

Not enough good so far
AT FATHER BAKER'S HOME.
out *Negro*

On a bright November day the fields were bare, the trees all adorned in their autumn colors. Despite the barren fields, there were lovely flowers in Father and Mother Baker's clean and well-kept yard. There were marigolds, bachelor buttons and winter pinks. The cotton had been planted close up to the small yard, and around the house were several chickens of different kinds, a turkey gobbler and two turkey hens.

Noticing the cotton so very near the house I asked, "To whom does this cotton patch belong?" Mother Baker replied proudly, "It's ours; me and Baker's, yes dis is our's," Father Baker interrupted, "I kin pick 'bout twenty-five pounds a day, too; can't pick mor'n dat 'cause my back gits so tired." He placed a hand on the "small" of his back as he continued, "I ain't what I use to be, an' yo' know my feet keep cold winter and summer, I dunno why."

By this time we had reached the rickety steps. Mother Baker said, "Go right in our shack. 'Tain't much, but yo' welcome; so glad yo' come."

After I had gone up the steps which had two or three holes worn in them, she came up bending down, using her hands to help herself. She wore a print dress pretty and clean and her hair was neatly done. She gets about ^{spryly} ~~splendidly~~ to be eight-three years old.

which was
As she and I sat on the clean porch, worn with age, talking and watching the turkeys strut among the flowers which adorned the yard, Father Baker, who had gone into the house, came out

presently with a good, ~~juicy~~ baked sweet potato. Smiling and bowing, he offered me the potato, saying, "We ain't got any dinner fit to offer yo', but here's a good ol' yeller yam, if yo' likes 'em."

Mother Baker began talking about Tuskegee Institute, which gives them a satisfaction almost equal to that they get from their religion. Mother Baker began by saying, "I've been goin' ter dat skule fer over fifty years. I jes' love it an' all dem teachers up dar." Then she folded her hands in her lap and shook her head. "Lawd I loved Booker T. I hated ter see 'm go. I 'member once he wuz talkin' in de chapel and it wuz crowded plum full. Lawd I hates ter tawk erbout it. He wuz tellin' us how we otter ~~be~~ live and love one 'nuther and have entrus in each udder."

She gestured with palms downward to help explain the great emotion that she felt, and swaying her frail body she continued, "I wanted ter cry so bad, but I wuz shame ter cry dar in de chapel, so I took my hanchuf and crammed in my mouf. I put my head in my lap. I done fust one thing en ernuther. I wuz jes' 'bout ter holler."

When she began again tears were shining in her eyes. "I wanted to hug Booker T. Washington in his coffin. I patted his face. I rubbed it. I jes' didn't want ter give 'm up."

I attempted to get her mind off Mr. Washington, asking, "Mother Baker, do you remember when you were a little girl?" Her face beamed, "Yes, chile, I wuz a little girl in slavery time but I didn't have no hard time lak most niggers. My folks belonged ter old man James Greese, and Moster Greese didn't 'low nobody ter beat his niggers an' he didn't 'low white folks pullin' his little nigger chilluns' years lak de res' did. Why, he never

hit a one of us a lick. And the good thing 'bout it all, he 'lowed de mothers all ter keep de chillun t'gether. He wouldn't sell chillun from de mas and pas. Mos' Greese got sick, en he sent fer all his Niggers an' tole dem 'meet me in heben.'

Father Baker interrupted here by saying, "'twertin (it wasn't) dat way wid me. My mother died when I wuz two weeks old, and da wuz er woman what nursed me til' I could eat an' git about. Den I wuz 'lowed ter stay in de white folks'house and help roun' de place, hunt turkey nesses. Old Ben Mott was his name. Dey wuz right kin' ter me. Dey give me one quilt ter sleep on and one ter kiver wid. But Old moster had a son-in-law name Tony, and oh, my stars, he hated niggers. You know, dey jus' give little boys a shirt, no pants, and many times dey would twist my shirt over my head and beat me fer nothin'. When boss Tony cum fer ter live wid Mos' Ben I had ter git out. He 'lowed he didn't want no nigger ter live in de same house wid him.

"So den I had ter git down ter de quarter to live wher de other niggers lived. I had ter go fum house ter house an' beg um ter let lil' Henry come in. And honey, do yo' know, some of 'em 'ould holler at me 'fo' I c'u'd git ter de steps, 'doncha come in here; no room in here fer yo'. Den it would be almos' dark 'n' I had nowheres to stay."

I interrupted here by saying, "You can well appreciate a home of your own, can't you?"

A smile played over his face as he said, "yas child, das reason ol' Baker worked so hard when he young. Working to git all my chillun a home. I got eight, an' all eight of dem got forty acres of land."

As he continued he leaned back in his chair like one confi-

dent of security. "President Roosevelt, he's a fine man, he believes in giving a man a chance. I b'lieves dat de Congress should be de fines' an' greatest church in de world; yas sir honest, upright, looking down on de poor wid a eye of pity jes' lak Roosevelt try ter get dem ter do. Yas sir, de President he wants us ter even be able ter read, us old folks. Way back yonder in slavery de paderole would git a nigger fer tryin' ter learn ter read."

"Paderole?", I asked, "what was that?" He burst into laughter as he began to explain, "Chile, de paderoles wuz ter keep bad niggers from gittin' worse, and ter keep dem from running away. Dey wuz unmerciful white folks. Sometimes dey tie you on a log and whip 'til de blood jes' run down." He laughed again and continued. "We use ter sing a song 'bout dem." He raised a hand as he began:

"Please ol' moster don't whip me!
Whip dat nigger behin' de tree.

O, run nigger run, paderole ketch-u
O, run nigger run, jes' 'fore day.

I run, I run, I run my bes',
I run right close ter dat hornet's nes'.

Paderole run, dey run da bes'
Dey run right in dat hornet's nes'.

As I started to leave, Mother Baker said to Father Baker, "Give her some our sugar cane. She got good teeth. Chew it, chile, and thank Gawd the paderole won't getcha."

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