

Ellen King

Personal conversation with Aunt Ellen King

Mauvilla, Alabama

—*Mary A. Poole, Mobile, Alabama*

SATAN DONE GOT DIS JUKING GENERATION

Ellen King lives in a two room cabin nestling back in the woods near Mauvilla, Ala., about twelve miles above Mobile. A little Negro boy led me along a circuitous path to the ex-slave, showing the weight of her 86 years. After talking awhile she became interested and told that she was born at Enterprise, Miss. on the plantation of Mr. and Mrs. Harvey, but could not recall their given names, or the names of their children, of which there were three, two girls and one boy.

They lived in a big white house and the cabins in the slave quarters were built of planks, with streets between and little gardens in front of them. Some planted vegetables and others flowers.

The Harveys were good masters, they had plenty to eat, and good homespun clothes to wear and home-tanned leather shoes. The women gathered leaves, bark, and indigo to dye the cloth to make their dresses of different colors.

The plantation was large and had several slaves. Aunt Ellen, however, could not recall the number of acres or the number of slaves, but knew there was a crowd of them. The Harvey's raised wheat, cotton and corn, and lots of live stock.

Aunt Ellen sat quiet for a few moments and said:

"Lady, when I sits and thinks of all the good things us had to eat and all the fun we had 'course we had to work, but you knows lady, when a crowd all works together and sings and laughs, first thing you knows work's done."

Aunt Ellen recalled the Yankees coming through and telling all the slaves they were free, and that a lot of the slaves went with them, but Aunt Ellen laughed and said:

"My Pa and some of the others got scared and hid in a big cave and just stayed there until the soldiers left, and, lady, he still stayed on atter the war with the Harveys, and I was married there in the white folks church. They gave me a big wedding, lots to eat, plenty of music, singing and dancing. Jest like they used to say, we 'danced all night to broad daylight.'"

Aunt Ellen was asked how many times she was married and she replied:

"Twice, first one dead and don't know where t'other is, and had no children by either."

When asked about religion Aunt Ellen said:

"Lady, I prayed and prayed and religion came to me, and I jined the Big Zion Methodist Church, in Mobile, Ala., but moved here to Mauvilla where there was no Methodist Church, so I jined the Baptist Church."

Aunt Ellen says the people of today are going back not forward. "All they study is idleness and to do devilment these days. Young generation done gone, Satan got 'am, too much 'joking' these days, have no time to study 'bout the Lord and their dying day. All they do, is juke, juke, juke! When they closed the schools up here in Mauvilla, they had children all juking.

The writer was somewhat at a loss to know just what Aunt Ellen meant by "juking," but thought best to let her talk on and not make a direct inquiry, and after a little Aunt Ellen continued:

"No, lady, we used to call figgers for our dancing, had a big fiddle and two small fiddles, and a set in one room and one in t'other. None of this twisting and turning. I just can't stand all that juking, just won't look at it."

By "juking" Aunt Ellen meant rough dancing of the generation of today.

Aunt Ellen firmly believes the old-time religion was best for all, and tried to sing in a wavering voice the following:

"Down by the river side,
Jesus will talk and walk,
Ain't going to study the world no more,
Ain't going to study the world no more,
For down by the river side,
Jesus will talk and walk."