



Katie Darling

KATIE DARLING, about 88, was born a slave on the plantation of William McCarty, on the Elysian Fields Road, nine miles south of Marshall, Texas. Katie was a nurse and housegirl in the McCarty household until five years after the end of the Civil War. She then moved to Marshall and married. Her husband and her three children are dead and she is supported by Griffin Williams, a boy she found homeless and reared. They live in a neat three-room shack in SunnySouth addition of Marshall, Texas.

"You is talkin' now to a nigger what nussed seven white chillen in them bullwhip days. Miss Stella, my young missy, got all our ages down in she Bible, and it say I's born in 1849. Massa Bill McCarty my massa and he live east and south of Marshall, clost to the Louisiana line. Me and my three brudders, Peter and Adam and Willie, all lives to be growed and married, but mammy die in slavery and pappy run 'way while he and Massa Bill on they way to the battle of Mansfield. Massa say when he come back from the war, 'That triflin' nigger run 'way and jines up with them damn Yankees.'

"Massa have six chillen when war come on and I nussed all of 'em. I stays in the house with 'em and slep' on a pallet on the floor, and soon I's big 'nough to tote the milk pail they puts me to milkin', too. Massa have more'n 100 cows and most the time me and Violet do all the milkin'. We better be in that cowpen by five o'clock. One mornin' massa cotched me lettin' one the calves do some milkin' and he let me off without whippin' that time, but that don't mean he allus good, 'cause them cows have more feelin' for than massa and missy. [Pg 279]

"We et peas and greens and collards and middlin's. Niggers had better let that ham alone! We have meal coffee. They parch meal in the oven and bile it and drink the liquor. Sometime we gits some of the Lincoln coffee what was lef' from the nex' plantation.

"When the niggers done anything massa bullwhip them, but didn't skin them up very often. He'd whip the man for half doin' the plowin' or hoein' but if they done it right he'd find something else to whip them for. At night the men had to shuck corn and the women card and spin. Us got two pieces of clothes for winter and two for summer, but us have no shoes. We had to work Saturday all day and if that grass was in the field we didn't git no Sunday, either.

"They have dances and parties for the white folks' chillen, but missy say, 'Niggers was made to work for white folks,' and on Christmas Miss Irene bakes two cakes for the nigger families but she darsn't let missy know 'bout it.

"When a slave die, massa make the coffin hisself and send a couple niggers to bury the body and say, 'Don't be long,' and no singin' or prayin' 'lowed, jus' put them in the ground and cover 'em up and hurry on back to that field.

"Niggers didn't cou't then like they do now, massa pick out a po'tly man and a po'tly gal and jist put 'em together. What he want am the stock.

"I 'member that fight at Mansfield like it yes'day. Massas's field am all tore up with cannon holes and ever' time a cannon fire, missy go off in a rage. One time when a cannon fire, she say to me, 'You li'l [Pg 280] black wench, you niggers ain't gwine be free. You's made to work for white folks.' 'Bout that time she look up and see a Yankee sojer standin' in the door with a pistol. She say, 'Katie, I didn't say anythin', did I?' I say, 'I ain't tellin' no lie, you say niggers ain't gwine git free.'

"That day you couldn't git 'round the place for the Yankees and they stays for weeks at a time.

"When massa come home from the war he wants let us loose, but missy wouldn't do it. I stays on and works for them six years after the war and missy whip me after the war jist like she did 'fore. She has a hun'erd lashes laid up for me now, and this how it am. My brudders done lef' massa after the war and move nex' door to the Ware place, and one Saturday some niggers come and tell me my brudder Peter am comin' to git me 'way from old missy Sunday night. That night the cows and calves got together and missy say it my fault. She say, 'I'm gwine give you one hun'erd lashes in the mornin', now go pen them calves.'

"I don't know whether them calves was ever penned or not, 'cause Peter was waitin' for me at the lot and takes me to live with him on the Ware place. I's so happy to git away from that old devil missy, I don't know what to do, and I stays there sev'ral years and works out here and there for money. Then I marries and moves here and me and my man farms and nothin' 'citin' done happened." [Pg 281]