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5-1 Letter to Mr. Page March 20, 1898

Charles W. Chesnutt

Fayetteville State University

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May 20, 1898

*to be in the "Hotfoot Hannibal" the name
"Hant", "Mars Jeems's Nightmare"
"Hotfoot Hannibal's Nightmare"
"Hotfoot Hannibal's Nightmare"
"Hotfoot Hannibal's Nightmare"*

My dear Mr. Page:-

I enclose you herewith the six "conjure" stories you suggested that I write ~~about~~ with a view to maga zine and book publication. ~~I have worked faithfully on them, and if they are not up to the mark it is the fault of the stories themselves, and not of the telling, though perhaps that could be improved upon.~~ *They are entitled as such.*
I have followed in general the lines of the conjure stories you read *the late 1 me* have already, and I imagine ^A this batch are similar enough and yet unlike enough, to make a book.

In one of them, "Hotfoot Hannibal", the outside and inside stories are both strong, and I have given ~~two titles~~ *an alternative title, "The Long Road,"* so that there is room for editorial choice, one ~~title~~ *name* being taken from the conjure story and the other from the outside story.

In the case of "Mars Jeems's Nightmare" the transformation suggested is not an entirely novel one, but the treatment of it is, so far as I know. I have thought a good title for the story would be "De Noo Nigger", but I don't care to dignify ~~an offensive~~ *it don't feel* word quite so much; it is all right for Julius, but it might leave me under the suspicion of bad taste -- unless perchance the whole title's being in dialect should redeem it.

Speaking of dialect, it is almost a despairing task to write it. What to do with the troublesome ~~r~~ *should be* and the obvious inconsistency of leaving it out where it ~~is~~ ^A in good English, and putting it in where correct speech would leave it out; how to express such words as "here" and "year" *"hear" and*; "other" and "another", "either and neither", and so on, is a ~~monstrous~~ ^{CL} 'stractin' task. The fact is, of course, that there is no such thing as a negro dialect; that what we call by that name is the attempt to express, with such a degree of phonetic correctness as to suggest the sound, English pronounced as an ignomnt old southern negro would be supposed to speak it, and at the same time to preserve a sufficient approximation to the correct spelling; to make it easy reading. I have to

ken the bull by the horns in the case of the word "you". To spell it "yer" all the time would not be as it would be spoken, and to avoid apparent inconsistency I have spelled it "you" all the way through. I do not imagine I have got my dialect, even now, any more uniform than other writers of the same sort of matter. If you find these stories available, I shall be glad ~~of course~~ to receive any suggestions in the matter of the dialect or anything else.

I hope you will like the stories and that you may find it possible to use them, or some of them, for the magazine, as well as for book publication, within the current year if possible.

Of the three conjure stories heretofore written by me and published, one, "The Conjuror's Revenge", the mule transformation story, ^{which appeared in the} has a good deal of extraneous matter in it, ^{revised} I shall ~~re-write~~ it forthwith, ~~leaving that out, improving it at the same in other respects,~~ ^{as I think it is a trifle coarse here and there. I shall re-write it} ~~as I think it is a trifle coarse here and there.~~ ^{as I think it is one of the mules checked} Hoping that these stories may meet with favorable consideration, which I know you ~~will~~ ^{find} be glad to ~~them~~ ^{find} worthy of, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

*By your house is suitable for
book publication.*