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Earl Moore

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NOTICE -- The playlet contained in this program is based upon the contents of letters owned by Miss Lenora Lindley, of Livermore, Kentucky, by whose permission the program was prepared and presented. All rights to the use of the material in the spoken parts of this program are reserved by her.
Livermore, Kentucky
January 18, 1936

Dear Mrs. Leiper:

I will be glad for you to use Rachel's letters for your radio broadcast in the way that you propose.

(Signed) Lenora Lindley
"College Heights."

Western Kentucky State Teachers College. We greet you all both great and small with the words of our college motto -- --

Voices Life More Life.

Vibraphone Chords.

Lurinda Mammy! I'se so hot, Mammy. Cain't I have some watuh?

Rachel Hush, chile. No mo' watuh now. (Child groans) It's been twelve days now. Fevuh mus break soon. That's whut evuh one tells me. Lay still, Rindy. Mammy's sorry, chile.

John Mammy, come set by me. My haid hu'ts so bad.

Vibraphone Chords.

Moore Those were the voices of colored children and their mother away off in Africa, and form part of a scene you are to hear in a few minutes.

Reposing among the many interesting and valuable old documents in the Kentucky Library on our campus is a handful of fragile letters in their original little old yellow envelopes, written in faraway Africa more than three-quarters of a century ago. The tragic story they tell has been made into a little play called Down from Slavery by Mrs. M. A. Leiper, Kentucky Librarian, and Mrs. Joe Sanford, an alumna of Western. I am presenting Mrs. Leiper.
The characters in *Down from Slavery* are Mrs. Charlotte Stevens Belt, a slave owner; Sandy, a negro slave; Rachel, his wife; their seven children; Reuben and Julia, the brother and sister of Sandy; and Adam.

The first scene takes place on the farm of Mrs. Belt, near Hartford, Ohio County, Kentucky, in the summer of 1856.

Mrs. Belt is seated on the verandah of her home.

(Orchestra continues "Dixie," fading for:)

Adam, go tell Sandy and Rachel and the children I can see them now.

Mrs. Belt

Admit, go tell Sandy and Rachel and the children I can see them now.

Adam

Yes'm they's in th' side ya'd waitin'. (Far off)

Com on, yo' all. Mis' Charlotte wants y'.

Rachel

Straighten up, Rindy. (Getting nearer---all talking but lower than Rachel) Take yo' thumb out yore mouth, John.

Mrs. Belt

Good afternoon, Sandy, Rachel. Hello, children. My, you're growing, Lurinda!

Sandy

Afternoon, Sam. You---you---want all of us?

Mrs. Belt

Yes, Sandy. I have some serious news for your family.

Sit down on the porch steps there.

Rachel

Yas'um. Set down, you chilluns. Heuh, Rindy!

Sandy

Ain't no bad news is it, Mis' Charlotte?

Mrs. Belt

Only in one way, Sandy. Listen now first while I try to explain to you. You all have heard about the slaves that are being freed and let go back to Africa, your own country. The great Mr. Henry Clay, who lived in Lexington, thought all Christian slave owners should free their slaves in this way, and by sending a few at a time, it won't be
too hard on anybody. Mr. Clay and many other good men in both the North and South have formed what they call a Colonization Society to plan all this for you. Already there are a few settlements of former American slaves in Africa. Now the colony to which we send most of our Kentucky slaves is named Clay Ashland, for Mr. Clay and his home in Lexington. You and Rachel know that we paid more than a thousand dollars for you, and your children are worth as much more, but I am going to give you your freedom, and let you go back to your native land, because I think you will be happier there.

Rachel: You mean you is pickin' us t' go to Africa?

Mrs. Belt: Yes, Rachel, you are the only large family on the place, and I feel that you will be happier together than a few sent alone.

Sandy: (With enthusiasm) Africa's 'way 'cross th' sea, ain't it?

Mrs. Belt: Yes, and you should be very happy there in the settlement.

Rachel: I ain't so sure, Mam. We'll miss ever'body heah.

Joseph: Goin' 'way off 'cross th' sea? Whee! Heah dat, Johnny?

Rachel: Shut yo' mouth, Joseph!

Mrs. Belt: It won't seem quite the same here without you. We will miss every one of you.

Sandy: Cain't Reuben and Julia go 'long too, Mis' Charlotte?

Mrs. Belt: No, Sandy, your brother and sister aren't counted in with your immediate family.
Sandy: Yes'm. When do we leave?

Mrs. Belt: As soon as you can get ready. You know it will take about ten days to get to New York, and a boat with the slaves on it will leave for Africa in about three weeks.

Sandy: Bless th' Lo'd! (Children squeal and jabber.)

Rachel: We better git home, Mis' Charlotte. I'll have a mess uv washin' and packin' t' do.

Mrs. Belt: (Wistfully) You are all excited aren't you?

Sandy: Yes, Mam'll!

Mrs. Belt: May the Lord be kind to you over there. Well, run along.

Rachel: Thank you, Ma'am. We hates to leave you, though.

Git along, little black 'uns!

Orchestra: "Uncle Ned," fading for:

Leiper: One year later; on Mrs. Belt's verandah.

(Orchestra continues "Uncle Ned," fading for;)

Mrs. Belt: Good morning, Reuben. How are you, Julia? I sent Adam for you, because I thought you three would be interested in this letter I received from Rachel.

Julia: Law, Mis' Charlotte, it's been over a year since they left us. When wuz th' letter writ?

Mrs. Belt: After they had been in Africa a few months, I think.

Reuben: Le's heah, Mam. I'se been mighty anxious 'bout them fur a long time now.

Mrs. Belt: Don't expect very good news, Reuben. I'm afraid the settlement isn't all that we were led to believe it would be.
En I thought it wuz gonna be so fine.
Le's heah!

All right. Listen. The letter begins: "Dear Mistress:
We are all down and sick with the aolim tiny fever. Rindy
has been down with the fever twenty days, during which time
it has not broke. John also has been down with fever eleven
days."

Lawd! Whut a bad time dey mus be havin' over theah.

(Mammy: I se so hot, Mammy. Cain't I have some watuh?)

Hush, chile. No mo' watuh now. (Child
groans) It's been twelve days now. Fevuh mus break soon.
That's whut evuh one tells me. Lay still, Rindy. Mammy's
sorry, chile.

Mammy, come set by me. My haid hu'ts so bad.

Th' good Lawd help us! Yes, John, I se comin' in a
minute. Lay still. It ain't nothin' but trot to Rindy,
then to John, then he'p Thomas with them spasm he's had,
then to po' little Athy. (Little sob) Athy, you ain't
spoke for two days. Heah dat, Rindy, she ain't spoke for
two days. Heah, Athy, cain't you 'rouse 'nough to take
jes' a little bit o' quinine?

(Very plaintively) Mammy.

I' se comin'. Hush, chile. No sleep, ain't laid my
head down for nights. No medicine much. Mighty little
food. Where's all them things we wuz promised when we
got here at Clay Ashland? (Groan from Thomas) I' se a
comin', Thomas. (Softer) Theah, theah, chile!

(Door slams)
Quiet, Sandy!

Sandy: I'm sorry, but I ain't in no quiet mood.

Rachel: What's wrong, besides what's been wrong?

Sandy: Nothin' only mo' uv it. We gotta pay rent fur this heah place, whin we wuz promised free keep. Got to pay it tomorrow, too.

Rachel: We ain't got no money.

Sandy: I knewed it. Joseph, Caroline, and Samuel has been wukin' them pore two acres they give us. None uv 'em feel so well, but nobody kin make a livin' out of that little bit uv pore ground. (Child whimpers.)

Rachel: Lawd he'p us!

Sandy: (Sarcastically) Two hoes, and one spade, they give us. Now ain't that too gen'rous uv 'em!

Rachel: Yeah, and we thought we'se sma't to leave Miss Charlotte! Ain't there no way t' git back? (Child groans)

Yes, Rindy.

Sandy: I' se tryin' evuh day, honey. (Door slams. Samuel, Joseph, and Caroline enter talking) I'm so tired. Come on, John.

Rachel: Hush, Y'all. 'Membuh po' lütte Athy an' the others.

Joseph: Yas'm. Mammy, I ain't feelin' so good.

Rachel: You take some quinine quick, boy. Heah, swallow.

Joseph: Aw, Ma!

Rachel: I ca'n't stand this no longer. (Louder) Sandy, you gotta do somethin'!

Sandy: Honey, I' se tryin'.

Rachel: Caroline!
Caroline

You watch those sick chillum. I gotta lay down and rest. Sandy, I'm a gonna rest, but I cain't sleep. Cain't you git some of th' home niggers together an' sing awhile outside th' house.

Rachel

Yeah, Pa, let's do!

Sandy

It kinda makes me sadder, but come along, Joseph.

Sandy

"My Old Kentucky Home," fading for:

Chorus

"Old Folks at Home."

Chorus

"Oh Susannah."

Sandy

Rachel likes "My Ol' Kentucky Home."

Woman

Lawdy, if we wuz only there.

Sandy

Cryin' ain't gwine a he'p. Le's sing.

Chorus

"My Old Kentucky Home." (Chorus)

Caroline

(Calling) Pa! Come heah quick. Mammy's asleep and Rindy's cryin' somepint awful. I'm afraid Athy's daid! She ain't breathin' no mo'.

Sandy

Lawl he'p us! I'se comin', Caroline.

Chorus

"My Old Kentucky Home," (chorus) fading for:

Orchestra

"Massa's in the Cold Ground," fading for:

Leiper

The same place, in the African settlement; eight months later.

(Orchestra continues "Massa's in the Cold Ground,"

fading for:)

Rachel

Mornin', Sandy. How's them ulcers of yo'ne?

Sandy

They'se powerful sore, Rachel.
Rachel     We bin here mo' than yeah now an' evuh one's ben ailin'. I ain't any more'n up from fever, when you gits ulcers. Pore Joseph ain't been well a day since that night y'all sang unduh mah winder. Le's see, eight months ago. Caroline's got th' ager now. Sandy, honey, this is wors'n bein' a slave.

Sandy     Yeah. Bein' a slave and gittin' fed right's heaben compared to this.

Rachel     Mis' Charlotte don't seem t' understan. Her lettuh says we oughta like it heah, and we oughta wuk ha'd. Theah ain't no wuk, theah ain't no cattle, there ain't no bread. (Louder and rather hysterically) And there ain't no pay. There's jes a little veg'bles and roots, and fevuh, an' ague, an' ulcers, an' sunstroke, an' death! My po' little Athy.

Sandy     I know, honey. I'se been prayin' evuh day fuh he'p. Yo' musn't give in so.

Rachel     (Crying) I caain't help it. I nevuh know when I may lose---Joseph---or Rindy---or any uv you. An' whut would you do if th's good Lawd took me?

Sandy     (Sharply) Shut up, Rachel!

(Door slams)

Man     Sandy, git up, man!! They'se a boat in th' harbor, headin' fo' Merica! They has room fo' about two mo' men effen th' men are willin' t' wuk goin' ovuh.

Rachel     Halleluiah! Sandy, git out uv that bed! Them ulcers kin heal quick on a boat. I got a little money for ya'.
Sandy: I'm ready—now.

Rachel: Bless the Lawd, Jim, fur yo' tellin' us! Tell th' chillun t' come on heah.

Man: Yas'm.

(Door slams)

Rachel: Praise th' Lawd! My prayers is answered. Listen while y' dress, Sandy. Fus thing, when yuh gits to th' Missis in Kaintucky, send us nails an' needles, an' some vacinty to avacinate th' chillun an' beg Mis' Charlotte t' sen' fo' us.

Orchestra: "Home, Sweet Home," fading for:

Leiper: Back in Kentucky, on Mrs. Belt's verandah; six months later.

(Orchestra continues "Home, Sweet Home," fading for:)

Mrs. Belt: Well, Adam, I have here another letter from Rachel. This one is addressed to Sandy.

Adam: To Sandy?

Mrs. Belt: Yes. That must mean he is coming back to us, but he should have been here long before a letter which was written to him after he left Africa.

Adam: Yas'm.

Mrs. Belt: So I decided to read it and see if there was anything we should know in it.

Adam: Yas'm.

Mrs. Belt: It seems from Rachel's letter that Sandy should be here by now. She tells you, Adam, to stay in America.

Adam: I'se sho' gonna do that.

Mrs. Belt: In her letter she asks Sandy to send them many things, including their fare back to America. I don't understand where Sandy can be.
Adam: Maybe he's to wuk somewheah else. It's pretty fur from Noo Yo'k heah an' he mus need money bad.

Mrs. Belt: I hope you're right, Adam. You may go now. Tell Julia and Reuben and the others about the letter.

Orchestra: "Hard Times Come Again No More," fading for:

Leipper: In the African settlement again.

(Orchestra continues "Hard Times Come Again No More," fading for:

Caroline and Lurinda: Hi, Ma!

Rachel: Well, well, you gals is out uv school right on time. Where's them boys?

Lurinda: Joseph's a comin'. Sammy had t' stay in. He cain't learn nothin'.

Caroline: Yeah, and John didn't evah git t' school.

Rachel: What! I'll learn that young'un t' git t' school. Them boy chillun is no good fur gittin' eddicated! Y'all go t' th' house 'an leave y' things an' come back. I need some help hoeing this pore garden.

Lurinda: Did y' heah from Pap?

Rachel: (Sighing) No. It's bin eight months now. Reckon he ain't had time t' git wo'd evuh yet. Sandy won't fail us though. We sho' need things. Run along y'all.

Caroline and Lurinda: Yas'm.

Rachel: (To self) Come on little 'tate, we needs you to eat! I guess th' Lawd bin good t' us lately. We ain't bin sick much. But, Sandy, oh Sandy, don' forgit us. Sen' fo' us.

Orchestra: "Old Black Joe," (stanza) fading for:

Leipper: One year later.
(Orchestra continues "Old Black Joe," fading for;)

Samuel
What y' doin', Mammie?

Rachel
Come on in, Sam; I'se writin' to Mis' Charlotte. I ain't writ in near a yeah now. Them ulcers kep' me too ailin' t' do nothin' but tend th' house.

John
Mebbe she'll send me a shirt. Reckon?

Rachel
I don' know, chile. I'se tellin' her how Joseph is gone to wuk on the coas' an' how Caroline caught col' nu'sin' that woman's chile, an' died. Mis' Charlotte don't know Hindy died uv sunstroke eithuh. And my po' little baby Athy didn' live no time 'tall (Sob) Effen Sandy just knew! I knows he loved you chillun. (Sob) He wouldn't fergit you all.

Samuel
(Softly) Don't cry, Mammie. Mebbe we'll git back anyhow. Pappy jes don't wan' t' bother with us.

Rachel
Hush yo' mouth, Samuel.

John
Ma, we ain't no money t' pay th' rent. What're we gonna do?

Rachel
I don' know, chile, I don' know. Mebbe we'll git good news. Joseph might git bettuh money wukin' down th' coas' on that vessel. Ain't much chance now uv goin' back t' America 'long as that Civil Wah's on.

Samuel
(Excitedly) Mammie! Heah comes dat nigger from th' boat, an' he's got a lettuh!

Rachel
Quick! Go meet him at th' door!

Samuel
Hi there, gimme that. Thank Y'. Here, Mammie, for you.

Rachel
(Tearing paper)
John

What is it, Mammy? What's th' matter? Lawd, Sam!

Read it!

Samuel

It--it's Joseph--

John

What about him?

Samuel

He's got kilt on th' ship he wuz wukin' on. Mammy, Mammy,

I'se sorry. Don' stare that way, Mammy. Look, look! We ain't
evuh gonna leave y'----Shake huh, John.

Rachel

I'se all right, Sam. Now no Joseph, no Athy, no Caroline,

no Rindy, no house. Sandy, y' failed us, y' forgot us; we ain't
got no home. (Hysterical laugh) Well, we'se got fevuh, an' sores,
an' sunstroke, an' a garden--------

Orchestra

"Old Black Joe" (chorus), first two measures softly,
sudden increase in volume, to end.

Leiper

And so is told all we know of the story of Rachel and
Sandy and their children.

Chorus

"Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."

Leiper

The little play to which you have listened is based on the
real experiences of the persons concerned, as told in several letters
written by the slave Rachel to Mrs. Higginson Belt and to her brother
Mr. Henry Stevens, well known, loved, and respected members of one of
Ohio County's pioneer families. Rachel wrote these letters from Africa
before and during the Civil War, from 1856 to 1863. They were received
by Mrs. Belt and Mr. Stevens at Hartford, Kentucky, during that time.
The original letters have been placed in the Kentucky Library at
Western by Miss Lenore Lindley of Livermore, Kentucky. Miss Lindley
is a descendant of Henry Stevens.

These letters are part of the very valuable manuscript
collection here, and this entire collection, is to be placed
in the Kentucky Building when the latter is completed. All
citizens of Kentucky and other states are cordially invited
to come and browse among our archives.

Chorus
"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." (With vibraphone accompaniment)

Strings
"College Heights," fading for:

Moore
You are listening to the program of Western Kentucky State Teachers College, in Bowling Green. You have heard today a sketch entitled Down from Slavery, based on genuine letters on file in the Kentucky Library of Western Teachers College, and written (i.e. the sketch, not the letters) by the Librarian, Mrs. M. A. Leiper, and Mrs. Joe Sanford. The cast was made up of students in the College and children in its Training School.

The part of Mrs. Belt, the slaveowner, was taken by Miss Barbara June Smith, of Mount Vernon, Illinois.

Rachel, the colored mammy, was Miss Dorine Hawke, of Upton, Kentucky.

Sandy, Rachel's husband, and Reuben, Sandy's brother, were played by Mr. Thomas Fike, of Providence, Kentucky.

Adam was Mr. Claude Galloway, of Hebbardsville, Kentucky.

The part of Julia was spoken by Lucy Byrd Smith, of Hardyville, Kentucky.

From the Training School you heard:

Billy Ray Taylor as John
O. V. Clark, Jr., as Joseph and Samuel
Jean Hill, as Caroline
and Norma Jean Allen as Lurinda.

Music was furnished by our studio ensemble under the direction of Dr. Richards and Prof. Gordon.
In the broadcast next Tuesday at four o'clock Central Standard Time, besides a varied program of musical numbers, the Department of Psychology will be represented.

Earl Moore speaking. We wish you Life More Life.

("College Heights" up)