THE LOST SHEEP

A Play in One Act.

by

Andrew Nelson Lytle.

Cornsilk Farm,

Guntersville, Alabama.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

May Kate, A high brown mulatto wench.

Brother Jake, the new Parson.

Aunt Martha, Ben's mother.

Ben, May Kate's wandering husband.

Zebedee, the leading elder.

Sister Adelaide.

Brother Jim.

The Starter.

Members of the Keys Chapel Church, African.

Place Rural Tennessee . . . a barn turned temporarily into a church.

Time September, after the crops are laid by. Evening during a protracted meeting.

Setting -

Back center, large double barn doors. Left and right, stalls. Between them an improvised platform upon which rests the pulpit and chairs for the Parson, the Starter, and the leading Elder.

In front of the platform rows of benches stretch out towards the audience, with a center aisle dividing them. The benches are rough, home-made affairs.

At the rise of the curtain May Kate peers through a crib door down left, looks quickly about the barn then lets her eyes rest on the open doors back center, through which a bright moon flows to light the back of the meeting house. The place is well lighted generally by its rays.

She enters with the easy rhythm of a bob-cat; puts two lanterns on posts opposite each other in the center of the building; goes to the partly opened doors and looks to the right and left. She speaks with disgust.

MAY KATE.

Umph! Look at dat moon. And dey aint nothin round here but a mule.

(She moves down front her voluptuous body, picks up a dust cloth and goes to work on pulpit and chairs. But it is evident her mind is not on her business, for she goes again to the doors and looks out. She returns quickly and hides in front of the pulpit.)

(Brother Jake sticks his head through the doors and looks cautiously around. He enters, dressed in a Prince Albert, a soiled stiff shirt, high collar without tie, patched trousers, and field shoes. He feels very fine and handsome, as he walks up to the raised platform.

May Kate raises the hand with the cloth and jiggles it. He sees it, looks over the pulpit, grins largely, tiptoes to shut the doors, comes back and leans over the pulpit.)

JAKE.

Good evenin, Sister Kate.

MAY KATE.

Good evenin, Bre'r Jake.

JAKE.

I'se mighty glad to see you bout de Lord's business, sister.

MAY KATE. (Moving stage L to dust.)

Sorter tidyin up the pull-pit.

JAKE.

De Lord will reward you, shore.

(He walks about to show her how fine the reward will be; then comes to her. She giggles.)

Yes, de Lord will shoulv pervide for you for dis. (Closer) You is purty tonight, sister. Dat you is, and I don't keer who know hit.

(She snuggles into his arms. He takes her: remembers his position and [illegible] her away.)

But, mind you, don't go settin yoo haid on vanity. Hit'll lead you in contrary ways. Vanity's de debil's reapin machine. Dat tis. (He stalks up and down in his best mulli pit manner.) Vanity is vanity, say de Lord. And when de Lord say vanity is vanity, dat's show God what he mean. (Turning abruptly) Aint dat de truf?

MAY KATE.

Dat tis.

JAKE.

It showly is.

MAY KATE. (Nestling again.)

You doesn't think I'se vain, does you, Bro'r Jake?

JAKE.

I hopes not, gal. I hopes not. (His arms play about her.) Old Scratch in all sorts o places, a-temptin you befoes you know hit.

MAY KATE. (Breaking away to bench S. L.)

I'll be keerful ob him den. (Jake follows) Br'r Jake, dey's gonna be a sorter settin-out at our house atter de meetin, and Pap wants you to come over. We's killed a young shoat, and dey's gonna be a little cider about.

JAKE.

I'll be dar, honey. I'll showly be dar. (Sitting on bench beside her.) But aint dey nobody else wants me to come 'sides yoo Pappy?

MAY KATE.

We all wants you to come.

JAKE.

But nobody in partic'lar?

MAY KATE.

Does you want a partic'lar invite?

JAKE.

Unless I gets hit I [illegible] come.

MAY KATE.

Den I gives it to yer.

JAKE.

You know, sister, you is do portest I ever seed you tonight.

MAY KATE.

Aw, git out

(She rises, gives 999999 him a playful knock; and the unbalanced bench throws him to the floor, bench on top of his dignity. Angry, he picks himself up and begins to brush off.)

If you come over here, I'll help brush you off.

(He backs up to her reluctantly, and her arms go insinuatingly around his neck. He ceases to frown, makes a grab at her, and she escapes coquettishly to one side of the pulpit.. He follows, chases her around it until they stop facing each other.)

JAKE.

You know, sister Kate, ever time I gits alone wid you, I feel do debil
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JAKE.

honey, you come set in yoo daddy's lap.

MAY KATE.

You forgits I'se a ma'ied woman, Bror Jake.

JAKE.

Dat banjo-picker is gone for good. Swap a preacher for a sinner over time, sister, and you'll git right wid de Lord.

(He pulls her, not without a friendly struggle, into a chair back of the pulpit, where they embrace. At this point Aunt Marthy, a fat old negro woman, moving her weight with the regularity of a pendulum, enters calling, "May Kate, May Kate." She sees the two disentangle. Jake crawls out the back doors.)

AUNT M.

What you doin behine dat pull-pit, gal?

MAY KATE.

Sorter straightnin hit up befoo de meetin.

AUNT M.

Straightnin hit up. war you? I'll be boun' you'd a been straightnin out behine it in one moo minute. And in de Lord's house too. De Lord'll punish dem what blasphome he house Who war de rascal? Who war he?

MAY KATE.

Who war who?

AUNT M.

You know who. . . . And yoo husband back from his wandorins.

MAY KATE.

Ben!

AUNT M.

Yeh, Ben.

MAY KATE.

You's lyin He been gone two year.

AUNT M.

No, I aint lyin Ben, yoo husband befoo God, you hussy, is back. (Chant.) De lost sheep is back in de fool agin. He war lost and he's foun'. De Lord's fotcha[illegible]n.

MAY KATE.

He lob' hese'f. An' dey aint nothin sheepish bout him, onless'n hit's he stink, and dat's goatish.

AUNT M.

You a fine one to talk bout goats. Here yoo husband right out de doo, and you bout to play de hog under he nose.

MAY KATE.

How come I know he out de doo?

BEN. (Thrusting his head in through door down left.)

Mammy, you too long. I couldn't wait no moe. . . . Hello, gal, aint you glad to see me. You don't sek like you is.

(May Kate attempts to be cold and distant: but Ben's sophistication and sleek attire is too much. He is bedazzling in a black and white check suit, close-fitting trousers, striped silk shirt, large jewel below a ready-made bow tie, Patent-leather shoes which, minus a few buttons, give him a devil-may-care attitude. He has a banjo.)

MAY KATE.

Umm! You's mighty sleek for us country folks.

AUNT M.

Aint he doe! You does look fine, boy. An you back jes' in time fer de mootin'.

BEN.

Mootin'? A-, go long, mammy. I wants to talk wid May Kate.

AUNT M.

Not tell you fess religion. You's de most worrysome child I is got.

BEN (Pushing her out.)

All right, den. You go leave me wid my wife. (A. M. goes out.) What you setin so offish about, gal. You knows you glad to see me.

MAY KATE.

Oh, is I?

BEN.

Course you is. Dey all is.

MAY KATE.

What you doin back here, dem?

BEN.

Do idea you astin me dat. I come all do way from do city jest to see you, honey.

MAY KATE.

Dat black gal, Maude, run you off?

BEN.

Maude? Who dat?

MAY KATE.

Quit ackin mulish. You kno-s. Do woman you lef' me for.

BEN.

Oh, dat Maude. I aint seed dat woman in a year.

MAY KATE.

You a'nt.?

BEN.

So he'p me, I aint.

MAY KATE.

What you been doin all dat time? If show aint took you no year to make up do piece o' mind you got. Iff'n it did, you kin turn on round and go back agin. Dey aint nobody wants to seev you round here. (Swagers off.)

BEN.

Honey, you show got yallo--jackish since I been gone.

MAY KATE.

An' I aint loss' my stinger, neither, big boy.

BEN.

No, Kate, don't ak lak dat. You still loves me, don't you, sugar?

MAY KATE.

Does I look lak I been lettin' do grass grow under my feets, a-waitin' for you to come now me out?

BEN.

Hmmh! You looks swell . . . jes' lak de heart of a great big watermellon' been cracked dew cold. Come on, honey, take yoo baby back agin. De moo I been away from you de hongrier I'd git to see you. (Heavy struggle.)

MAY KATE (Pushing him away.)

Two year! Hummh! I aint never seed yoo belly dat rattlin' empty.

BEN.

It's de truf. And when it come cotton-pickin time, I could jes' see you out dere, a-fillin yoo old sack faster'n any of em. All of a sudden I seed I had to come on back to my baby.

MAY KATE.

I picked three hunnerd pounds yesteddy.

BEN.

Did? No- aint you sumpin. Befoo I lef de bes' you could do was two ton. Aint dat right?

MAY KATE.

Dat tis. Ho- you member dat?

BEN.

I aint forgot nothin' you ever done. I aint forgot how you useter could love neither, sugar. Member how me an you useter set out under de hill in gatherin time, wid de moon a-leanin over sorter keerless- like, a-lookin at me and you? All de yearth was a-smellin of curin' hay, and de crickets was a-buzzin, and de old mules a-swishin deir tails in de barn. Don't you member? It's gatherin' time nor, baby, and I jest couldn't stay away no longer. See, dar's de moon, de same ole moon, a-comin' ober de top of de knob. It's a-talkin' to us, honey, a-talkin' to us. (He is close beside her.) It's a sayin Ben, she's yourn. Nobody's but yourn, and you aint a-goin leave her agin. It's a savin', kiss ole Ben, May Kate. Don't let him stand dar hongry in gatherin' time.

MAY KATE.

Eff I did hit'd take a twenty acre fiel' to fill you.

[illegible] a-gitt pore Ciel' to fill you.

(Ben grabs her violently, and they embrace. Brother Jake, with resumed dignity, re-enters. He finds them much to his surprise in a situation, the consequences of which are well known to him. He assumes the pose of wounded dignity: then clears his throat - without effect. He clears it again. Still no response. He forgets his wounded dignity.)

JAKE.

Sister Kate . . . Sister Kate . . . You certainly is free and easy tonight.

BEN. (Quickly turning: drawing razor)

Nigger, what dat you said?

JAKE (Moving down right, Ben following.)

Put dat razor up. Dis is de Lord's house.

BEN.

Dat don't dull de aidge of my razor.

JAKE.

Put it away, I say.

MAY KATE.

He de preacher, Ben.

BEN.

Oh! So you is de preacher, is you?

JAKE. (Drawing himself up.)

I has de honor of functionin for dis flock.

BEN.

Well, from now on, Parson, you do yoe functionin in de pull-pit, whar you b'longs: or I'll be doin done functionin myse'f. Come on, May Kate, loss step down de road a piece.

MAY KATE (As they move off.)

We'll be back befoe church is broke, Bro'r Jake.

JAKE.

Sister Kate, you better stay here and worship wid us. From de looks of things you needs a powerful lot o prayin.

MAY KATE.

I'll do dat when I gits back, Br'r Jake.

B N.

An ef we don't gits back, Parson, den you pray for us.

(Jake is enraged. He strides towards them and jerks May Kate back into the room. Ben draws his weapon. Jake picks up a bench - then the congregation enters gradually, with it Uncle Bill.)

BILL

Wher you gine, gal?

MAY KATE.

I'se jes' gine stop out wid Ben, Pappy.

BILL. (Looking over his spectacles to see.)

Wid Ben! Wher he?

BEN

Here me, Uncle Bill. I come back for May Kate.

UNCLE B.

You is? Well, you aint gine git her. No nigger can up and leave my gal like you done, den come sashayin back and think he gwi walk off wid her easy like.

BEN

She my wife, Uncle Bill.

UNCLE B.

Which one?

(Murmurs from the congregation which, excepting a few stragglers is all in. Uncle Zebedee, with whito whiskers, white kinked head, bent over with years and toil, moves forward and seats himself to the right of the Parson's chair. The Official Starter, a strong negro wench, is seated on the left. She gets her title by "starting" the shouting when the picture of hell-fire and brimstone fails to set upon the congregation quick enough.

Brother Joe and Sister Adelaide come in and seat themselves in the middle of the church. Brother Joe is under the influence of corn and falls asleep immediately upon seating himself. His wife, Adelaide, punches him frequently, but he only opens his eyes to close them again. Other negroes, young and old, giddy and grave, flirtatious and loquatious, come in and fill the barn with noise and pantomime until Zebedee takes charge.)

UNCLE B. (Continued.)

Go set down, May Kate.

MAY KATE.

But I wants to be wid Ben.

UNCLE B.

You been away from him two year. Leastway, he been away from you two year, and now you can't wait ontell church is broke to step out wid dis banjo-playin sinner. Go on do-n dar.

(He drives her with the motions of his cane to a seat Stage right.)

A YOUNG BROTHER.

Kin you still knock her, Ben?

BEN.

Ho- dis?

(His fingers run quickly over his "box". The congregation quivers with anticipation of pleasure other than religion.)

A YOUNG BROTHER

Lissen dar.

JAKE.

You take yoese'f and det sinful instrument outer dis house of worship.

BEN.

Jes as soon as I kin take my woddin wif wid me.

UNCLE B. (As Ben moves towards M.K.)

Git back dar. (Raising cane.) You aint a-gonna play de rooster wid my gal no moe.

JAKE.

I kno-s, but my jedgment tell me . .

ZEB.

Let de Lord do de jedgin. What dis boy need is Prayer. Aint I right, sisters?

(Answers: Yeh, yeh. You right. So right. Need Prayer. Amen.)

He standin in the need of Prayer.

(Zeb sings t is out. The congregation joins in. Ben drops in a seat near M. K.)

It's me . . it's me, Oh Lord
Standin in the need of Prayer.
Oh, it's me, Oh Lord, standin in the needof prayer.
Notmy brother, not my sister,
But it's me, Oh, Lord, standing in the need of Prayer.

ZEB.

Does you begin to feel de sperit, son?

BEN.

I does. Uncle Zeb.

JAKE.

Dat's fine. Now, since we is stuck a thorn in de debil's foot, dey aint nothin lef to keep us from standin close to de Lord. Less begin by takin up de collection. Br'r Sam'l, will you do de honors?

ZEB.

Jest a minnit, Br'r Jake. I wants to say somethin. Less Sunday when de hat went by, certain pussons of dis congregation, instead ob dropoin deir dimes in to make hit jingle, jest shuck de hat. Now, tonight, when she jimble, I wants dat jingle to hab some meanin

JAKE.

Amen. Amen.

JAKE.

Throw him out you deacons.

BEN

Why doesn't you try hit.

JAKE.

I kin. (Deacons interpose.)

AUNT MARTHY. (Entering.)

Wher my Ben? Is he come?

A BRETHER.

Yeh, he show come, sister.

AUNT. M.

Whet my los' lamb? Oh, dar you is, come to grace. Sweet Jesus, bless he name.

(She begins to shout. Three holders, after much effort, get her into her seat. Uncle Zebedee rises.)

ZEBEDEE.

Mey Kate, set down dar whar you'll be away from de doe and temptation. You, Ben, over dar.

JAKE.

But, Br'r Zeb, his pusson heah will spile de eliments of dis meetin.

ZEB.

De Lord say hit better to bring one rank goat into de fole dan tie to keep forty fleecy lambs inside. Dat's de scripter.

JAKE.

I knows dat. But I don't want no son o Satan a-jumpin wid my flock.

ZEB

Br'r Jake, we is obleeged to try . . . And look at his pore ole mammy, worried to death ober his ways!

JAKE.

Sisters, let's don't argify in de Lord's house. Eff May Kate never drapp no dime in, twarn't her fault. She aint quite herse'f yit.

ADELAIDE.

Eff dat had been me, Parson, you wouldn't talk so purty.

BEN. (Rising.)

Eff May Kate aint drapped no dime in, hit's because she leave sich matters up toher man. Gimme dat hat. (With great non-chalance he tosses a dollar bill into it. Great reaction from congregation.)

MAY KATE.

Could you git dat drunken man o yourn do dat, Sister Adelaide.

ZEB.

Here. Here. De debil put dem words in yoe mouths, bofe of you. Pass de hat agin, Br'r Sam'l. See if you kin all do as good as Br'r Ben. De Lord is beginnin to sit wid him.

(As this is done, Br'r Jim starts up-

No hiding place down dere,
Oh, dey's no hidin place down der.
I went to de rock for to hide my face.
De rock cried out, 'No hidin place'.
No hidin place down dere.

Oh, de sinner man he gamble an he fell.
Oh, de sinner man he gambl an he fell.
Instead of goin to Heaven, he had to go to Hell,
No hidin place down dere.

Oh, de rock cried I'm burnin too.
Oh, de rock cried I'm burnin too.
Cause I wants to go tolleeben jist de same as you,
No hidin place down dere.

(The congregation sings this with feeling. As the hat comes back to Zebedee, the singing is hushed with expectancy. When he nods

final approval, the song bursts in loud relief. At its height

May Kate jumps up in a shouting fit. She throws herself, presumably by accident, in Ben's arms. The meeting is in chaos.)

JAKE.

May Kate, take yoose'f out'n dat damn nigger's arms. You heah me, May Kat

MAY KATE

Oh, my soul's a achin,

ADELAIDE.

Taint yoo soul dat's achin, you Jezebell.

JAKE.

You deacons, take em apart. (Kneels by pulpit.) Oh, Lord God, take de deb-
il out'n dis pore sinnin woman. She don't know what she's a-doin.

(As he prays, he looks sidewise to see that May Kate is taken
from the devil's arms.)

MAY KATE.

Oh Jesus, how I loves him.

JAKE.

Lissen at her God In yoo house , God. Bellow yoo thunder. Shake yoo lightnin.

(The holders bring M.K. back to her seat. Jake rises.)

Dat's hit. You's doomed ole Scratch. De lord will see yoo good works, broth-
ers. And now, sir, clare outern de lord's house.

ZEB.

No, we aint give him no chance. Set down, Ben. Set down, I say.

JAKE.

Howcome he aint?

ZEB.

De boy aint done nuthin. Dat war May Kate tryin to Jezebell him.

UNCLE B.

I gi beat her good when I gits her home.

ZEB

Yeh, May Kate, you akin lek dat, and yoo Christian pappy by yoo side.

MAY KATE.

ADELAIDE.

We all need you.

BEN.

She never done nothin.

ZEB.

Heah, Ben. It's a fight wid de debil to bring you back. Lissen boy. All of you lissen. Dis aint gwi hurt none of you. (Nolords, fron the congregation.) I'm gwi tell you what happened to Jonah for goin in contrary ways to de Lord's command. " Arise, Br'r Johah, and go ye to Ninny, dat wicked city, and tell dem misbehavin chillurn ofhine to right deir ways or I'll be atter em."

JAKE. (Rising.)

A bible story.

ZEB

And Johah say, " I'll go, 'Lord, eff'n I got to walk over step ob de way. But no sooner had de Lord turn her back dan dat black rascal Jonah struck out thru de under brush in de direction of Tarville, on de udder side ob de railroad track.

JAKE. (Rising.)

Dat's de scripter. De scripter.

ZEB.

Why did he do dis, I asks yer? Why did he go agin de command ob de Lord? (Why'Er'r Why. Go on. Tell us.) Heah me! He done what many moe has done, befoe he time and atter it. Dey wuz a ginger-braid gal, name Rose of Sharon, over at Tarville. Dat's why he done it. She wuz a dancin woman, too, sistors. A dancin woman, brothers. (Loud responses.) A sinful woman. Heah me, May Kate?

(The starter rises and beats her head against the pulpit.)

STARTER.

Oh Lord, save de men of dis congregation from de ways ob [illegible]. Do you heah me, Lord?

ZEB.

Why, she was so sinful, dat de sin oozed out'n her eyes and years and rolled out on de groun'. Yeh, hit did. It got so de king ob dat country had to hab doorny out ditchin when she went to town to buy meat for dinner. So what happened to Jonah? What happened to him, I asks yer. (loud responses.) De mate ob de boat picked him up by de seat ob he breeches and tossed him overboa'd, clothes and all, and down went Jonah as straight as he could go into de whale's belly. ~~as he could go~~.

(At the mention of belly there are snickers from the back row. This irritates the old man. He stops, pulls up his specs, and pounds the pulpit.)

Yeh, belly. . . . De Bible say belly, and I says belly. Belly, belly, belly BELLY.

JAKE. (Rising.)

And I says belly.

ZEB.

And dat's what happens to folks dat don't heed de command ob de Lord. You scoffers on dat back bench beater heed me. And You, Ben, You heared me?

BEN.

Yes. I heared you, Uncle Zeb. But de pint is, I aint Johah.

(Moans from congregation.)

JAKE.

You see he still stiff necked, Uncle Zeb. De debil's got him. Let de debil heb him. We must spend our time wid Sister Kate. It's gonna take a powerful lot o prayin. Dat tis. And atter dis meetin, Hay Kate, I wants to set out and pray wid you. De debil's slipped up behind you, and it's gonna take us bofe to drive him out.

BEN.

(Rises, shifts his derby, spits on the floor, and moves to the

back of the barn with insulting impudence and ease.)

BEN.

So de debil's got me, is he? Dat's jest you way o sayin you wants my woman.

(The congregation takes in its breath.)

Well, you aint a-goin to git her. May Kate, is you willin to go to de debil wid me, honey?

MAY KATE.

Anywhere wid you, big boy.

(Moans from saintly members. Ben starts in her direction, but Uncle Bill pulls her into her seat. Deacons look menacingly.)

JAKE.

May Kate's my . . de Lord's woman. She a leetle weak at times, but we must save her Is I right? (You is. Save her. from all parts of barn.) Now, will you git

BEN.

Oh, yeh. I's a-gittin. But I aint gone for good. (Moves nearer barn door, stage left.) You all is mighty fine Christians, aint you? (He slighly strikes a few dance chords on his banjo. Again, but more decidedly the congregation tingles with the music. He laughs.) Dat look lok hit. Well, Parson, I see you Christians aint forgot de debil's chunes. Das all I wants to know.

JAKE.

Git out o here, you son of Satan.

(With a final strum, Ben exits.)

Brothers and sisters, we's done all we could. You, Sister Martha, you see how de wind blow. And now, as Leadin Elder, I wants to tell Br'r John on de part of de congregation how proud we is to hab him come preach for us, to hab him lead us out'n de land of Egypt . . into de Promised land. (Amens.) We'd been in dat sinful land long enough.

JAKE. (Rising and bowing.)

Brothers, sisters, Br'r Zebedee. I wants to thank you for dem kind words.

JAKE (Continued.)

(Amens) And I wants to tell you how proud I is to be de shepherd ob dis flock. Yes, I wants to tell you all how glad I is. I wants you all to hit, everbody settin in dis House of God. (Yes dees. Yes. Yes. ect.) De text o my sermon dis evenin is -- De Los' Sheep. We's had a powerful good example befoe us tonight. Let hit set like a beam of wa win in yoe eyes, my chillurn. Dey was a man had two sons. De youngest was spiled by he mammy and lef unbeat by he pappy (Zeb: A Reerless Pappy.) So one day dat boy up and say, " Pap, I wants you to gie me what you aims to while I'se young and kin enjoy hit." " All right, son," say he pappy, " It ain' gwine be much, but lyar tis." So dis boy went into a furrin land and spent de money in r uty livin. He sinned. Oh, how he sinned! When de Christians is up in Heaven a-flyin from one cherry-beam to another cherry beam, he-agine he down in de debil's Hell a jumpin from one fryin-pan to another fryin pan.

(At this Aunt Marthy shouts out of the church, holders dragging after her.)

But befoe I goes deep into dis subject, I feels obleaged to make a fession to my flock. I wants you all to know dat I aint always been as godly as I is today. (Loud responses: Amen. Aint it de truf. Bless he name.) I wants you to know dat I has sinned. (Oh lords.) I wants you to know dat I has called de figgers to de debil's chumes. (Still louder) I wants you to know dat I has been a dancer in my sinnin days. (Very loud.) I wants you to know dat I has set my oats in de wrong fiel'. (Approaching climax.) I'se done all dese here things tell de Lord come to me in all he mercy and say: "Samson. . Oh, Samson, take yoe fool haid out'n Delilah's lap."

(Climax for responses. Several sisters shout. After they are quieted he proceeds.)

Eff'n anybody here have sinned, let him or her git up and tell de Lord ab ut hit. No 's de time . . . to wash away yoe sins in de Lamb's blood. Yeh, now de time.

(Ben can be seen in a stall, begin ing to strum his banjo, softly at first, then gradually louder.)

ONE SISTER. (Leaps up.)

De Lord been good to me. He gimme clothes. "Here I am" - Sompin Tiert

OUR SISTER (continued.)

when I'se hungry, and water when I'se thirsty. He done all dis for me, and hot I'se sinned.

(The music is louder. Some of the congregation begin unconsciously to pat their feet.)

JAKE.

What dat I hear? Hit's de debil as shore's I'm a son of God . . . A-sending dancin chunes in tru de -indow. He's a-temptin you. Sten' up and face him. His fare is burnin lo- in hell. (Groans from congregation.) He need rich wood to flare up under his kittles. Is you agine to be dat wood? Answer me, is you? (No Lord . Don't wanna burn. cot . . . from all parts of barn. This does not keep their feet from patting, However.) Fight wid de Lord, you brothers of Ham. Git down on yoe bended knees. Hole up yoe right han'. Glory Hallelujah ram. Oh, Lord God, save dese pore sinners. Save, Ole Harster, from de debil's chunes.

(The young begin to giggle and h a the words, almost unconsciously to Old Dan Tucker.)

Heah de debil! Heah him, God!

(By t is time, and without his knowledge of it, Jake's foot keeps time to the music.)

Yeh, God, Old Dan Tucker he got drunk,
Fell in de fare and kicked up a chunk

What! dat I'se a-sayin? Oh, Lord God, de debil's jumped in my mouf. Scrouge him out, Lord. He kno- I war a dancin man one time, Lord. He know dat. He kno- he had a holt on me, Lord. Look at dat foot, a-shakin like any sinner. Stop yoe shakin, foot. Stop it, I say. Oh, Lord bof' of on is a-goin. Nemmine, shake allyou wants to, you aint gaine cut no pigeon wing in de Lord's house, even if tis a barn.

(At this point, the pious part of the congregation is down on its knees, praying. The frivolous are beginning to jig. Those neither pious nor frivolous are patting their feet, not quite the Lord's, not quite the devils.)

Partners to yoo places like mules to dey traces.

(All but a few pious fa'l in line.) Ben steps out among them.)

JAKE.

De Lord's lef' me. De debil's got me.

(He grabs banjo from Ben.)

Gie dat box to somebody what know how to knock hit, nigger. Balance all, Hands around and circle to de lef'. Half way back, and promonade home . . .

(While this is taking place, Ben slips May Kate to the barn door. They look at the parson in the devil's hands; then go out under the gathering moon, as the

CURTAIN FALLS.

She's mean. She's got every kind of meat in her, like a turtle.

Miss Neidan, I had me a swell party last night, nothin but preachers and teachers, brains buttin brains.

The woman who shouted and fell at the preacher's feet. Let her lay where the Lord pitched her.

Here, take this money. I saved it up to bury me, but it looks like I can't die.

He's over in the fence corner, his belly bilin like a pot.

Look her, Sis Kate, do you sell camphor?

Time somebody put salt in his liquor. Ran every body out of the house but grandma. " Now, if you want to shoot me, go ahead but you're not going to chase me out of my house."

Squire Fletcher cried whenever grandma's name was mentioned, and he died a few weeks afterwards.