

The Sunny Side of Darkness

Military Mathematics

A negro company was stationed at Camp Lee, Virginia, for training during the late war. One afternoon during drill, announcement was made that next morning the company would be trained in attacking a fortification.

After the troops were dismissed, a big, awkward looking private approached the dapper young corporal in charge of his squad and said: "Corprul, what is a fortification anyhow?"

And in a tone of utter contempt for such ignorance, the corporal replied: "Don't you know no 'rithmetic a tall? Anybody ought ter know dat two twentyfications makes a fortification."

Exactly

The pastor of the colored church in Southport, North Carolina, out for a morning stroll last Winter, came upon two of his deacons in earnest debate.

"Good mawnin', Deacons, what is you all discussin' so serious dis mawnin'?" inquired the pastor.

"Good mawnin', Reverent," said Deacon Griffin; "we is 'sputin' concernin' correck language; and we is sho glad you is come to 'cide it. Which is more properer to say, 'ezackly' or 'dezackly'?"

The pastor pondered the question sagely, scratched his head, and replied: "Well, you is asked me a hard question in language. I is studied de same question befo'; an' I don't know *perzackly* which is more properer."



Buxom

Two negroes meeting one day on the principal colored residential street of Lynchburg, had paused for a friendly chat, when they observed on the opposite side of the street a flamboyantly buxom negro woman, who was striding along with an air of proud superiority, obviously conscious of the attention which her physical charms were attracting.

"Jim, who is dat pouter pigeon woman yonder carryin' herself so pertubrun't?" asked Sam.

"Why, dat's Miss Mandy Johnson, down here fum Roanoke on a visit to Reverent Morris," replied Jim.

"Well," said Sam, "she sho do present herse'f, don't she?"

What's in a Title?

Admiral McGowan, who is a native of South Carolina, returned to his home city of Columbia for a short visit just prior to the World War. He was struck by the large number of negroes on the streets wearing gaudy uniforms. Most of them were strangers to the Admiral; but after a while he met an old negro acquaintance, Tom Mason, who was most elaborately attired, with gold epaulettes, a plumed chapeau, a brilliant red sash, and a glittering sword as distinctive features of the general elaborate effect.

After friendly greetings, the Admiral asked Tom what occasion had brought all the uniformed negroes to town.

"Admurl," said Tom sententiously, "dis is de yearly, annual secession of de uniform

rank of de 'Sociated Sons an' Daughters of I Will Arise.' An' niggers is hyuh fum all over de State, tendin' on de convention."

"Well," said the Admiral, "from your uniform I imagine you must be an official of high rank."

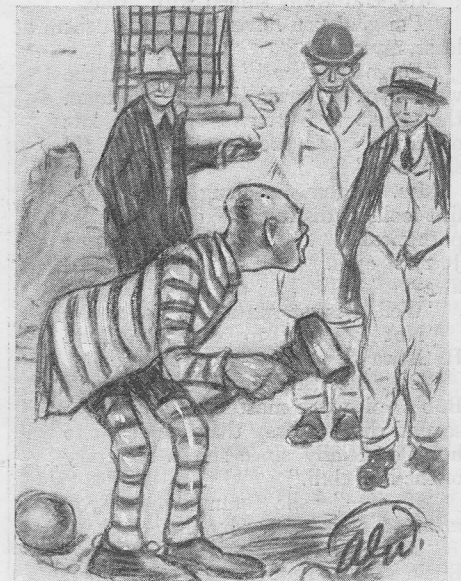
"Yes, Suh, Admurl, I is," replied Tom. "I is de Royal High Ruler an' Supreme King."

"That surely is a superlatively exalted title," said Admiral McGowan. "You must be the highest official of the Order."

"No, Suh, Admurl," said the Supreme King modestly, "dey is five above me."

Not a Life Sentence

Some months ago a party of visitors from Newport News, Va., was being shown through the penitentiary at Richmond by the warden. As they approached a gang of trustees at work in the yard, one of the party recognized an old acquaintance, a negro from his home town.

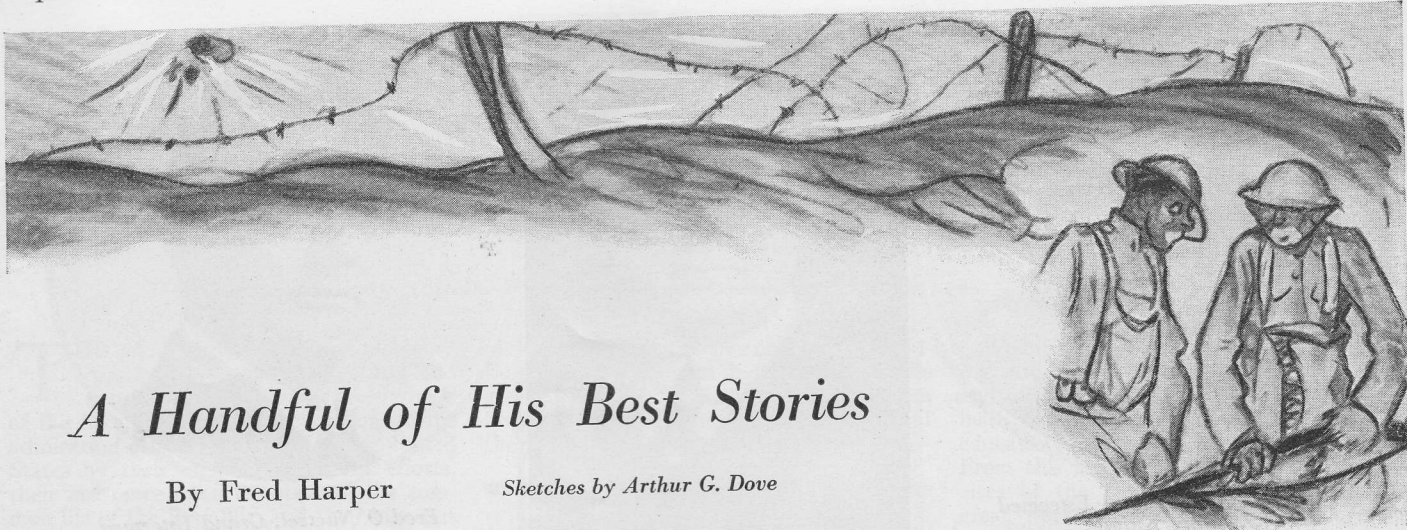


"Why, Jim, I didn't know you were here," said he. "What are you doing in the penitentiary?"

"Well, Suh," said Jim, "I had some words wid a nigger down on de C. and O. docks; and in de ruckus, I leaned a crowbar up against him. An', don't you know dat nigger took an' laid down an' died?"

"That's too bad," said his friend. "I suppose you were charged with murder. Did they put you in for a life sentence?"

"No, Suh," said Jim, "not no life sentence; jus' fum now on."



A Handful of His Best Stories

By Fred Harper

Sketches by Arthur G. Dove

Like Her Pa

The legal formalities of marriage and divorce are matters of small concern to a certain class of negroes in the South. And sometimes the irregularity of the family relationship is disclosed by the most naively innocent expressions.

In Wilmington, North Carolina, there was a middle-aged negress employed as cook in a white family. At her earnest solicitation her daughter, about seventeen years of age, had been engaged as a housemaid. One morning last Spring the lady of the house overheard the mother scolding her daughter for some neglect of her duties.

"You sho is one no 'count nigger," she said. "Shiffless, dat's what you is; shiffless an' onery. Lazy is what you is, nothin' else but. You is jus' zackly like your pa. I suttinly is glad I didn't marry dat nigger, I never had no use for him nohow."



Phew!!!

Uncle Jeff, an old family darkey, from Bedford County, Virginia, had just returned from a trip to New York where he had gone on a "cullud 'scursion." It was his first visit to a big city and he was relating his experiences to his old mistress, whom he still called "Miss Lucy," as he had done when she was a young lady.

"De white folks suttinly was nice to me, Miss Lucy," he said. "On Sunday mawnin' one white gen'leman showed me where was a gran' big chu'ch an' he 'vited me to 'tend



worship. An', Miss Lucy, it was gran', dat chu'ch. It had de finest cyarpet on de flo' all up and down de corridor; an'—"

"You mean the aisle, Uncle Jeff," interrupted his mistress.

"Yessum, Miss Lucy, de ile. An' another white gen'leman, all dressed up in Prince Albert close, he bowed low to me and took an' 'scorted me way up dat ile, befo' all dem people, an' sot me down on de fines' bench, right smack dab side er some gran' white ladies."

"You shouldn't say 'bench,' Uncle Jeff, in speaking of a church seat," again interrupted his mistress, "you should say 'pew.'"

"Yessum, Miss Lucy, 'pew,' dat's it. Dat's jus' what one er dem white ladies said when I sot down by 'em."

The Rear Guard in Danger

A negro regiment was stationed in the front line trenches in France during the World War, awaiting the zero hour for their first charge in actual battle. As they were untried troops, the precaution had been

taken to station six thousand seasoned white soldiers in the immediate rear as a support.

As the moment approached for them to go over the top, they grew more and more nervous. Finally a little undersized negro private turned to the buddy at his side, a great giant of a man, and said: "Mose, what you reckon de papers back home goin' ter say 'bout us in de mawnin'?"

And Mose replied: "If de rest of you niggers feels like I does, de headlines is goin' ter read 'bout like dis—'Six Thousand White Troops Tromped to Death.'"

Just Right

Last Winter a Northern tourist, while spending a few days in Atlanta, decided he would like to try a little of the local moonshine about which he had heard so much. With very little difficulty he secured a pint of the "white lightning" and retired to his room to sample it. One taste was enough. It was a peculiarly vicious decoction and he promptly resigned. He did not care to throw it away, so he presented it to an old darkey who had been driving him about the city in his taxi.

The next day he asked the old negro how he liked the liquor. "Boss, it was zackly right. Yes, Suh, it was jus' zackly right."

"What do you mean by just exactly right, Uncle?" he asked.

"Well, Suh," said the darkey, "it was jus' zackly right, 'cause if it had er been any better you wouldn't er give it to me; an' if it had er been any worse I couldn't er drunk it."



In the Order of Elks, with its scores of capital story-tellers, there is no more accomplished raconteur than Past Grand Exalted Ruler Fred Harper, present Mayor of Lynchburg, Va. The Harper classics are mainly of the Southern darkey, whose broad exaggerations of pronunciation Mr. Harper imitates with perfect art.