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At least one old Augusta Negress has vivid recollections of childhood days on plantations in the pre-Civil War days. Outstanding in their memories are the methods of rearing slave children and the amusements indulged in by their mothers and fathers.

"I was born and raised in Powers Pond Place," said decrepit Estella Jones, "and, though I warn't but nine years old, I 'member dey had a nuss house whar dey put all de young chillun 'til dey wuz old enough to work. De chillun wuz put at dis nuss house so dey Ma and Pa could work. Dey had one old 'oman to look atter us and our some'pin [HW:] t' eat wuz brought to dis house. Our milk wuz put on de floor in a big wooden tray and dey give us oyster shells to eat wid. All de chillun would gather 'round dis tray and eat. Dey always let us eat 'til us got enough. I kept some of de oyster shells dey give us for spoons 'til my own chillun wuz grown.

"De nuss house wuz close to de marster's house. It wuz a wooden house wid two great big rooms. De sleepin' room wuz furnished wid little bunk beds three or four feet apart. The other room wuz used for a playroom and dinin' room. De floor wuz bare and de seats and benches wuz built from undressed lumber.

"Slaves on our place had a hard time. Dey had to work night and day. Marster had stobs (staves) all over de field to put lights on so dey could see how to work atter dark. De mens, more so dan de womens, had to work every night 'til twelve o'clock. But dey would feed 'em good. Dey had dey supper sont out in de field to 'em 'bout nine o'clock by a cripple boy who didn't do nothin' but tote water and do things lak dat.[Pg 347]

"Dey wuz always glad when de time come for 'em to shell corn. Dey enjoyed dat better dan dey did Christmas, or at least jist as much. Dey always had to work durin' de day time and shell corn at night. De overseer wuz real good to 'em and it looked lak he enjoyed corn shellin's as much as dey did. Most times slaves from other plantations would come over and help 'em. Dey used to put on dey good clothes 'cause dey wanted to look dey best.

"It always tuk 'bout two weeks to shell corn 'cause de real old mens and womens never did help. Dey always had somethin' good to eat at dese times. Dey would pick out de best six cooks and dey wouldn't help shell corn, dey jist looked atter de cookin'. Dey would have chicken, sometimes fish or anythin' dey could get. Now and den dey had jist chitt'lin's and sweet 'tatoes.

"De men have even stole hogs from other people and barbecued 'em, den dey would cook hash and rice and serve barbecue. The overseer knowed all 'bout it but he et as much as anybody else and kept his mouth shut. He wuz real good to all de slaves. He never run you and yelled at you lak you warn't human. Everybody loved him, and would mind him better dan dey would anybody else. He always let de slaves shell corn 'til 'bout ten o'clock, den everybody would stop and have supper. Atter dat he would let 'em dance and play games 'til twelve. Our marster didn't say nothin' 'bout what de slaves done so long as de overseer wuz wid 'em.

"When corn-shellin' time come, everything would be tuk out of a big room, and one half of de room would be filled wid corn. Every pusson had a bucket dat held de same amount. Every time a bucket wuz filled it wuz tuk to de scorekeeper to be credited to his name. Whenever[Pg 348] de huskin' wuz over, de number of buckets you had filled wuz counted and de one who filled de most always got a prize.

"Whenever anybody wuz late gittin' his cotton picked out, he always give a moonlight cotton pickin' party. Dese parties wuz always give on moonshiny nights and wuz liked by everybody. Atter while dey give everybody somethin' good to eat, and at de end of de party, de pusson who had picked de most cotton got a prize. Sometimes dey had pea shellin's 'stead of corn huskin's, but de parties and frolics wuz all pretty much alike.

"At quiltin' bees, four folks wuz put at every quilt, one at every corner. Dese quilts had been pieced up by old slaves who warn't able to work in de field. Quiltin's always tuk place durin' de winter when dere warn't much to do. A prize wuz always give to de four which finished dere quilt fust. 'Freshments went 'long wid dis too.

"Sometimes de grown folks all went huntin' for fun. At dem times, de womens had on pants and tied dey heads up wid colored cloths.

"Cake walkin' wuz a lot of fun durin' slavery time. Dey swept de yards real clean and set benches 'round for de party. Banjos wuz used for music makin'. De womens wore long, ruffled dresses wid hoops in 'em and de mens had on high hats, long split-tailed coats, and some of 'em used walkin' sticks. De couple dat danced best got a prize. Sometimes de slave owners come to dese parties 'cause dey enjoyed watchin' de dance, and dey 'cided who danced de best. Most parties durin' slavery time, wuz give on Saturday night durin' work seasons, but durin' winter dey wuz give on most any night.

"I still 'members some of de songs dey used to sing at frolics and at church too":[Pg 349]

The Wind Blows East

The wind blows east and the wind blows west,
It blows like the Judgment Day.
And all them sinners who never have cried,
Will surely cry that day.

Let me tell you, sure to cry that day, sure to cry that day,
All them sinners who never have cried,
Will surely cry that day.

You'd Better Be Praying

You'd better be praying while you're young,
You'd better be praying while you're young,
You'd better be praying without waiting any longer,
You'd better be praying while you're young.

You'd better seek religion while you're young,
You'd better seek religion while you're young,
You'd better seek religion without waiting any longer,
You'd better seek religion while you're young.

Come Change My Name

Bright angel, bright angel, come change my name,
O angel come change my name.
Come change my name from Nature to Grace,
O angel come change my name.

Sweet Jesus, sweet Jesus come change my name,
O Jesus come change my name,

Come change my name from Nature to Grace,
O Jesus come change my name.
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I'm On My Way

If a seeker gets to Heaven before I do,
Look out for me, I'm on my way too.
Shout, shout the Heaven-bound King!
Shout, shout I'm on my way!

If a brother gets to Heaven before I do,
Look out for me, I'm on my way too.
Shout, shout the Heaven-bound King!
Shout, shout I'm on my way!