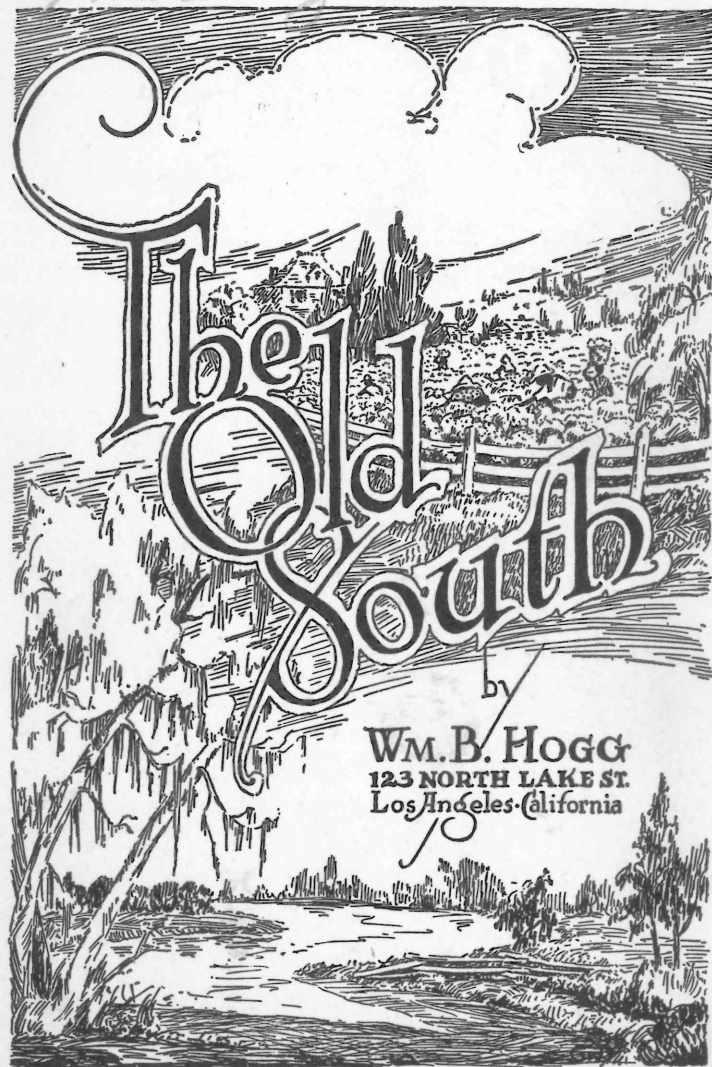
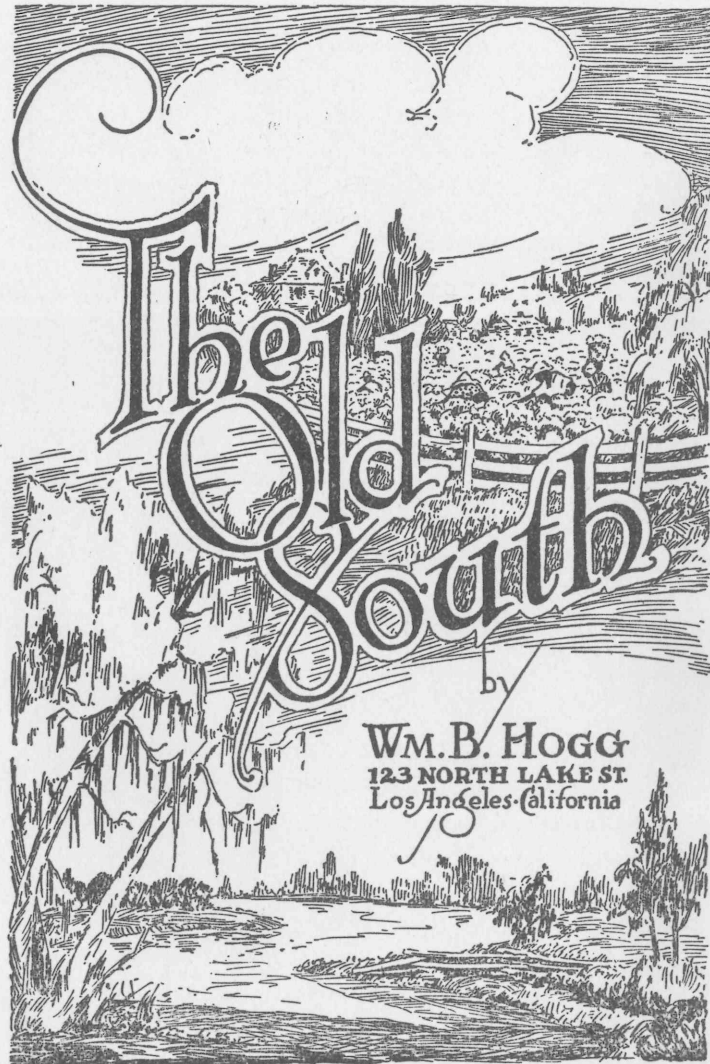


History Before & After Civil War  
Very Interesting True Stories



Country Church



# The Old South

by

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*AFFECTIONATELY dedicated to my wife, a daughter of the South, who has been a faithful partner as we have traveled together out of the blessed Yesterdays through these lovely Todays on our way to God's beautiful Tomorrow.*



## The Old South



IT IS AS difficult to tell where the real South begins as it is to divide the East from the West. But once you are in the heart of Dixie, you will know it. Then there is a South today, and there was a South that used to be. The purpose of this booklet is to let you live for a while in the Dixie that my mother knew and that I saw in the years of my happy boyhood.

Agriculturally the land of corn and cotton has changed. Once the farms were so large that one literally rode all day on one man's land. Today trucking and intensive farming have broken the vast feudal estates into many small "patches" that are owned and tilled by whites and blacks. There was a time when one man was lord and master of an empire of rolling hills and fertile valleys which were cultivated by slaves who were bought and sold like livestock. Some of the slave-owners were devout Christians; their negroes enjoyed much freedom that the colored folk have today with none of the cares about the necessities of life. When the slaves were emancipated many refused to leave their masters, preferring the evils of slavery to the uncertainties out in a world of which they knew but little. They were like birds that have learned to love the cage that has held them captive. However these were the exceptions. Many masters were brutal and even inhuman in their treatment of the helpless blacks.

The South has changed industrially and economically. Smokestacks now rise on the horizon that was once unbroken fields of snowy cotton, or yellow corn, stretching away like a mighty sea to meet the sky. Deprived of cheap slave labor, the South has literally had to go to work. This has changed the status of its women who were forced to do their own housework, and its men who no longer could reap the rich harvest of gold and silver from its enslaved toilers. The fluctuating prices of staple products, and

the break-up of the vast estates, have changed the financial system of the southland. These changed industrial and economic conditions have had their reflexes in the character of its people. The South has developed initiative and enterprise that have taken the place of leisure and luxury.

The change in agriculture, industry and finance and the necessary readjustment of the people to the new living conditions have brought about a new era in education for the south. Once it was the center of illiteracy because of the denial of education to the negro and the easy road to wealth open to the idle and pampered youth of the land of pines and cotton. It is true that its aristocracy went north and east for their education, but this was possible only to sons and daughters of the well-to-do. This has all been changed; now school houses dot the sunny hills of Dixie while accredited universities make it unnecessary for the youth to leave their native state in quest of higher education. Now it is the negro who leaves the south for a better education, especially for professional training. But that is not really necessary because such institutions as the Tuskegee Institute, founded by Booker T. Washington, have thrown wide open the doors of educational opportunity even to the poorest among the blacks.

There are communities where these changes are hardly perceptible. Even today there is in some places the old feudal system of farming and the handling of labor. "Hands" are not allowed to leave a plantation while they are in debt to their landlord. Drastic farm-labor laws support such a custom. It is easy to set up a system of bookkeeping that keeps the laborers indefinitely on the farm of the man for whom they labor. The iniquitous system of "furnishing" the laborers with necessities in advance of the planting of crops is, in all its dire effects, a form of slavery. This is true of the poor white farmer as well as the negro tenant.

Let me give you a picture of the South that used to be. Natchez Mississippi, on the Mississippi River, was once the heart of the Old South. Incidentally it was the seat of government for much of the southland when the Spaniard was in power. It then became the center of power when the flag that floated over Dixie bore the

lilies of France. Naturally the elite of the Old South gathered there. Knowledge of the life that once throbbed in Natchez with its feuds, its landed nobility and its slave-marts led me to make a visit to this historic city. It was there that once one could see the river packets dock for the unloading of cargoes of cotton, corn, molasses and slaves. These boats were floating palaces where gamblers sat in poker games and often plantations with their slaves changed hands with the turn of a card. It was near Natchez that the *Prairie Bell*, a palatial river boat, burned with a staggering loss of life. From the crowded wharves of this old city, thousands saw the famous race between two rival river boats from New Orleans to Memphis when sides of bacon were burned to win the race after the wood had been exhausted. It was near historic Natchez that Aaron Burr vainly persuaded a southern belle to fly with him to Europe when he was being sought for his conspiracy with Blennerhasset to disrupt the Union of States. What a city of memories! Standing on its wharf, or walking its narrow streets, one catches the perfume of romance, much like breathing the faint odor of rose petals that have lain for years in old love letters.

Stirred by such musing, I drove out to see Nutt's Folly. This is an ante-bellum mansion that was started about 1850 by someone in the fabulously rich Nutt family in Mississippi. A family made rich by the exploiting of slave labor in the cotton and corn fields on land that had been secured practically without cost by a governmental land grant. The house was five or six stories high, built in an octagonal shape and elaborately furnished with marble statuary and rare period furniture from Europe. But the building was never finished. There were no stairways above the second story, and only the servants' quarters were ever occupied. When I saw the house, it had been standing with windows and doors boarded up for fifty years! The collapse of the south after the war had stopped construction. The war of the 60's and the unspeakable reconstruction period made impossible any hope of ever completing it. No human foot had been on the upper stories for half a century, and the gaily tinted walls of bedroom, ballroom and salon had never thrown back the echo of the merry voices of children or the soft tones of lovers! When I was there, great trees had

grown up on what was once cotton and corn rows—even the house itself was lost in a great forest. One wonders why such a mansion has never been remodeled for a modern home or resort. Inquiry disclosed that hundreds of thousands of dollars would be necessary to make this ghastly relic habitable—thousands more than would be necessary for the erection of such a place entirely new. What a picture of an unfinished life! How many human souls present such a spectacle after the years of pleasure-mad living and earth-bound hopes have left the life to crumble back to the dust from which it sprung!

Not many miles away I found another mansion that was once aglow with the romance and chivalry of the Old South. It was of white stone construction and rose to the height of three stories with an aquarium on the roof! When I entered the open front doors, a herd of goats scampered out of the rear entrance. What gorgeous ceilings! What beautiful marble banisters lined the curving staircase that led from the ballroom to the story above! On the third floor I found a solid cedar room in which still hung a hoop skirt but all the sheer fabric that once covered it had rotted away leaving only the rusty wires that had held out the ample expanse of some belle's skirts when the knighthood of the Old South was in flower. In a closet a little leather trunk kept faithful sentinel. I lifted the dusty lid from the bulging body of the quaint relic of the pre-war days to find a doll with one leg torn and the sawdust cruelly leaking on the floor of the ridiculous trunk. In faint letters on its leather sides one could decipher the itinerary of this trunk as it accompanied the blue-blooded son of the South on some trip to continental Europe. What had become of the little girl who once kissed the china doll and laid it away for its long sleep? Where had the young lordling of the Old South wandered who once so proudly watched his slaves carry this queer little trunk aboard a palatial river boat for a voyage across the sea? The crumbling plaster on the mildewed walls echoed "where?"

So with a heavy heart I walked down the stairway where beautiful southern belles once blushing descended to the marriage ceremonies amidst the splendor and glory of a land that lives only in memory.

## A LAND WITHOUT RUINS

*Yes, give me the land where the ruins are spread,  
And the living tread light on the hearts of the dead;  
Yes, give me a land that is blest by the dust,  
And bright with the deeds of the down-trodden just.  
Yes, give me the land where the battle's red blast  
Has flashed to the future the fame of the past;  
Yes, give me the land that hath legends and lays  
That tell of the memories of long vanished days;  
Yes, give me a land that hath story and song!  
Enshrine the strife of the right with the wrong!  
Yes, give me a land with a grave in each spot,  
And names on the graves that shall not be forgot.*

*Yes give me the land of the wreck and the tomb;  
There is grandeur in graves—there is glory in gloom;  
For out of the gloom future brightness is born,  
As after the night comes the sunrise of morn;  
And the graves of the dead with the grass overgrown  
May yet form the footstool of liberty's throne,  
And each single wreck in the war-path of might,  
Shall yet be a rock in the temple of right.*

—Ryan.

An old resident of Natchez told me the story of this antebellum mansion. A feud was burning with deadly hatred in the breasts of two quick-tempered planters who owned neighboring plantations. The son of one became enamoured of the daughter of the other. Challenges to duels were threatening when the youngsters eloped to Europe. They lived across the ocean until the bridegroom's father could build this mansion of white stone. The couple bought all the house furnishings in Europe. The gala night of the "housewarming" rolled around. Carefully timing their visit in historic old New Orleans, the young married couple arrived on the river boat the afternoon of the great "gathering" at the new mansion. The beauty and the chivalry of the South were there for this momentous social triumph. Down the river they had come from Memphis, and across the South by stage coach from Jackson and Montgomery, and up the river from Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Biloxi and Mobile.

At the feast that night sat the fathers of both bride and groom, gentlemen of the Old South who could smile and say "How are

you all?" then shoot it out! Yes, the belligerent father of the beautiful bride was too much of a Southern gentleman to decline the invitation to the wedding supper, or "in-fair," as it is called down there. At the most tense moment of the feast the father of the groom arose and said. "We are gathered here to warm this house for the finest boy in Dixie and his wife, and forgivin' and forgittin' the onpleasantness of other days between us neighbors I hereby hand to the happy couple a deed to this here house and a thousand acres of the best hill land in the fair state of Mississippi." Up jumped the hot-headed father of the bride and strode out of the room! Ladies all but swooned in the fear of gun play; gentlemen tightened their lips in the thrilling expectancy of a "little Southern unpleasantness."

Soon the irate gentleman returned followed by several grinning slaves, each one carrying a sack that evidently was very heavy. One by one they followed the sharp commands of the "Old Marster" and poured out \$50,000.00 in gold on the floor of the dining salon. Then the old gentleman quivering with suppressed rage shouted, "There ain't no planter in Mississippi that can treat his son better'n I can treat my daughter! So there's my wedding gift to the finest gal in Dixieland and her husband." The breach was healed, two old southern families were united, and two happy young hearts began housekeeping in an old fashioned southern mansion. I wonder what has become of the descendants of these two families! Have they felt the biting frosts of the poverty that have fallen on so many of the proud families of the old South who once were named among its landed aristocracy? A poet of the land of sunshine has given us the meditation of a tender-hearted old negro as he mused upon the tragedy that had overtaken his "Old Marster."

#### MAHSR JOHN

*I heahs a heap o' people talkin', ebrywhar I goes,  
'Bout Washingtum an' Franklum, an' sech gen'uses as dose:  
I s'pose dey's mighty fine, but heah's de pint I's bettin' on:  
Dere wuzn't nar a one ob 'em come up to Mahsr John.*

*He shorely wuz de greates' man de country ebber growed.  
You better had git out de way when he comes 'long de road!*

*He hel' his head up dis way, like he 'spised to see de groun';  
An' niggers had to toe de mark when Mahsr John wuz roun'.*

*I only has to shet my eyes, an' den it seems to me  
I sees him right afore me now, jes like he use' to be,  
A-settin' on de gal'ry, lookin' awful big an' wise,  
Wid little niggers fannin' him to keep away de flies.*

*He alluz wore de berry bes' ob planters' linen suits,  
An' kep' a nigger busy jes' a-blackin' ob his boots;  
De buckles on his galluses wuz made ob solid gol',  
An' diamon's!—dey wuz in his shu't as thick as it would hol'.*

*You heered me! 'twas a caution, when he went to take a ride,  
To see him in de kerridge, wid ol' Mistis by his side—  
Mulatter Bill a'-dribin', an' a nigger on behin',  
An' two Kaintucky hosses tuk' 'em tearin' whar dey gwine.*

*Ol' Mahsr John wuz pow'ful rich—he owned a heap o' lan':  
Fibe cotton places, 'sides a sugar place in Loozyan';  
He had a thousan' niggers—an' he wuked 'em shore's you born!  
De oberseahs 'u'd start 'em at de breakin' ob de morn.*

*I reckon dere wuz forty ob de niggers, young an' ol',  
Dat staid about de big house jes' to do what dey wuz tol';  
Dey had a'easy time, wid skacely any work at all—  
But dey had to come a-runnin' when ol' Mahsr John 'u'd call!*

*Sometimes he'd gib a frolic—dat's de time you seed de fun:  
De 'ristocratic fam'lies, dey 'u'd be dar, ebry one;  
Dey'd hab a band from New Orleans to play for 'em to dance,  
An' tell you what, de supper wuz a 'tic'lar sarcumstance.*

*Well, times is changed. De war it come an' sot de niggers free,  
An' now ol' Mahsr John ain't hardly wuf as much as me;  
He had to pay his debts, an' so his lan' is mos'ly gone—  
An' I declar' I's sorry fur my pore ol' Mahsr John.*

*But when I heahs 'em talkin' 'bout some sullybrated man,  
I listens to 'em quiet, till dey done said all dey can.  
An' den I 'lows dot in dem days 'at I remembers on,  
Dat gemman warn't a patchin' onto my ol' Mahsr John!*

—Russell.

## THE CHRISTMAS TURKEY

In the days of the South of which I have been speaking, the Governor of Mississippi made careful preparations for the entertainment of his staff in the ample dining room of the historic old "Governor's Mansion." Many turkeys were bought and started through the careful process of fattening that is peculiar to the epicures in the land of cotton. There is a careful diet prescribed consisting of cracked corn and corn meal, to be finished off with pecans or other nuts a few weeks before the feast. Among the turkeys that were being "groomed" for this sumptuous feast was a beautiful bronze specimen of astounding size. Each day the governor's wife would inspect the turkeys and note their condition. Three days before the banquet she discovered that the big one was missing. She immediately asked all the servants if they could explain the mysterious disappearance of her prized gobbler. No one could give her the slightest clue to his disappearance. The first lady of the state of Mississippi took upon herself to do a little private investigation. Imagine her indignation when she discovered the bronze feathers of the missing bird under an empty barrel in the rear of her cook's cabin.

As the lady entered the kitchen "with blood in her eye," she heard the high notes of "Aunt Chloe" as she sang in typical Southern negro style a beautiful spiritual, "When I rise, I'm er gwine ter shine." Nobody on earth can sing these plaintive heart-throbbing songs of soul-longing like the colored folk of the South. They have a natural sense of rhythm and harmony that defies instruction. They have a pathos and heart-power in song that was born in the fiery furnace of their suffering under the horrors of slavery. Torn away from their home in Africa, crowded into slave-trader's boats, sold to the highest bidder, then driven to their tasks under a scorching southern sun. Every song now famous as a "spiritual" was born of their sufferings. For example,

"I got shoes  
You got shoes,  
All God's chillun got shoes;  
When I git ter Hebum,

[ 10 ]

Gwin ter put on my shoes,  
I'm gwine ter walk all over God's Hebum.  
Hebum, Hebum,  
Gwine ter walk all over God's Hebum."

That song was the wail of barefooted slaves who never had shoes, some of them were deprived of covering for their feet save in the biting cold days of winter when their feet would freeze without them and their masters thereby be deprived of their labor. Then they got shoes. How beautiful is the song to us today when we see behind the modern singers the stooped and suffering forms of the slaves of long ago!

Another one that always stirs my heart is:

"I couldn't hear nobody pray;  
I couldn't hear nobody pray;  
Away down yonder by myself,  
I couldn't hear nobody pray."

The Christian negroes were praying for freedom, but in many cases this was forbidden. This song was written by some negro who listened for the voices of prayer but no sound cheered his heart because of a cruel master's orders. It is the cry of a Christian negro alone in a cotton field as his soul took wings and soared away above the sorrows that were breaking his heart. When the load got too heavy and he sighed for release, his soul would cry to God in the words of perhaps their most beautiful spiritual:

"Su-wing low, su-weet chariut,  
Er-comin fer to carry me home."

So it was that dear old Aunt Chloe cheered up her heavy heart with the song—

"Yes, I'm er gwine ter rise 'n shine,  
Like er golden star,  
An' wear er crown that's mine—all mine,  
Whar God's people are.

Oh, yes, I'm er gwine ter shine,  
Oh, I'll rise an' shine——"

[ 11 ]

"Hush!" shouted the indignant mistress of the governor's mansion. "You old hypocrite! 'Shine?' you'll look pretty 'shining' and full of my turkey that you stole." Then the white lady all but collapsed in a paroxysm of grief and disappointment, sobbing "Chloe, how can you act like that, and you one of the most active members in your church? Tell me, woman, haven't you any conscience at all. Why, night before last you asked me if you could entertain the officials of your church and their wives in your cabin. What will they think of your stealing a turkey?"

With great tenderness the old colored "mammy" came close to her white "missus" and laid a black hand on her shoulder, saying—

"Honey, dat's what's de matter wid you white people. You gits all hot an' bother an' frustrated over nuthin'. How'd you spect me ter entertain the pasture of the church and de elders and day wives 'thout er feedin' of 'em? Shorely you know'd I cook 'em a good meal. I never 'stole' nuthin'—dere ain't nuthin like stealing resting on my soul. In de fust place, I 'blong ter you all. My life and labor—all is yourn, I'm jest er slave. You white people done got rich on de labor of us cullud people. Now jest cause I pro-prates one pore little turkey for de Lawd's own chillum you done fell out wid nervous pesteration. You know de Bible, you done read it. Didn't de Lawd tell Moses and all de chillun of Isrul when dey had been slaves for years and was er leaving out fer de Promus Lan' to take everything dey could lay dey hands on? Ain't dat scripture? Well, I feels like all you all's got is part mine. Dere now, I done tole you!"

The old white haired colored woman was also weeping now as she sobbed:

"Here I is er slavin' and er workin'—don't git nothing fer it. I ups and gives de Lawd's lambs one ole turkey when dey ain't had nothin' fer months and you calls it stealing. I wus er gwine tell you in time. But dis her want de time. Den in the next place, does you think that I'm er gwine ter let a little ole thing like a turkey come 'tween me and my Lawd? No, honey,—dry your tears, case you know what I'm gwine ter do?"

"I'm er gwine ter rise and s-h-i-n-e,  
Yes, I is er-gwine to rise 'n s-h-i-n-e-!"

"All right, Aunt Chloe," sobbed the governor's wife. Have it your way. Maybe you are right. It will not be long anyway until we'll all be God's children in a better world where there are no whites and blacks, and where no hearts ever break nor eyes ever weep." She changed the subject abruptly—"Aunt Chloe, you'd better have some nice, hot biscuits and cane syrup for supper."

"All right, honey, dey'll be hot and drippin' wid butter, shore's you born. I makes biskits when I lays my han's on the biskit board."

As the red-eyed white lady left the kitchen, she heard the soft sweet humming of her old colored cook, as her soul arose on the wings of a Negro spiritual to higher realms than the rolling hills of Mississippi.

## BEYOND OUR FENCE

My father was always afraid that I would be contaminated by bad association. So he built the highest fence in town. The pickets were fully six feet high and sharpened to a needle's point. Then he got me a dog and a playmate. The dog had nothing that even in the faintest way resembled a pedigree. He was pure dog,—part hound and part bird dog, and maybe some "fice." But he was all dog—fleas and all. I always appreciated the wisdom of Mark Twain expressed in the statement that a reasonable amount of fleas was good for a dog, adding as an explanation that scratching the fleas kept him from brooding over the calamity of being a dog. The playmate was Aunt Rose's son, Joe. He was black; as the colored folks down South say, his color was "honest." Not only was his color honest, his heart was also. No boy ever had a better playmate than Joe. He had never mingled with the worthless white "trash" that Aunt Rose so hated nor the "no-count cullud folks that ain't worth the powder it'd take to blow them up." (The quotations contain Aunt Rose's own estimate of the shiftless negro boys that she so despised.) How often have I heard dear old Aunt Rose say, "Yes, I'd ruther have my Joe runnin'



wid even a white boy an' er dog dan dat no count gang of cullud chillun and pore white trash on de street corner." I have never had reason to regret my father's choice either of Joe or the dog.

All three of us ate together at every opportunity—Joe, dog and I. The dog is dead—he seemed to fare worse than either Joe or me! How all three of us enjoyed the "pot-likker" in which we crumbled cornbread. Then what a thrill we got out of the Fourth of July! That was when we made ice cream—and incidentally that was the only time in all the year that we had "made" ice cream. When it snowed, we would always mix snow and milk and have "snow-cream." But that 4th of July cream! We would turn the little freezer, falling down the steps always a time or two, but never spilling the cream! No, sir, it didn't matter much what happened to Joe or the dog or me, but that precious freezer would always be landed right side up!

When the freezer got too hard to turn, Aunt Rose would say, "Git outen my way! You can't turn dat freezer all day. Lem me git dat dasher out, so de white folks can have dey cream."

She would always direct a barrage of threats at Joe on such occasions, and about like this:

"You black ape! What you lookin' at dis freezer for? Dis here is for de family. I'll break your hard head wid a stick uf stove-wood if I ketch you teching this freezer."

But the dog, Joe and I all knew that was camouflage; she meant just the opposite. She was right then taking the dasher out to give to us to "lick"—the dog, Joe and me. We would take turns at it. Of course, we'd hold it behind us for the dog to get his. That was the best cream I have ever eaten. I have tried so hard to find ice cream that looks and tastes like that, but I haven't found it yet. A few days ago I brought home some cream, but it was so insipid by the side of the memory of cream of long ago, that I put it out on the back gallery. The next morning—and it was warm weather, too—that cream stood as rigid as ever! Had celluloid or some such "holding-up" ingredients in it.

But soon the little back yard got too small to hold our imagi-

nation and longing. The great trains thundered by in sight of Joe and me—and the dog. People seemed to be going away off yonder somewhere to be happy and find their bag of gold. We became restless, and talked a lot of climbing the fence and running away where boys could have everything they wanted and would not have to "mind" anybody.

So we began to look through the pickets a lot—the cruel pickets that seemed to imprison us. What fools we were! Those pickets that seemed to shut us away from the big wide world where men did great things and had freedom, those pickets that seemed to imprison us, in reality were shutting us away from a cruel world that would one day break our hearts. Yes, that fence held us in where a mother could kiss away our tears, and rock us to sleep, and protect us from the evils that lurked outside.

The Prodigal Son climbed the picket fence that his father built to keep him at home and in his father's will! What a fool he was ever to take his "substance" over that fence! How glad he was to get back, and what a welcome he found when once he was inside that fence again!

One day we saw a little boy in the yard next to us. He wore velvet breeches, and his mother called him "pretty". How that tickled Joe and me, and maybe the dog, too. For did he not see all that we saw? And it may have been that he understood much that we understood. I wonder! Anyway we got to thinking about the boy next door. Who was he after all? What toys did he have? What other playthings? Did he ever have sore toes, too? We talked much about it. In time we yelled at him "Yoo-hoo, what's your name?" It was Pretty Smith. Joe and I giggled until it made him mad, and he threw mud at us. We decided to let him alone for Aunt Rose appeared on the scene and laid down the law to both of us in no uncertain words:

"You chillun, hear me! Ef I catches you boys botherin' that nice white chile, I'll warm you up with this coffee paddle, an dat ain't all, I'll git Mrs. Hoggs to tend to Willie, and I'll kill you, you low-down black young-un, you. You hear me?"

But still we wondered about the boy on the other side of our

fence. After due deliberation, I determined to go over there and find out all about the little sad-faced boy that never seemed to have any fun. Joe and the dog were to follow when I got on the other side! I got up on top of the pickets with Joe's help, while the dog watched the whole procedure with great interest, doubtless fearing that he would be left behind! Unfortunately, I slipped and fell on the pickets, one of the sharp points pierced my side. There I hung impaled while Joe screamed! Aunt Rose burst out of the kitchen door and all but fainted as she gulped:

"Law me! Dat pore fool boy's done kilt hissef with a picket board!"

How tenderly Aunt Rose nursed me back to health again. What blessed days of invalidism, with Mother holding my hand and singing to me, and sister reading stories. Aunt Rose did her bit with the best cookies that a hungry boy ever ate! Aunt Rose's comments were precious to me with all her rebukes thinly veiled by a love that she was never able to conceal.

"Boy, you going to be de ruination of dis family," she would comment as she fixed my tray on the bed. "You are so reklus, so on-careful. One week you jumps out'n a tree wid a umbrella fur a par-a-shoot, den you blows yo-sef up with gun-powder, and here you is jest nachully ruint wid a picket boad. Miss 'Sweet' (that was my blessed sister who is in heaven now) sho is right stayin' in dis house. Liable to get herself kilt out in dat yard wid you and dat nasty flea-bitten old dog dat I'm er gwine pizen some of dese days."

Joe and the dog would always come in at meal time to see how I was getting along, and, incidentally, share my fare. Poor Joe! He would stand there with his little "Arm and Hammer Brand" soda-cap in his hand, and look so woe-begone. Aunt Rose would snap at him:

"What you lookin' in here fer? Dis here ain't yore tray. An' you and dat dog ain't gwine ter tech dese tea-cakes. I'm er trying to do my part to get dis picket-ruint boy out where he kin git some sunshine."

But she would soon relent, saying to Joe:

"Bring dat dog in here so dis boy won't get de piralasis er worryin' 'bout him."

Aunt Rose would thoughtfully depart, leaving the three of us to feast on my sumptuous tray, Joe, the dog and me.

Soon we were happy again for a time in the sunshine, but the contentment didn't last long. The fence kept bothering me. "Why put up a fence?" I asked myself again and again. "Why can't I play with that lonely boy on the other side of those pickets?" That question has lingered with me as I have traveled across the years. "Why let the fences keep you from the sad-faced folks on the other side?"

There are the fences of international boundaries and rolling seas. As I write this, there are a thousand million human hearts on the other side of the fence from me who have never heard the heart-stirring story of my Christ, or if they heard it at all, they have never had it from a heart that really wanted to "play with them". Doesn't it ever cause you heartaches to see the sad-faced millions dying just across the fence from you? Somebody told me that there are millions in the Far East who never laugh one cheery, ringing, hearty peal of merry, carefree laughter! Why? I wonder why? Somebody told me—someone who had crossed the fence and come back to "my little yard" to tell what he saw—that they do not care for each other much. That when one poor fellow fell into a river, the only reaction was "Now we will have more rice, for there is one less mouth to eat the meager store the famine has left us." Jesus looked across the racial and national fences and said:

"Go ye into all the world and teach all nations."

The fences never stopped Him! And what a cruel wound "the pickets" made in His side as he went over, literally dying for those on the other side!

## A COURT ROOM SCENE

It had been ten years since Lee had offered his sword to Grant at Appomattox Court House. The South was in ruins agriculturally because the farms had lain idle in many cases for four years, and the decimation of the owners together with the freeing of the slaves had all but deprived the South of labor. Financially the land of cotton was apparently hopelessly wrecked because of the loss of its currency, the Confederate money, and the destruction of its property and its man power, and the staggering loss in the emancipation of slaves worth on an average of \$1000 each. Often we children played store with Confederate money in bills as large as \$500 denominations. The collapse of the South caught my father with perhaps \$250,000 in worthless currency!

The negroes were economic failures in the freedom to which they were helpless strangers and the easy prey of scoundrels who duped them by multitudinous schemes of robbery. As a result of this readjustment and economic collapse, many negroes actually faced starvation.

One poor colored man named Isom Williams was languishing in a stuffy Alabama jail charged with stealing a hog. The day of trial arrived, and the culprit was dragged by two bailiffs into the crowded courtroom. The frightened negro looked once at the gentleman on the bench then stretched out and went to sleep! The presiding judge was his former owner, now dignified by the title of His Honor, Judge Williams.

After "due process of trial before a jury of his *peers*," the confessed thief was ordered to stand and give any reason that he might have why the sentence should not be pronounced upon him. But Isom slept on, oblivious of the whole proceedings. A bailiff shook him.

"Wake up, nigger, and receive your sentence."

Slowly he opened his eyes, glanced wonderingly around the court room and innocently asked:

"Do which?"

"Stand up for the judge to pronounce sentence upon you!"

The pitiful figure of the half-starved ex-slave shuffled up to the bar of justice. He had a dilapidated hat with a gaping hole on both sides, and the frayed gilt band all but gone. It evidently had once been a Confederate officer's hat. There were no strings in the shoes that leaned crazily to right and left exposing the rusty ankles. He wore no coat, and his ragged trousers were suspended from two strips of bed-ticking. As he nervously twisted the old hat in his gnarled fingers, he smiled and asked:

"Does you want to speak to me, Jedge?"

The court room tittered, as the dignified judge rapped for order and sternly said:

"Isom Williams, you have been charged with larceny, the theft of one hog, whose value has been established at \$10.00. A jury of your peers, after your confession of this theft, has returned a verdict of guilty as charged. Have you any reason why this court should not pronounce the sentence upon you—the sentence fixed by said jury after due deliberation?"

The negro, astounded by the cold dignity of his "Old Mars-ter," asked:

"Don't you know me, Jedge? Ise Isom your ole nigger slave."

The Judge pounded his gavel, and demanded order as the crowd of court loafers chuckled.

"Will the defendant please proceed to the point. Have you any reason why this sentence should not be pronounced upon you?"

The negro stiffened in amazement.

"Yes, I is got reasons why any sentence should be POUNCED upon me. An' what's more, you done called youself a cote (court) and I am gwine ter tell de cote and evey body in de cote house that dis thing is all wrong, and ain't nothin gwine ter be pounced on me.

"Fust and foremost, dat little ole hog want woth no \$10. He want no bigger'n my two fistes. Den in de nex' place, my wife was hongry and I was too. You see, Jedge, since you all sot me an' my wife free and tole us to get out and skuffle fer ourseves, we has mighty nigh starved most of de time. Lucy's my wife,—you know her, Jedge, she's been mighty porely all dis year wid some kind er misery like piralisis in her foots, and she can't work none, and can't git out and fetch no grub, so she says ter me—

" 'Isom.'

"I says: 'What?'

"She says, 'You better go out ter night an' look around fer somethin' ter eat case I perishin' fer some hog meat.'

"What would you do, Jedge, if your wife and little chillun wus hongry? Yes, I took dat little hog, an' shorely you ain't gwine ter put me in no jail fer feedin' a starving wife, is you?

"An dat aint all. You done ast me ter tell dis cote why I don't 'low to go to no jail; an' dats jest exactly what I'm gwine do rite now.

"Jedge, does you 'member when de war broke out? You ma was awful porely with a wearyin' over you raisin' dat calv'y company of young men in dis county wid dey fine hosses. When dey pintoed you captin' of the company, do you ricollect how de old 'missus' fell out and mighty nigh pined her self to a dead corpse—all over you gwine ter de war? De day you was ter ride away to the battle of Shiloh, you ricollect how you ma carried on? I was er holding you hoss out by de front gate, barefooted, a young nigger man, couldn't read ner write, never did have er hat twell you gimme dis here one after de Yankees shot a hole thu it at Gettysburg. You ricollect?"

Tears were running down the cheeks of the Judge now. As his faithful old slave and body guard told the halting story in his illiterate way, this gallant young Cavalier out of the heart of Dixie lived over again those horrible days of fratricidal conflict. Again he was raising himself in his stirrups as he, on his Kentucky thoroughbred, led charges at Shiloh, Franklin, Murfreesboro, Cold Harbor, and Gettysburg. Again with the rollicking J. E. B. Stuart,

he swung his cavalcade on a wide encircling movement around a wing of the Federal forces. As he wiped his streaming eyes, he roared in all his judicial dignity:

"Order in the court room."

But no pounding gavel could stop the flow of tears from the eyes in that court room.

The darky went on.

"You come out on de front porch of de big house, and said: 'Isom, give that bridle to one of those other niggers, and come in here.' Do you 'member? I come in barefooted right up on de front verander, and you said kinder soft like, 'Isom, Mother wants you.'

"Dere she lay looking like a white angel on de bed in de company room. She took my black hand rite in her purty white hand, and said:

" 'Isom, this turrible war has broke my heart, I'm going home whar dere ain't no war, and where mothers don't have ter send dey chillun away to battle.'"

Everybody was sobbing now. They had attended the funeral of the Judge's mother years ago, and remembered her as a most beloved daughter of the Old South. The Judge tried vainly to preserve his official dignity and order in his court.

The tattered black man moved closer, and putting his scaly and calloused hands upon the judicial desk, went on:

"Den she put my han' in your han' and said: 'Son, be good to Isom. He's a poor negro slave dat ain' never had a ghost of a chance, but I believe he's a Christun, and has a home in glory!' Den she turnt to me and said: 'Isom watch over my boy, and with de Lawd's hep, bring him back ter home.'

"Jedge I kep dat promus ontill you turnt me and de ole 'oman free, and tole us to go hustle fer ourseves. When dat bullet tore thu your side at Cold Harbur,—does you recollect how I toted you off frum whar you was at, bleeding to death? It was me dat brung you water and den de doctor fore I'd let em tie up my arm whar a bullet hit as I was totin' you off dat battle field.

"It looked like you wus mighty nigh done when you gave de doctor a message dat he writ on an ole piece of paper and handed it to me. You tole me, 'Isom, take dis to my beloved! Tell my precus bride-to-be that I died fer her and the South at Cold Harbor. Goodbye, Isom, take care of your sef.'

"I shore did cry fer days after that but I took de letter to Miss Emmerline, my sore arm didn't stop me, and I was on de road fum Cold Habor to Montgomery fer weeks, wid no money and bare-footed. But you can ast Miss Emmaline when you go home ter dinner today if I didn't fetch her the letter. She sont one back to you; den I carried dat on foot too ter you. You 'member when I brung her letter to you? You was in de hospistol but couldn't get well, seemed like. Miss Emmaline had put some roses fum her yard in her letter, and ast you to put dem ginst you heart and said you would be bound to git well and come back to her. Your pore muther had done perished to death from grieving over you. Dat made it more harder fer you ter git well.

"But you soon got on de mend and wus up and about. Jedge, does you recollect? Yet you done ast me if I has any reason why dis jail time shouldn't be pounced on me! Listen, Jedge, I ain't thu yit!

"When you got mo better, you says one day, 'Ole nigger, I shore would 'preciate some roasted hog meat.' Now, didn't you say dat? I up an said, 'Dey ain't no hogs 'round here, all dis shootin' done skeered 'em all off.' You said, 'If you can't fine none, Isom, dey ain't none here.' But I did fine one: a fat little shote dat nite after de moon had done sot, and it was dark. Nex' day I roasted him fer you and all de officers. You said you never had et sich roasted hog meat, and 'lowed I wus de bes' at foraging in de whole army of Viginny. What I wants to ast dis cote is, IF DAT WAS FORAGING IN VIGINNY, HOW COME IT'S STEALIN' IN ALABAMA?"

The crowd roared! The Judge perspired and wept alternately, but finally recovering his voice, he shouted:

"Mr. Clerk, erase the record of this case from the docket for lack of evidence. Next case on the docket!"

Then leaning over toward Isom, the Judge whispered, "You black scoundrel, get out of this court house! I'm going to beat you within an inch of your trifling life if I ever see you in this building again! Here, take this twenty dollar gold piece; go buy yourself and Aunt Lucy some victuals, and go up to my house and get that two-mule team and move your belongings in that empty cabin in my back yard. And, you hear me, don't you ever leave it. Get out!"

As Isom shuffled out of the Court room, he whispered to the folks about the door:

"You seed me asleep didn't you while dey was er trying me? I knew I was safe in my old Marster's hands. You heered me!"

Then he started up the road singing merrily on his way to the land of peace and contentment again where the blue birds sing and the rainbow of hope spreads above.

His song faded out as he disappeared up the street—

"I got shoes,  
You got shoes,  
All God's chillun got shoes,  
When I git ter Hebum,  
Ise gwine ter put on my shoes,  
Gwine ter sing all over God's Hebum."