

# Tallyrand and Firefly

By J. MacNEILL JOHNSON

## CHAPTER XIV.

There was probably no other word in the dialect of the Plantation slave that expressed quite so much contempt as the word "Buckra." Marryatt, the great French lexicographer, tells us that this is an African word, which on the shores of Africa, meant "White Man," but as it was used by our Negroes on the southern plantations it referred only to the poor white people, who did not own slaves. It was exceedingly rare to find a slave that hated his master; and it was equally rare to find a master that was personally cruel to his slaves; but the great bulk of the trouble was caused by the "Buckra" overseers, who were detested and held in contempt by every slave except the few who were willing to curry favor with the Buckra by becoming a spy and informer. And be it said to the everlasting credit of the Negro race, these exceptions were few and far between.

Across the river from Mr. Studebolt's Verdun plantation, in Arkansas, there lived a very wealthy planter named Bolter. His plantations called The Mains, extended for several miles along the river, and as far back west. He owned three hundred slaves, and his Negro quarters were about midway between his mansion house and the river, and about a mile from each. Tallyrand, being the son of a wealthy planter, and a man of influence, was always privileged to go among the negro quarters of any plantation in the country when he pleased, and he actually knew every negro by name, not only on The Mains, but on any one of half a dozen other plantations up and down the river for a radius of many miles.

Mr. Bolter owned a young negro man named Zeke, a man of tremendous strength. He was not tall like Bill and Ned, but was as strong as an ox. His neck was large and the muscles of his arms were so big they looked like they were swollen. He was just a little bow-legged, but then he was a ditcher, and you know bow-legged men make the best ditchers. Tallyrand, like all other boys was a worshiper of great strength, and this was the probable cause of his taking such a liking to Zeke. Tallyrand often passed where Zeke was digging a canal, and would always stop and look at him throw out the great spade-fuls of dirt, and look with astonishment at the enormous muscles on Zeke's arms, as they swelled to the effort; and Zeke on two or three occasions asked Tallyrand to bring him a stick of candy. After Tallyrand had brought him candy twice he asked Zeke what he did with it, as he noticed he carefully hid it in his coat lining. Zeke came as near blushing as a black negro could, but refused to tell. In sport Tallyrand threatened not to bring any more candy; then Zeke relented and said: "Well I'll tell you. I want to gin it to Suckie, but you mustn't tell on me." Tallyrand not only promised, but said he would bring him two sticks next time. Zeke's pleasure showed itself in a great horse laugh; then he spit on his hands and bent to his task.

Suckie, as Tallyrand knew, was a "lackly wench," black as a coal, with gazelle eyes, blue gums and immaculate teeth, and when she laughed showed every one of them. She lived in the upper end of the quarter, and since she was ten ears old she and her mother did the washing for the "quarter." But recently Suckie had been promoted to the office of housemaid for the white folks at the mansion of Mr. Bolter, and while she and Zeke were recognized lovers, and were expected to marry, if slaves could be said to marry, her constant duties at the "Big House" kept her away from the "quarter" so nearly all the time, Zeke was well-nigh distracted, for he did not dare show himself over at the kitchen except on Sunday afternoons; and to him the Sundays appeared a year apart.

Old Colonel Bolter was not a cruel man naturally, but he drank rum, and that will make any man cruel; besides it was the cause of his terrible suffering from gout that for the last years of his life confined him to his room, and most of the time to his bed. His eldest son, Jacob, was a negro trader, and very much dreaded by the slaves on the Mains Plantation. But his younger son, Tom, was beloved by every negro on the place. Tom and Zeke had been play-fellows in childhood, and a boy never outgrows this; and Zeke always knew he was safe when he could appeal to "Marse Tom," and the "Buckra" overseer hated Zeke for this favoritism on the part of Tom.

All the foregoing applied to The Mains Plantation two years before the opening of this story; and the year that has passed since Tallyrand found his little friend, Firefly, makes a gap of three years in the affairs of The Mains, and the changes there had been many and great. Old Colonel Bolter had become a confirmed invalid. Tom had opened a law office in Little Rock; Zeke and Suckie had married, after the fashion of slaves, that is to say "they jumped the broom" together in the presence of Marse Tom, and were husband and wife. The Buckra overseer, Mr. Soakem, made a sharp contract with Colonel Bolter, by which he should receive in addition to his annual salary, a contingent share of the profits of the plantation, and had stipulated in the contract that there should be no appeal from him by a slave; and in a short time the slaves began to feel the weight of his heavy hand in a way that made their lives almost a burden.

When Zeke learned that there was to be no appeal from the Buckra overseer, Mr. Soakem, his heart almost died within him, and he exclaimed, "Oh, Lord help me!" and he wondered where his enemy would strike him first.

But Zeke was surprised beyond expression to find that Mr. Soakem actually appeared to be growing kind. A negro dearly loves to have a "task" assigned to him; so when he finished his task he can play the balance of the day, or the balance of the week as the case may be. Mr. Soakem had always refused to assign a task to Zeke; but now he came to him of his own accord, and said in a friendly voice: "Zeke, how would you like to have me assign you a weekly task?" Zeke replied that he would be very glad. Then, Mr. Soakem said: "Well, I will let you lay the task off." This also pleased Zeke beyond expression, and he laid off an honest week's work, and asked the overseer how that would do? Mr. Soakem replied: "You ought to know, and I believe you are honest about it." So the stakes were set, indicating the work for the week.

Poor, simple Zeke had but one thought, and that was to complete his task, and have a day off. So he worked like a Trojan, early and late, doing more ditching each day than any other two men on the plantation could do; so by Friday at noon Zeke had completed his week's task, and Mr. Soakem was right there to take note of the time. Mr. Soakem did not congratulate Zeke, but said: "Well you got me this time; but I am a man of my word." Zeke did not like the tone in which this was spoken, but in his happy freedom he soon forgot it; and armed with a pass from the overseer, so that "Patterrollers" would not take him up, he actually walked into the village and rested all day Saturday; and Saturday night he said to Suckie that he did not believe Mr. Soakem was as hard a master as the Buckra that was over them before.

But all this kindness was soon explained. Next Monday morning Mr. Soakem appeared at Zeke's canal, and said: "Well you cheated me last week. Now let us see what is a fair task for this week." Zeke was undeceived in a moment, and no argument that

he could use made any impression on the heartless overseer. Zeke tried to talk humbly, and said: "But Boss, you know I nearly worked myself to death to earn Saturday free." But to this Mr. Soakem answered: "That he would have none of his 'sass,' and went on laying off a task much larger than that assigned for the week before. Then Zeke took the "sulks," and said that he did not want any more tasks, which greatly irritated the overseer, and he showed his wicked heart to poor Zeke in this information: "You impudent buck! You have every foot of that dirt excavated by Saturday night, or I shall stripe your back like a Zebra's; and understand, there is now no Marse Tom to appeal to. Another thing I will tell you: You and that 'lackly wench' Suckie have been married more than two years, and no increase. That wench goes to the block in New Orleans to be sold; no drones shall be allowed on this plantation. My contract includes a contingent part of the profits, and a wench that bears no children shall not remain on The Mains; and there is no appeal from me."

Zeke's blood froze in his veins. He could not utter a word. He forgot himself, and was thinking only of Suckie. He had never made a fight at an overseer, though his back bore the marks of the cruel lash; but now the temptation was so great he dropped his spade and put it away from him. Without a word he stepped out of the canal, and walked off towards Colonel Bolter's mansion, paying not the slightest heed to the overseer's imperative commands to stop and return to work. The overseer then jumped on his horse, and galloped ahead of Zeke, and called several slaves that were in the field, and ordered them to take hold of him. And from force of habit they ran in front of Zeke. But there was a look in Zeke's face that made them recoil; and Zeke walked on to his master's mansion.

(To be continued)

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## A BILLION DOLLAR GARDEN

We count wheat and cotton as principal crops, and yet, in 1921, they both together were barely equal in value to the vegetables grown on farms in the United States. If we add the truck grown on city and town lots to the "garden sass" grown on farms we find a total just about equal to that of the national corn crop. Not all of these vegetables were sold, of course, but perhaps as great a proportion of them as of the corn produced found their way to a direct cash market. So far as that is concerned, the poultry products for the last census year—1919—were more than a billion dollars in value, and the dairy products nearly a billion and a half. Residents of Vass and community will find these figures interesting, because they show how extremely important the garden and the poultry yard are to all this nation, as well as to the rest of the world.

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# WATCH

this space next week. It may have a statement of general interest from

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VASS, NORTH CAROLINA

## MY ROSE

Lakeview, N.

Dear Pilot:

Will the enclosed 1 through these hot days to your troubles? imagine the ocean and melt.

Cordially

HELEN M.

P. S.—The Pilot gr better all the time.

A day in June, a se Old ocean rippling w A sky of blue with f Flung wide, now n now light.

By giants or by fair They roamed, or sle or prayed.

All this upon a June Where on the isle, born.

A dainty little bud A Fit for a queenly di With leaf of green, a plete,

A little bud, fair, pu A jewel rare, a pric Soon rudely broken.

By life's rough ocean Upon life's rocks to When gentler winds

And loving arms sho To shield the flower sea.

What magic steared me And let it bloom clos Thank God that in

might, The simple rose bud And grew into a flov Its fragrance tossed t Yet in my garden, bl

## THE FOURTH UNIVERSIT

Chapel Hill, July 6.— July was celebrated by Summer School student program of stunts and on in Memorial Hall from the various colleges in the state, and students of Georgia, South Virginia. The program a procession headed by Uncle Sam, represented Sawyer, of Gastonia, C sent by Miss Drois T boro, Columbia represe Hulda Hester, of Chatan

The first two weeks of Session closes with wo partments rapidly unde student body of more t ously down at it, some normal and some worki credit, many in the Gr studying in some special

The Teacher's Bureau indispensable to the tea and those preparing to It is rendering a service able nowhere else, in pla students in desirable pos like manner furnishing schools the teachers the for. Principals of publi the state are frequently devoted to this Bureau with students about nex tions. The students a special blanks and filin the Teachers' Bureau, qualifications and credits is this year reaching m before, due to the enlarg sudent body.

The recreational side school life is this year siderable attention. T pools, one in the gymn near town, are affordi advantages during the and proving thoroughly the afternoons. Dances day night in the gymnasi supervision of the soci are attended by all stud ed in terpsichore and social events. Other e are being given throug sion.

Field Day exercises w place in this session of ty Summer School, acc announcement of Miss He selling, director of Phys and for the past nine yea of the Summer School whole day will be devo of this nature with the s ticipating. Miss Mass