

JOHN BARKER, age 84, Houston.

5 photographs marked Green Cumby have been assigned to this manuscript—the 'Green Cumby' photos are attached to the proper manuscript and the five referred to above are probably pictures of John Barker.

JOHN BARKER, age 84, was born near Cincinnati, Ohio, the property of the Barker family, who moved to Missouri and later to Texas. He and his wife live in a neat cottage in Houston, Texas.

"I was born a slave. I'm a Malagasser (Madagascar) nigger. I 'member all 'bout dem times, even up in Ohio, though de Barkers brought me to Texas later on. My mother and father was call Goodman, but dey died when I was little and Missy Barker raised me on de plantation down near Houston. Dey was plenty of work and plenty of room.

"I 'member my grandma and grandpa. In dem days de horned toads runs over de world and my grandpa would gather 'em and lay 'em in de fireplace till dey dried and roll 'em with bottles till dey like ashes and den rub it on de shoe bottoms. You see, when dey wants to run away, dat stuff don't stick all on de shoes, it stick to de track. Den dey carries some of dat powder and throws it as far as dey could jump and den jump over it, and do dat again till dey use all de powder. Dat throwed de common hounds off de trail altogether. But dey have de bloodhounds, hell hounds, we calls 'em, and dey could pick up dat trail. Dey run my grandpa over 100 mile and three or four days and nights and found him under a bridge. What dey put on him was enough! I seen 'em whip runaway niggers till de blood run down dere backs and den put salt in de places.

"I 'spect dere was 'bout 40 or 50 acres in de plantation. Dey worked and worked and didn't have no dances or church. Dances nothin! [Pg 44]

"My massa and missus house was nice, but it was a log house. They had big fireplaces what took great big chunks of wood and kep' fire all night. We lives in de back in a little bitty house like a chicken house. We makes beds out of posts and slats across 'em and fills tow sacks with shucks in 'em for mattress and pillows.

"I seed slaves sold and they was yoked like steers and sold by pairs sometimes. Dey wasn't 'lowed to marry, 'cause they could be sold and it wasn't no use, but you could live with 'em.

"We used to eat possums and dese old-fashioned coons and ducks. Sometimes we'd eat goats, too. We has plenty cornmeal and 'lasses and we gets milk sometimes, but we has no fine food, 'cept on Christmas, we gits some cake, maybe.

"My grandma says one day dat we all is free, but we stayed with Massa Barker quite a while. Dey pays us for workin' but it ain't much pay, 'cause de war done took dere money and all. But they was good to us, so we stayed.

"I was 'bout 20 when I marries de fust time. It was a big blow-out and I was scared de whole time. First time I ever tackled marryin'. Dey had a big paper sack of rice and throwed it all over her and I, enough rice to last three or four days, throwed away jus' for nothin'. I had on a black, alpaca suit with frock tail coat and, if I ain't mistaken, a right white shirt. My wife have a great train on her dress and one dem things you call a wreath. I wore de loudest shoes we could find, what you call patent leather.

"Dis here my third wife. We marries in Eagle Pass and comes up to de Seminole Reservation and works for de army till we goes to work for [Pg 45] de Pattersons, and we been here 23 years now.

"Ghosties? I was takin' care of a white man when he died and I seed something 'bout three feet high and black. I reckon I must have fainted 'cause they has de doctor for me. And on dark nights I seed ghosties what has no head. Dey looks like dey wild and dey is all in different performance. When I goin' down de road and feel a hot steam and look over my shoulder I can see 'em plain as you standin' dere. I seed 'em when my wife was with me, but she can't see 'em, 'cause some people ain't gifted to see 'em. [Pg 46]
