularly of his young son "Ran."

"Jerry, I wants you to promise me to be good to your Miss Alice an' de gyurls when I am gone, an' to remember to take special keer of leetle Ran. I'm feard I hab loved dat boy too much, ole man, an' 'dulged him too much for his good.'

"An' Marse Randolph groaned hard, an' lifted up his eyes to heaben an' prayed de Lord to hab mercy upon de helpless ones; an' den he hel' out his han' to me, an' squeezed mine hard, an' said, sez he, 'Good-bye, my dear, faithful Jerry, God bless you, an' my good Kitty too—I leab 'em all to you.'"

The heart-broken negro ran to the woods and, throwing himself on the ground, wept long and bitterly, for in his own language, "Me an' Marse Randolph had been frien's for thirty-odd year, an' neber a cross word had he eber spoke to me."

"Ran" developed into a youth of such brilliant parts that his instructors urged the duty of sending him to college. He inherited from his father a taste for "dram-drinking," which terminated in delirium tremens and suicide soon after his college days were over. Uncle Jerry, who had been in the habit of taking his "toddy as reg'lar as ole Marse hisself," took the death of his "Ran" so much to heart that he adopted the following platform:

"And so, sah, ef yer com' to ax me 'bout my pol'tics, I can only say, I am an ole man, an' gittin' on to de grabe, an' I kno' nothin' 'bout your high-license an' your low-license, but I *do* kno' when I meet Marse Randolph on de oder shore, I shall hab to tell him I tried my bes' to take keer of leetle Ran, but—de whiskey was too much for me. But ef dere's any oder poor boy like him to be saved, *mebbe* de only son ob his mother, an' she a widder; an' so long as de Bible say 'Am I my brudder's keeper'; an' so long as my poor Ran's blood cry to me from out de groun', gemmen, you mus' 'scuse me, but ole Jerry feel as ef nuffin' an' nobody can keep him from votin' de 'dry-ticket' to-morrer."

"Pops," a young negro boy, was the playmate of his little white charge. This interesting story, like the foregoing, shows the more beautiful side of slave life in Virginia in the days before the war. The story presents vividly the tender care and watchful solicitude of "Pops," who finally sacrificed his life in rescuing little "Pill" from a watery grave, as well as the beautiful way in which the latter in after years manifested his gratitude for the sacrifice.

Incidentally the author gives us some notion of the crude ideas

that prevail among negroes regarding such matters as "getting religion," what constitutes a proper funeral, and what qualifies one to inhabit the kingdom of heaven.

"A Daughter of the Revolution" narrates in a pleasing way the brave deed of a young French officer who belonged to the military family of General Rochambeau. He was nerved to the endeavor by his love for the heroine, Eleanor Page, whose birth, beauty, and devotion to the wounded and dying were such "that her very name was as a bugle's blast to numbers of brave souls"; and at the last moment he was strengthened and fortified for his perilous undertaking by the knowledge that his love was reciprocated. We will not detract from the reader's interest by giving an outline of the story. Suffice it to say that the story is well told and ends as it should.

The book is illustrated by V. A. Garber and Margaret May Dashiell. The illustrations are appropriate. The type and the binding are attractive specimens of art.