A TRUE STORY, REPEATED WORD FOR WORD AS I HEARD IT.

IT was summer time, and twilight. We were sitting on the porch of the farm-house, on the summit of the hill, and "Aunt Rachel" was sitting respectfully below our level, on the steps,—for she was our servant, and colored. She was of mighty frame and stature; she was sixty years old, but her eye was undimmed and her strength unabated. She was a cheerful, hearty soul, and it was no more trouble for her to laugh than it is for a bird to sing. She was under fire, now, as usual when the day was done. That is to say, she was being chaffed without mercy, and was enjoying it. She would let off peal after peal of laughter, and then sit with her face in her hands and shake with throes of enjoyment which she could no longer get breath enough to express. At such a moment as this a thought occurred to me, and I said:—

"Aunt Rachel, how is it that you've lived sixty years and never had any trouble?"

She stopped quaking. She paused, and there was a moment of silence. She turned her face over her shoulder toward me, and said, without even a smile in her voice:—

"Mist' C----, is you in 'arrest?"

It surprised me a good deal; and it sobered my manner and my speech, too. I said:—

"Why, I thought—that is, I meant—why, you can't have had any trouble. I've never heard you say, and never seen your eye when there was n't a laugh in it."

She faced fairly around, now, and was full of earnestness.

"Has I any trouble? Mist' C----, I's gwyne to tell you, den I leave it to you. I was bawn down 'mongst de slaves; I knows all 'bout slavery, 'case I been one of 'em my own se'f. Well, sah, my ole man—den he's my husban'—he was lovin' an' kind to me, just as kind as you is to yo' own wife. An' we had chif'en—seven chif'en—an' we loved dem chif'en just de same as you loves yo' chil'en. Dey was black, but de Lord can't make no chil'en so black but what dey mother love

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'm an' would n't give 'em up, no, not for anything dat's in dis whole world.

"Well, sah, I was raise in ole Fo'ginny, but my mother she was raised in Maryland; an' my souls! she was terrible when she'd git started! My lan!' but she'd make de fur fly! When she'd git into dem tantrums, she always had one word dat she said. She'd straighten herse'f up an' put her fists in her hips an' say, 'I want you to understan' dat I wa' n't bawn in de mash to be fool' by trash! I's one o' de ole Blue Hen's Chickens, I is!' 'Ca' se, you see, dat's what folks dat's bawn in Maryland calls deyselves, an' dey's proud of it. Well, dat was her word. I don't ever forgit it, beca'se she said it so much, an' beca'se she said it one day when my little Henry tore his wris' awful, an' most busted his head, right up at de top of his forehead, an' de niggers did n't fly aroun' fas' enough to 'tend to him. An' when dey talk' back at her, she up an' she says, 'Look-a-heah!' she says, 'I want you niggers to understan' dat I wa' n't bawn in de mash to be fool' by trash! Is one o' de ole Blue Hen's Chickens, I is!' an' dem she clar' dat kitchen an' bandage up de chile herse'f. So I says dat word, too, when I 's riled.

"Well, bymeby my ole mistis say she's broke, an' she got to sell all de niggers on de place. An' when I heah dat dey put chains on us an' put us on a stan' as high as dis po'ch, I says, 'You shan't take him away,' I says. But my little Henry whisper an' say, 'I mos' off of 'em, an' beat 'em over de head wid my chain; an' de men did; but I took and tear de clo'es an' lef' me all by myse'f wid de other niggers in dat mons'us big house. So de big Union officers move in dah, an' dey ask me would I cook for dem. 'Lord bless you,' says I, 'dat's what I's for.'

"Dey wa' n't no small-fry officers, mine you, dey was de biggest dey is; an' de way dey made dem sojers mosey roun'! De Gen'l he tole me to boss dat kitchen; an' he say, 'If anybody come meddlin' wid you, you jist make 'em walk chalk; don't you be afraid,' he say; 'you's 'mong frens, now.'

"Well, I thinks to myse'f, if my little Henry ever got a chance to run away, he'd make to de Norf, o' course. So one day I comes in dah whah de big officers was, in de parlor, an' I drops a kurtchy, so, an' I up an' tole 'em 'bout my Henry, dey a-
at de top of his forehead. ’Den dey look mournful, an’ de Gen’l say, ’How long sence you los’ him?’ an’ I say, ’Thirteen year.’

’Den de Gen’l say, ’He would n’t be little mo’ no mo’, now--he’s a man!’

’I never thought o’ dat befo’! He was only dat little feller to me, yit. I never thought ’bout him growin’ up an’ bein’ big. But I see it den. None o’ de gemmen had run acrost him, so dey could n’t do nothin’ for me. But all dat time, do’ I did n’t know it, my Henry was run off to de Norf, years an’ years, an’ he was a barber, too, an’ worked for hisse’f. An’ bymeby, when de waw come, he ups an’ he says, ’I's done barberin’,’ he says; ’Ts gwyne to fine my ole mammie, less’n she’s dead.’ So he sole out an’ went to whah dey whad him, an’ den I grabs his lef’ han’ an’ shove back his sleeve, an’ dey looks like a gen’l, an’ d’yet d’yet cave’ away befo’ me an’ out at de do’. An’ as dis young man was a runnin’ an’ smilin’ at my soul, he had no trouble. An’ when dey got abreas’ o’ me, dey went to kin’ o’ balancin’ aroun’, fust on one leg an’ den on t’other, an’ smilin’ at my big red turban, an’ dey was havin’ a time! an’ I jist a

''Oh, no, Misto C----, I hain ’t had no trouble. An’ ’no joy!’” --Mark Twain.

http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/twain/twain.html

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