

# **Memoirs of a Southerner**

Edward J. Thomas

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# Memoirs of a Southerner

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## PREFACE

My young manhood having spent in the South just before, during and after the War of Secession, I may say I lived in two distinct periods of our Southern history, for this war completely severed the grand old plantation life, with all its peculiar interests and demands, from the stirring and striving conditions that followed. The first was a life complete in all things to foster intelligence and honor; the second simply, for me, a constant struggle and a hard fight to keep the proverbial wolf from the door, but with pluck, frugality and endurance the fight was won, and now, in my old age, with kind relatives and good friends, I have found happiness and contentment.

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MY FATHER was of Welsh stock descended from one John Thomas, captain of the first vessel that brought colonists to Georgia. My mother's maiden name was Huguenin, of the Huguenots, who, being Protestants, left France and settled in South Carolina after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in 1685.

I was born in Savannah, Georgia, March 25, 1840, but a few years after we moved to the old homestead in McIntosh County, some forty miles from this city. My first recollection was of this plantation. It was called "Peru" on account of its fertility – the legend of Pizarro's gold find being not yet forgotten – situated on South Newport River, a bold and wide salt water stream emptying into Black-Beard Sound. My grandfather lived at one end of this plantation of three thousand acres, and my father lived at the other. I remember my grandfather very distinctly; he wore no whiskers, and, not shaving daily, would catch me in his arms and rub his face against mine, scratching me with his beard, much to our mutual delight. This impressed me with the belief that old men had beards and young men had whiskers, for father wore whiskers except the moustache, which, to wear in those days, was considered "horsey." Grandfather, Jonathan Thomas, died a few years later, leaving his many plantations – Peru, Belvidere, Baker, and Stark, comprising some fifteen thousand acres and about one hundred and twenty-five slaves.

His remains are buried by a large oak in our private burying ground on the banks of South Newport River, and there he rests while the restless waters ebb and flow nearby. His portrait now hangs over my fireplace, and kindly smiles down on his great, great, great grandchildren.

Plantation life on the seaboard of Georgia was master and slave in its prettiest phase. It was the rarest thing to sell a negro, and but few were bought. The negroes on these places had been reared along with their young masters and mistresses, and the interest of each was the concern of all.

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And just here permit me to say that of our one hundred and twenty-five slaves there was but one mulatto, and let me tell you how that one came. It became necessary, on account of mother's health, when I was about eight years old, for father to take her to one of the northern springs. Those were the days of state money, and no express, and I well remember the bags of gold father had to pack in his trunk, for Georgia money would not be good in Massachusetts, and vice-versa. Of course no Southern lady traveled without her colored maid.

Mother carried "Fanny," and behold, sometime after "Fanny" got home, a chocolate boy was seen. "Fanny" told me that the red clay hills of the old North State did it. I was delighted. I claimed him as my special charge, to rear as my body servant. I named him "Ned," but he died a year or two after.

There was on the plantation a trusted and intelligent slave called the Driver, who was directly in charge of all field work, Sea-Island cotton, corn, peas, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, melons, and all garden stuff; another was in charge of the horses, cattle, etc., and a third was foreman of the plows.

The fields were all staked off in tasks, a quarter of an acre, and each slave was required to cultivate with hoe or plow a certain amount of these staked fields, and as near as possible the same area cultivated in the early spring would be constantly worked by the same person, that he or she might be rewarded for doing the work well in the beginning, as it would be less labor the second hoeing if it was well done at first. In this way the industrious and diligent negro seldom worked after the noon hour.

They were very well housed in two-room lumber cabins, a chimney to each house, and allowed a garden. Sundays no work was permitted, the slaves attending church. They could raise as many chickens as they pleased, could have boats and go anywhere fishing, so they came home by daylight to resume work.

They were given two suits of clothes a year, one of wool, the other cotton, two shirts, a pair of blankets, and a pair of heavy shoes. The clothing was given to them twice a year, in the early spring and winter; the shoes in the beginning of winter. During the summer they generally went barefooted. Each slave's foot was measured, and his name written on the stick showing the length of foot; these sticks were then bundled and sent to the merchant furnishing the shoes, and each shoe would come home with the stick inside of it. The master would then take up the shoe, pull out the stick, and call the name of the slave, who would receive it.

The ration on cotton plantations was corn meal and grits, potatoes, peas, and a little bacon or Louisiana molasses; on rice plantations, rice instead of meal. These rations were distributed weekly, the slaves coming with proper utensils to receive them. Having their own boats, they could always have fish and oysters, and in their gardens raised chickens and vegetables.

The marshes abounded in raccoons and the woods in 'possums, and nightly the baying of the dogs – their own – would tell you the boys of the plantation were on a hunt. Diamond-backed terrapin were abundant, and one never was brought to our dwelling that the bearer could not get in exchange a "thrip" (the old-fashioned six cents), or, if he preferred, a ration of bacon or syrup. Many old English coins were in use, the thrip – six cents – and the "seven-pence," twelve cents.

The women sold their chickens to mother, eight for a dollar. Baked 'possum and roasted potatoes, as these people would fix them, were always nice; at least I thought so as a boy, and many the time some old mammy would call "Mas' Ed" and give him a portion of what was in her little three-legged iron pot. Yes, "Mas' Ed" could have all he wanted, patting me on the shoulder, "Bless de chile, 'e spit image of 'e Granpa.

The older men were allowed to keep guns; to many they were supplied by the master. Many had horses and cows, permitted to run in a large free pasture. These pastures extended over thousands of acres of salt marsh, and in these pastures the horses were reared, hence the name they acquired, "marsh tackies." They were not quite so large as the horses reared on the Mexican plains, but for durability and deviltry they had no equal. On the eve of

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coming home from school, I would write the Driver to get many of these marsh tackies penned and fed, so they would be in good shape when I got there, and then, getting a half-dozen or more of our negro boys about my age, would bridle these devilish beasts, strap a saddle cloth on, and go bouncing and scampering over the plantation. Magnificent sport for boys.

The young negroes particularly looked forward to Mas' Ed's coming home, for they knew I would insist on a big barbecue of beef for our mutual enjoyment.

'Twas no strange sight to see many ponies and wagons on our route going to church, several miles away in some shady grove, driven by these families, for wherever the white folks attended church the slaves were welcome, and on Communion Sundays they all, master and slave, took wine from the same silver cup – the white folks, of course, first. They had their own meeting and prayer house on the plantation, built by the master, where "shouting" and singing and sleeping were enjoyed, and strange doctrines preached, but, by the master's order, never after twelve o'clock at night.

I can remember to this day the sweet chants of "our people," as we used to call them, when the young men and girls, on moonlight nights, would meet to grind their corn around the hand mills. The constant whirr of the mill stones and the plaintive ditties and merry shouts of these happy people frequently lulled me, when a boy, to sleep, the negro quarters being not so far away. Never more will such merry shouts be heard!

I remember the great big cotton house, three stories high and every window glassed, where the older women would sit and "pick and sort" the good cotton from the bad, where the youngsters would take the newly ginned cotton to the strong men with the iron pestles, who stood in a strong bag of stout bagging – no presses those days – until the contents were hard and fast, pestling in this bag some three hundred pounds of cotton; the horse gin, where Dick and Montezuma, the two horses, took turns with Lewis and Robin, the two mules, in pulling the lever that turned the machine that ginned the cotton; the two little black nigs who rode on the lever to keep the animals at even speed, and after a few hours, when the horses got accustomed to the noise, would fall off in the nearest corner fast asleep; the pleasant rivalry between the men and women to see who would pick the most cotton, and hence get the prize – a calico dress or hat or pair of Sunday shoes – that father would offer weekly to the one picking the most cotton. The picking season then was very long, no guano those days to hasten matters, so the cotton would not open until October, and the fields would be white until after Christmas.

Our family consisted of mother, father, and six children, and for the comfort and convenience of this family the following servants were employed in and about our house: Old "Mamma Chaney," who had held us all from babyhood, and rocked and soothed us to sleep by her lazy and loving pat and monotonous crooning. Her queer ways, high headgear, red shawl, and her black face and white bordered eyes, holding my little sister in her lap, I shall never forget. "Mamma Martha," the head servant, to whom the keys were entrusted, and who, during mother's absence, looked after our comfort; Fanny, mother's maid; Ann and Lizzie, seamstresses; Nancy, the washerwoman; Phyllis, the cook; old Lucy, looking after the chickens; little Lucy and Zelleau taking their first lessons to become maids to my sisters; Phil, the coachman; William, the hostler; Daniel, the butler; Bony, the fisherman; Henry, the gardner; and Joe, my body servant. These slaves were not housed or fed at our house, but were given the regular ration and served in all things at their own cabins.

THE YOUNG negro men, getting tired of cultivating the fields, would at times run away; that is, they would leave their cabins and seek shelter in the neighboring woods or some isolated "hammock," which so abundantly are found about plantations on the seaboard. When on these runaway frolics they would live by stealing cattle, or perhaps, robbing the nearest field or barn or potato cellar, and, of course, were always slyly abetted by those of their family at home. In this way they became outlaws, always a menace to the peace and good order of the plantation, and a source of extreme annoyance and vexation to the master, and, in fact, to the entire neighborhood.

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Being accustomed to the use of boats and firearms, and knowing every little inlet through the marshes, which furnished all the fish and oysters they needed, these runaways could keep up their frolic of idleness and theft almost indefinitely. They would always be smart enough to provide themselves with good boats at the start; if they had none of their own suitable, they would steal the best they could lay hands on.

At night they would leave their hiding places and sneak to their respective cabins to get a change of clothing from mother or wife, or to replenish their rations from the nearest field or barn.

It can easily be imagined then what peculiar duties at times devolved upon the master. He had not only to be financier and executive, but at times detective. I remember early one morning going with my brother to the piazza of our home, and finding a sword broken in half and a heavy bar of lead. At breakfast table we asked father where they came from. He told this story. At twelve o'clock the night before he had an idea a runaway, by name Emmanuel, would be prowling about the negro quarters, and so he got out of bed and dressed, and before starting took his little bird-gun which was loaded with bird-shot, and not knowing what he might encounter, he rammed three buckshot (muzzle loaders those days) on top of one of the small shot charges. He walked a mile, perhaps, to where the cabins were and hid behind a tree. Soon he saw someone walking towards him, and when nearby he stepped from behind the tree, recognized Emmanuel, and ordered him to stop. Emmanuel stopped instantly, and put both hands behind his back. Father asked, "What have you in your hands?" He replied, "Nothing, sir." "Well," said father, "hand me what's in your right hand." He did so, and it was a sword; this father ran into the ground and putting his foot on it, snapped it. In the other hand he had a bar of lead. He surely came well supplied to carry off a beef. Emmanuel was then ordered to cross his hands, and father, placing his gun between his knees, took from his coat pocket a large silk handkerchief and was about to tie his hands when Emmanuel dashed for the woods. He was ordered to stop, but he kept on running. Father then fired the barrel with small shot, calling him to stop, and then the other barrel, but Emmanuel kept on his run to the woods. Father prided himself on his good shooting and could not imagine how it was he did not stop this man, who had been an outlaw for so many months – a perfect nuisance to the entire neighborhood.

The matter was almost forgotten, except that brother and I took our first lessons in swordsmanship with the broken sword, and had a set of new quoits from the bar of lead, when one morning while playing in the front yard we saw Daddy Emmanuel coming up the front avenue, a long straight way about a mile through the cotton fields from the woods to the residence. Father was absent. We ran to mother and told her. She came to the front door and asked the man why he had come home. "Missis," he said, "Massa hit me wid ebervy shot in de gun, and me come home to dead." He was placed in a comfortable bed, the nearest physician called in, every attention given him, and he recovered very soon. This man belonged to us, was worth before the shooting some \$2,000; afterwards, perhaps, only \$500; that shot from father's gun cost him \$1,500, but it was necessary, and today any outlaw would be treated by lawful officers in the same way. Daddy Emmanuel was always a good man after that; we children all liked him. He was put to light work, and, when his freedom came he preferred to remain on the old plantation, where a home was provided him to the day of his death.

It is strange that no negro ever thought of defending himself in these nightly encounters. Here was a man well armed, who made no resistance. Even if armed with a loaded gun, they would yield at the first command of the master. Father put the question to one of them, and the answer was, "My gun might snap, Massa; yourn neber do."

As a small chap I was given my milk and hominy or butter and hominy, fed me by my nurse, and put to bed before dark, and many the time I slipped from my bed and, looking downstairs at the lamps burning then with whale oil, and wondering, how funny it all looked. Then only whale oil, and wax and tallow candles made at home, were used for lighting purposes by the well-to-do; the negroes and poor whites – "poor Buckrers" we called them – used mostly lightwood in the chimneys, and even to this day many of these people use this same lightwood torch. Then came a fluid we called "burning fluid," somewhat like naphtha, and then, kerosene, gas and electricity.

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My brother and I had a nice time catching birds in traps we made with sticks; the bulfinch, the red or cardinal bird, the speckle-breasted thrush – and, killing them, made a fire in the woods, broiled the poor little devils, and had a quick lunch; and as a boy I thought them fine until one day we caught a crow, but his meat was more than our appetites would permit. Sometimes we sat on the front porch in summer with bare feet and legs, to see which could kill the most mosquitoes.

When I was about ten years old, the biggest runaway squad in my remembrance almost worried my good father to death. He had arranged the planting of his crop for, say fifty or sixty slaves and the necessary mules, so much cotton and other crops to each hand. When the hot weather was the greatest, and the grass began to race with the crops for existence and the greatest diligence and energy were required of each hand to do his or her part, some eight or ten of his best men, with several from adjacent plantations, left their duties on a runaway. Of course this required that a certain proportion of the planted crops be abandoned, for there were none to hire to take their places. These were Solomon, Dick, Daniel, Jonas, Mark, etc., all fine boatmen and accustomed to firearms. They, as usual, lived by raiding the cattle ranches and corn bins, and gave intolerable trouble everywhere and to every one in the direct neighborhood. Besides it was like having twelve or fifteen thousand dollars taking wings to itself, destroying the proper ratio on the plantation as to the workers and consumers and thereby making the year's results perhaps unsatisfactory. After these men had been "cutting their capers" for a month or two, and after every individual effort on father's part to catch them had failed, the neighborhood decided to make a united effort to rid themselves of these outlaws. The idea was to provide a good boat, all equipped for ready action; then to scour the neighboring plantations with good dogs, and if they were not found on the mainland, then to take to the boats and search the "hammocks" and islands. A well known man from Savannah, with his trail hounds, was engaged.

I well remember the big eight-oared boat towed to the landing, the buffalo robes and blankets, and champagne baskets filled with hams and chickens and goodies of all kinds, the demijohns of good whiskey, in case of snake bite, the guns and ammunition, besides a sail to hoist if the weather permitted. I remember feeding the dogs and wondering how pretty "Musie," with her soft brown eyes, could prefer that ugly old man to anybody else. The dogs were docile and obedient, only intended to trail the outlaws, not to injure them. We were much interested in their welfare, for were they not our own? When everything was loaded in the boat and it was anchored in place, the neighborhood party mounted their horses and proceeded to do the first act in the drama, viz., searching the mainland. Scarcely had the party gotten to the woods, about a mile distant, when a large party of these runaways came running up from another quarter, and in the happiest mood, bid mother, who happened at the back door, "Good morning, Misses," and walked towards the well furnished boat at the landing. They all shook hands with me, and with a hurrah pushed off the boat and were gone. A runner was sent after the scouting party, and returning, I remember father's remark: "Well, they have the best boat in the county, and nothing more can be done now." Some spy among the many house servants must have kept these runaways informed.

The man and his dogs returned to Savannah, and the hunt, for the present, was at an end. We heard no more of these runaways, except now and then that some cow had been killed by them, until about the first of December, when one cold night, happening at the back door, I heard some one outside in the dark say, "Huddy, Mas' Ed." I went down the back steps and said, "Hello! What you want?" And looking closely saw Solomon, one of the runaways. He said: "Mas' Ed, tell Massa we come in." I ran to the parlor where father was reading and I called out: "Father, Solomon and all the runaways have come in." Father said, "Tell Solomon and all his gang I wish them in hell. Will see them in the morning." Father then hired the gang to a railroad contractor for the balance of the winter, and the neighborhood was rid of them. When all this was happening on the plantation, we had no fear of them at home. Frequently we would be left alone for several days, mother and children, with the house servants, all our own slaves, and the doors of the residence not even locked at night. You may be sure, though, strong locks were on the barns, meat houses and chicken coops.

THUS OUR country life passed, mother teaching us our first lessons, and making us stand in the corners of the room, face to the wall, if we missed our lessons, and oh, what an awful time we thought we were having! If we got our lessons well, we were rewarded by going with her on her customary carriage drive, through the well kept

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roads draped with jessamins and overhanging trees, that ran through various parts of the plantation. Gero and Jerry, mother's chestnuts, with Daddy Phil, the coachman, and the pretty and sweet woods of the home plantation, will always have a warm place in my memory.

Christmas month we always spent with our grandmother, Mrs. Eliza Huguenin, in Savannah. There being no railroads in this section at the time, and in fact no railroads south of Savannah, the distance – a good day's journey by carriage – was made partly in our carriage, and partly by stage. At that time all communication south of Savannah was by stage. How well I remember one of these trips when about ten years old. We had driven some twelve miles to catch the stage, arriving at the little village of Riceboro. It grew very cold, so father provided each of us with a rough blanket to wrap our legs in. There was a lady in this stage dressed in a handsome black gown, on her way to the city, and the white hairs from our coarse blankets falling on her black dress, almost drove her wild, and all to our extreme delight. I fear we disturbed those coverings more than was necessary. A fine-looking, elderly gentleman was also a passenger, and was constantly teasing us, declaring that when we got to town the "big boys would grease our heads and swallow us whole." Little did I think then the relation I would bear to this jolly old gentleman in after years.

Father found it necessary about this time for us to have more regular instruction, so he engaged the services of a Miss Mary Boggs, a Virginia miss, for our governess. She came and she captured us all, with her great brown eyes, pretty brown hair, and large mouth filled with white teeth. I think she was my first sweetheart. She only taught English branches, so soon we grew beyond her acquirements. In truth she was so sweet and pretty that Judge McLaws, of Augusta, won her love and took her to his home, and this suited nicely, for he was our cousin and therefore she became our Cousin Mary.

At that time, 1853, there were good schools in Walthourville, Liberty County, some twenty miles away. So we went to live there. The premises we occupied were just across the road from the home of a Mr. George W. Walthour, and what was my surprise and pleasure to find him the jolly old gentleman of the stage four years back, and the lady in black who so disliked my blanket hairs, a relative.

In his family there was a daughter about ten years of age, and in my family there were two sisters nearly her age. It goes without saying that having no sisters companionable with herself, and living so near, my sisters and she became every-day playmates. Her name was Alice. She had dark brown hair combed back from her pretty face with the large circular combs used at that time. Her eyes were blue-gray and twinkled like stars, and as a thirteen-year-old boy I thought this ten-year-old girl the prettiest thing I ever saw – chock full of mischief and fun, as straight as an Indian maiden, and supple as a reed. She took precedence in all our romps, and was never so happy as when catching a frisky calf by the tail, she made pandemonium with the chickens in the yard, and caused peals of laughter from all who saw her. Soon she was off to boarding school.

The first of May always brought us happiness in the way of a May party at the Academy's big shady grounds. Months before the jolly day everybody in the village was making preparations. The girls were getting ready their white dresses, ribbons and dancing slippers, the boys their natty coats and white pants, the mothers making cakes and goodies of all kinds, and the fathers cussing at the expense and yet more delighted than anybody else when the girls were rigged for the occasion. Of course the prettiest girl in school was chosen by the boys as our Queen of May, and I shall never forget our two queens of '55 and '56 – Miss Tilla and Miss Helen. Sweet and pretty girls they were sixty years ago, and today they are glorious matrons – the same sweet smile tempered with the cares of life. May the God of Love ever protect them!

I well remember the January of 1857, when not quite seventeen years old, I started for college. The railroad from Savannah southward and westward was only constructed thirty miles out, so I went by private conveyance, and then these thirty miles by rail to Savannah, where I took train to Augusta and thence to Athens, where I was to attend the University of Georgia. It took two days and two nights to make the trip in those days.



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This was my first trip from home, and my first ride on a railroad train, and surely I expected some highwayman to attempt to rob me of my gold watch, or perhaps the small pieces of silver I had in my pocket, and as a college man I must defend my property, so I invested seventy-five cents in a sharp and shining bowie knife (the kind they had in Kansas at that time), eight inches long, and a horn handle, and in a red morocco sheath, tipped with silver. I then cut a small hole in my waistband behind, and buttoned in my ugly armament. No sleeping cars, so when I got tired I twisted upon a seat, and wriggling in my sleep to get comfortable my coat pushed up and my big knife showed up in great shape. Some good old gentleman passing by unbuttoned my armament, waked me up, and quietly asked me if I had not better put it in my satchel. I never felt so cheap in my life. I quickly took it from him, thanked him, and threw it under the seat, and that is the last time I ever had such a thing.

COLLEGE LIFE was very pleasant but very uneventful. My first vacation, before going home, was spent with Col. Julius Huguenin, a kinsman in South Carolina. His mode of life was peculiar. Up early every morning, after a cup of coffee, he would take saddle-horse and ride over his home place; then getting into his carriage, to which were harnessed two elegant black stallions that tried so hard to chew each other up that an iron rod was fastened between their bits and their heads well checked – was driven to his second plantation, where saddle-horses would be in readiness, and with his overseer he would ride and direct the affairs of that place; then likewise to his third plantation, getting home about noon, when his breakfast would be served. About two o'clock – it was in December – all hands would prepare for a fox hunt, horns blowing the signal would be heard from the stable yards, the baying of hounds would testify to their readiness; saddle-horses, held by negro chaps in gay caps, would be waiting on the lawn, but not long waiting, for we would all soon be in the saddle and cantering to the forests. I never had anything to suit my taste as did these fox chases. We would take no guns, relying on the dogs and our swift horses, going pell-mell through fields, over fences and ditches, and once in a while bring home the tail of a fox stuck in some one's hat. Getting home about dark, a bounteous dinner would be served.

Cousin Julius took me into his cellar one afternoon, and all kinds of good things were there in evidence. He had a man who employed his time hunting, and hence venison, wild turkey and ducks, and birds were in abundance; the fisherman had also been industrious, and his catch was in evidence, clams and oysters were piled in the corners; portions of a fat ox and a small lamb showed that the dinner table would not be in want. This dinner was a long meal, and when it was over every evening, Cousin Julius, mellowed up with many glasses of good old brandy, would be lifted from his seat by two or three body servants, taken to his room, bathed and put to bed, like a veritable old Turk. Cousin Julius never drank wine, although his table was abundantly supplied with all kinds and enjoyed by the younger folks. When I went to college at seventeen I determined within myself not to touch a drop of any spirits until I was twenty-one, so I did not join the other youngsters in getting rid of the wine. I made one exception to this determination, for when I went home on vacation and mother exhibited her "orange cordials," "cherry bounce" and blackberry wines, I thought it would sound so unwelcome for me to say "Mother, I don't drink," so with her we drank her nice products, and I praised them to the sky, although to be honest, I did not care for them. This abstemious resolution made in early life has helped me wonderfully.

While Cousin Julius lived as I have mentioned, his wife had her three customary meals. Separate cook and kitchens were provided. Sundays the entire family took meals together, either at the husband's or wife's table. On this visit I met my cousin Tom Huguenin, who afterwards became the gallant defender of Fort Sumter.

Getting home after Christmas, father had arranged to give us a hunt on St. Catherine's and Black Beard's Islands. To make my story complete, I must tell about an old lady, Aunt Peggy Harris, as everybody called her, who owned a plantation and some twenty-five or thirty slaves, all being raised by her during a long life, from a few negro women inherited in her youth. She did not keep her plantation in very good discipline and hence father, her nearest neighbor, did not like to have his negroes companionable with hers. But she had a young man, very tall and strong, by name Landcaster, who wanted to marry one of father's women, by name Nelly. Father objected, as I said before, to having any of Aunt Peggy's people given the freedom of his plantation, and hence refused to sanction this wedding. However, his objection availed but little, for love found a way, and year by year Nelly's family grew larger. While father objected to Landcaster as a husband, because it would give him the freedom of

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his plantation, yet when he went on a hunt he would exchange hands with Aunt Peggy for the occasion – much to Landcaster's delight. He was a good oarsman (no naphtha launches then), sang songs merrily, knew every path through the woods, and where to get up a deer or find the best fish, a good cook, always jolly and willing – a complete rascal in all things; hence he was along on this trip.

The hunt and fish on the islands came off with the usual good luck, and we had enjoyed camping out under the large oaks, resting on the robes, and all the good things that boys do so enjoy. On our way home in this eight-oared boat, when perhaps half way home, my brother fell asleep, and when the boat made a sudden jerk he raised his foot suddenly, when out of the boat and in some ten feet of water, tumbled one of our best guns. Father immediately called out: "Landcaster, get that gun and I'll give you Nelly." Without even taking off his hat, Landcaster was overboard and into this ten feet of cold salt water, but in a shorter time than I can write it, up he came, gun in hand and a grin on his face. Immediately he was helped out of the water, three fingers of good old Bourbon floated under his shirt, his seat resumed and the oars feathering the water and driving the boat at fast speed ahead He knew he had Nelly.

A day or two after he got home, father fulfilled his promise to him and his dusky bride in, to them, royal style. The bride was diked out in one of mother's white dresses, ribbons ad libitum floated from head, waist and arms; the groom in the tallest white collar the community could furnish, and big yellow cravat. The large piazza was turned into a dance hall, and with fiddle and banjo they made merry, while a barbecue awaited them on the lawn.

To finish the story, Landcaster, so soon as the Federal gunboats in 1862 made their appearance off the coast and in sight of our place, took his wife and babes in a boat to find freedom After the war, he told me, he soon found freedom with a wife and six children very different from having a master to provide for them. Like the man he was, he did the best he could. When the war was over, he came back and lived on the old plantation until he died. I obtained a pension from the U. S. Government for his wife, Nelly. It seems he got his name on the payroll of the government by doing some trivial service and now his widow is receiving the usual pension. All bosh, I know, but while millions are being distributed to the undeserved, this poor woman might just as well get her mite. And strange to say that while I am writing, this same Nelly is now sitting in my kitchen waiting for a helping of whatever I may have, which she or any one of our old slaves shall have as long as the recollections of Peru Plantation, and those happy days, linger in my memory; and they all know it, for even to this day they bring all their big troubles to "Mas' Ed" to have him explain or correct.

I do not mean to imply that there was no cruelty between master and slave, but no more so than between husband and wife, or father and children, or employer and employed, but I do know that laws were enacted preventing a master's cruelty to his slave, as also that a husband should not beat his wife. In all relations in life the tyrant will manifest himself.

FATHER DIED in the year 1859 in his forty-third year; was buried beside my grandfather in the old graveyard on South Newport River. He was not a church man; a man of good deeds rather than a man of faith, and goodness and sympathy beamed from him as naturally as light from the glowworm. A soul full of charity for every one, he has gone to his Maker to get that reward provided for the just.

The first of January, in my young days, was a day of rejoicing. Visiting the rule. About early noon we would gather in fours, get into carriages and visit everybody worth visiting; always the best of wines and cakes in evidence at every house, and perhaps we would have headaches the next morning, but 'twas all forgiven in the general good cheer. If you left your card New Year's Day, you were to have the civilities of that house for the year. For the disobedience of this custom, when quite a young chap, I got in much trouble. I was visiting my grandmother, who gave me a list of her friends to call on, she having driven to her plantation some five miles from Savannah. I had paid most of the visits; the last visit was to call on two old maids. They were close-fisted, sour old ladies, never had anything good to eat, but always a lecture on their tongues. Their house was near the Central R. R. depot on Liberty Street, and when we got near there, meeting friends, the idea struck us that we

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would switch off from that house – no cake, no nuts no nothing – and have a game of catcher on the cotton bales at the Central R. R. yard. In those days all the cotton that came to Savannah was unloaded at this yard, and then drayed to steamers, etc. The result was, in one of my leaps from bale to bale I slipped and broke my right leg, and had to be carried home in the arms of one of the big Irish laborers. When grandmother arrived home from her ride and found me lying down with my leg in splints, she wanted to whip me because I had disobeyed her in not going to see those old maids, and I thought I was pretty well punished. Father came from our old Peru Plantation home to see me, hunted up the laborer and treated him handsomely.

My dear old grandmother – how she used to indulge me, and how I used to fool her! Many little stories could be told of her confiding love and my infernal duplicity, but I suppose it is the experience of all boys.

About 1860 the papers rang out with discordant notes, the North against the South, the South against the North. How little we college boys knew what was before us! The beginning of this term, 1860, a chair of geology was established at the college for the first time, and Dr. Henry Hammond, fresh from the advanced schools in Paris, France, was consigned to it, and to us boys (we thought we were men) who had been sitting under teaching of good old Dr. Mell, Dr. Hammond's new ideas were surely confounding.

Dr. Mell taught that the world was made in six days, and Dr. Hammond that it took twenty–two thousand years to bring the earth to the present condition. Judge Joseph Henry Lumpkin, at that time Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia, once a week gave the Senior Class, of which I was a member, lectures on the Constitution of the United States. The Judge was a strong Secessionist, and delighted and enthused our young hearts with his word pictures of the glorious South, cut loose from the Union, with Cotton as King and free trade with the world.

Being so wise in our judgment, we boys thought surely he could and would decide whether Dr. Mell or Dr. Hammond was right – whether it took six days or twenty–two thousand years to make the world. After one of our lectures this question was put to him, and I shall never forget the result – at least to my mind.

The Judge was short and stout, wore very long hair much inclined to curl, and getting up he shook his head like an enraged lion, and almost swore at us boys for indulging in skepticism, declaring the Bible says "the world was made in six days, and you young gentlemen have no business to look further. You are losing that faith in Holy Writ which has brought not only individuals, but nations, to destruction. Beware! Beware!" Such was the answer given by Judge Lumpkin to the Senior Class of 1860, at that centre of learning, the University of the State of Georgia! How the world has progressed in thought, as in all things, in the last generation!

During my college course I paid much attention to religious matters; I became deeply interested in church work of all kinds. The various churches in Athens had protracted meetings, and eminent divines thundered orthodox doctrines in the ears of their congregations night after night. The gifted T. R. R. Cobb, an eminent lawyer, took active and enthusiastic part. The angry God and the loving Son was the burden of their song, and unless you were converted (?) you were sure of eternal punishment. I tried to get what these Orthodox called converted, that is, to feel that my sins had rolled off me like a mountain, and that I felt so happy I wanted to shout. I never got it. I even felt disturbed when some converted sinner would begin shouting his happiness; but I tried to keep not only my actions, but even my thoughts, "unspotted from the world." I tried to be too orthodox. I became too earnest. I wanted everybody to walk that narrow chalk mark, as it was chalked out to me by those who said they knew all about it. This would have suited very well, perhaps, if I had not begun to think too much, and ask too many questions of those who were teaching me. My teachers all had different views on all these matters, and I had sympathy for them all. I found my chalk mark grew wider as my sympathy and learning expanded, and soon I found the whole world chalked over, and the great and kind Creator, instead of the angry God, looking and lightening up the pathways for all mankind. Whereupon I opened my heart to that great Creator, discarded all the "isms" I had recently so fondly cherished, and simply put my trust in Him. Sympathy for all mankind and trust in God, I will live by and hope to die by.

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I GRADUATED this summer in the class of 1860, and received my "sheepskin" as a Bachelor of Arts. On my route home, at most every station a liberty pole was erected from which flags of various designs were hung, always expressing something defiant of the Yankee. A rattlesnake coiled, with "Don't step on me" was frequently seen, and the secession badge pinned to every man's coat and lady's jacket; and the nearer I got home, the higher the poles and larger the flags. Father's death made it necessary for me to take charge of our plantation, and this, together with the unsettled condition of the country, made me forget my individual interest. The first of January, 1861 I assumed charge, and with the assistance of our old Driver, "Daddy John," prepared to plant the usual crops. Our family lived in Walthourville, Liberty County, twenty miles away, in order that the younger members of the family might have school privileges. I kept bachelor quarters on the plantation, with old "Mamma Peggy" as provider. About this time Federal gunboats could be seen out in the sound, and the neighboring planters became uneasy.

One of our neighbors, Mrs. Anderson, had a son about my age, a nervous and eccentric chap, and a very interesting daughter. I frequently rode or drove to their home, and was always welcome. They were distant relatives. One Saturday night about the first of March, riding over to this house, I saw quite a suspicious boat nearing the landing hard by, and suspected it to be one of those "Damn Yankee" trading schooners, selling, or rather trading with the negroes their products, such as skins and pelts of various animals, and frequently what stuff and cotton or corn they could steal from their masters, for mean whiskey and gim-cracks of all kinds. These vessels were not allowed about our landings without permission. Hence when I got over to Anderson's I told him about the vessel, and we agreed to visit this particular landing about midnight. Anderson had a young relative by name Jones visiting him. About eleven o'clock we started off. I took my long buggy whip, Anderson a gun loaded with buckshot, and Jones a gun loaded with small shot in which he rammed three large buckshot on top of each charge. I laughed at them, wanting to know whom they intended killing. We found nothing wrong at the landing, but returning, we heard what the negroes call shouting, in one of the cabins not far from the residence. It was a moonlight night, and this noise being contrary to rules, we walked over to see who the parties were and quietly stop the noise. Anderson and Jones were to go to the front door and rap, and I to the back door, and if any one attempted to get by me, I would intercept him. Anderson rapped, and the door by me was flung open and a negro boy, as well as I can remember about eighteen years old, ran by me before I could take hold of him. The idea immediately suggested itself to me that he belonged to some neighboring place, so I would at least have the frolic of catching him and finding out. Being quite swift of foot, I ran after him, and scarcely got beyond the corner of the cabin before Anderson fired his gun and the whole contents entered my right shoulder. He could not have been more than thirty feet from me, for it brought me down all in a heap. I suffered no pain, but I felt as though my body had been torn away and my head only rested on the earth. The nearest physician, eighteen miles off, was sent for, and the wound dressed. And thus I spent my twenty-first birthday, March 25, 1861, in bed.

Anderson never could give any reason why he fired the gun, and the name of the chap who ran by me was never known. The whole Anderson household did all in their power to alleviate my wretched condition. It seemed that when we stopped for a few moments at the landing, Anderson and Jones, by some means, exchanged guns. If that had not been done, I would have been killed, for Anderson started out with the gun loaded with buckshot. The doctor said that thirty-two duck-shot had entered my shoulder and back of my head, and three buckshot had passed entirely through my shoulder. Many of these shot have been taken out by the lances, but some twenty or more are still in my shoulder. I was in bed for about a month fretting that I was incapacitated to go and fight for my native land, for about this time companies of volunteers were being organized, through the entire South.

FROM THE writing of the Constitution there were always two distinct opinions as to the right of a state to secede from the Union. The New England states, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, were the first to declare for this right to secede, and openly threatened to do so July 4, 18 1814, on account of Jefferson's embargo, and then their right to do so was not particularly questioned. From the days of Hamilton and Jefferson – the first for a central control, the latter for state's rights – and then again in the time of Webster and Calhoun, later in the time of Lincoln and Davis, these two separate causes were championed. This ghost of secession was forever rising to disturb the Union, the Southern states always claiming the right; and hence we felt we were acting within our

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rights when, in 1860–61, we withdrew. Only such authority was delegated by the states to the General Government as would have this government function properly. All the other rights were reserved to the states.

The border states were loath to break from the Union. The great R. E. Lee and his state, Virginia, were for the Union until Lincoln called for Virginia's quota to make the desired number of troops to coerce the Southern states, and then Lee said, "The die is cast. I cannot fight for that." And Virginia, too, seceded. In fact, the Southern states have always felt that their first allegiance was to their state, and second to the Union. The Northern states have, so to speak, let down their state fences and are known more particularly by their large cities – as Portland, Boston, New Haven, New York, and so on, while we of the South have continued our state pride. For me, I am a Georgian first, and an American afterwards. This does not make us love our nation less, but our state more.

Before 1860 Georgia and Massachusetts were almost as distinct countries, under the Constitution of the United States, as are now Italy and Belgium under the League of Nations, for it was primarily for self-defense that these unions were effected. Yes, at times even the contrast is more favorable to the European countries, for a man can go from Belgium into Italy and not have his property stolen from him, but we of Georgia could not go to Massachusetts with our slaves – guaranteed to us under the Constitution as our slaves, and sold as such to us by these same Northern brethren, and also guaranteed by the Supreme Court of our land – without having them stolen from us, and then by underground railroad whisked off into undetermined places. It was not officially done, but connived at; and, perhaps, with the approval of the majority of the citizens of the state. Towards the end, it became a moral issue rather than a Constitutional measure.

The planters on the seaboard of Georgia found it necessary at this time to move further inland. Shot and shell from the Yankee gunboats would sometimes be thrown most too near. I took all the infirm and very old slaves, and many of the little negroes, to our home in Liberty County, and found homes for the others among the farmers about Thomasville, Georgia. My object was to get them good homes during the war rather than to drive hard bargains as to wages. I had not a particle of trouble with them. They seemed to feel the emergency of the case, and assisted me in the work. Loyal they were to me, and they have never been forgotten for it. Although managing negroes from boyhood, I never whipped but two of them in my life. Jumping from my buggy one morning for a package I had forgotten, and rushing into my room buggy whip in hand, I found the house maid using my toothbrush. I struck her two or three cuts across the shoulder, threw the brush out of the window, and then resumed my trip in the buggy. I strapped my boy one day in camp for not having my horse ready when "boots and saddles" was sounded. While doing duty on the seaboard, a great many of us officers, non-coms and privates, had our body servants, and half a dozen forming a mess, our own negro cook; but when ordered to the front, all luxuries were abandoned, the servants sent home on the extra horses, and only the scantiest necessities kept. Nevertheless, how happy we were to go!

Knowing that I would be obliged to leave my mother, sisters and little brothers at home, without a male protector – for every white man was in the army – I called "Daddy Henry," one of our trusted slaves, to my room before departing, and told him that I left everything in his care. He must see that the many house servants were obedient to mother; he must take care of the old slaves and many young ones, keep mother well provisioned from plantation and garden; that, in fact, he must stand right square up, as he knew I wished. He was standing, hat in hand, and said, "Mas' Ed, 'fore God I won't betray you." I left with every confidence in the world. He proved faithful to the trust imposed, and when it became necessary for mother to take refuge in Savannah, on account of the raiding parties from Sherman's army, he did all in his power to aid her. When I met "Daddy Henry" at the old plantation after the war, he gave me a verbal accounting of his conduct, and seemed perfectly happy when I shook his hand and said "Daddy Henry, I knew you would be true." Before my visit at the plantation ended, I deeded to him his home and ten acres of land, as a home for him and his good wife, "Mamma Nancy," who had been our washerwoman as far back as I could remember. The South should never forget the loyal conduct of our slaves during the war of Secession; they not only took care of our families, but made bread for the soldiers at the front, and never a single instance occurred of improper conduct to any of these families. The day must come when a noble monument will be erected to their memory; and this loyal conduct refutes in burning language the assertion

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that the master was cruel to his slave, and I believe this same good conduct would still prevail, if the infernal fanatics had not insisted on their enjoying political preferences and social advantages, two privileges they were unfit for, and not prepared to receive.

During my vacation from college in 1859 I met Miss Alice Walthour, then sixteen years old, at a wedding, for the first time since we frolicked in childhood, six years before. She was one of the bridesmaids, and to say she was charming is only to be just. The pretty brown hair had grown in all its womanly luxuriance, and was becomingly arranged around the same sweet and saucy face. The pretty child had grown to be the beautiful woman. I only shook hands and said a few words, for Miss Alice was busy in her duties as first maid of honor, and I had taken a young lady to whom my duty as escort required my attention, but her image struck deep into my soul.

So, returning to college, the vision of that pretty miss, my former playmate, would not down at my bidding. I am not sure I bid it down. It kept dancing on the pages of all my text books, and I liked it. It smiled at me through the tangles of my calculus. I saw it in the deepest resources of my geology. I think it was in my eyes, and impressed itself everywhere.

After graduating from college I was so anxious to get into the army and help kill the d—n Yankees, fearing that the war would end before I got a chance. A cavalry company was organized in our county, which I joined, and we offered ourselves to the Governor of Georgia. He accepted us, and had us do duty watching the Yankee gunboats, always just off our coast, until the last of March, 1862, when we entered the service of the Confederate Army for the war. I stipulated for a thirty-day furlough in the beginning, and the second of April Miss Alice and I were married. The fond dream of my young manhood was realized.

The young men of the South were so afraid the war would end before they had a chance that a company was made up in my county and offered to the state, without compensation. I became one of them, although my right arm was yet in a sling. We were accepted by our Governor, and required to do picket duty along the coast, reporting the manoeuvres of the gunboats, always in sight along our ocean front. In 1862, April 1st, I enlisted for the war. Our victories had made us believe a few more months would see the end of it. How little we knew the feeling in the Northern states, and how determined Lincoln was to preserve the Union!

About this time our regiment was ordered to Florida to take part in the battle of Olustee, but General Colquitt, who was on the ground, made such quick work of the Federal attack that we reached there only in time to follow up the retreat of the enemy, and to see thousands of dead negro soldiers, dressed in blue. On this battlefield I found a dollar greenback, and didn't know what it was. I had frequently to pass through this stretch of woods, where the fiercest engagement occurred, and for a mile or more the dead horses were so thick and the stench so bad that, arriving at the place, I would hold my nose, put spur to my horse, and hasten through.

WHEN SHERMAN began his march on Atlanta, we were ordered to General Joseph E. Johnston's army to stop Sherman, and became a part of Joe Wheeler's cavalry, but we did not succeed. However, we all think if Johnston had not been retired at this time by President Davis, Sherman would never have made his hellish march to the sea. But who knows? Just before Sherman took Atlanta, the cavalry under General Joe Wheeler was ordered to the rear. Why, I, of course, don't know, but I expect because General Johnston wanted to cut off Sherman's railroad supplies, and because we had nothing for man or beast to eat. The order assembling us was strange. It commanded that we assemble without a change of clothing, without a blanket, but plenty of ammunition. Being acting Quartermaster of the Regiment, I was not included, but having a good horse, good pistols, and hungry for a fight, and from the nature of the order so poorly equipped for service, we all thought it a short raid, so I arranged to go.

Soon we found ourselves almost in Tennessee, living on what we could forage. At Dalton, Georgia, we captured – or stole, perhaps, is the better word – lots of goodies from the Yankees who had followed Sherman and opened shop. It was the first time I ever saw canned goods. We had been living on green apples and green corn since we left Atlanta, and to see the boys eat crackers and condensed milk was amazing.

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The quartermaster had become forage master. With a squad of men to leave at crossroads, I was given the direction the march would take, and when about twenty miles distant, would provide the food, which would consist of a field of corn just maturing, making good food for both man and beast, but without salt or meat. We paid these obligations by giving a certificate of purchase, reading: "Two years after a treaty of peace between the Confederate States and the United States, the Confederate States promise to pay John Jones one hundred dollars for fifty acres of corn," I signing as quartermaster.

When the regiment or brigade reached this place, they would pull the ears of corn for their horses, and make large fires and roast the ears for themselves; then catch an hour or two of sleep on the bare ground, rain or shine, night or day, and, strange to say, the men and horses all kept well. The boys soon learned to put the green corn ears, just as pulled from the stalk, in the fire, and when the husk was burned off the ear was just properly cooked. The sharp line between officers and enlisted men was not severe in the Confederate Army. Although at first a sergeant in the army, the Colonel, a West Point graduate, would offer me his headquarters tent to entertain my sisters. The sharp command of an officer to attend to a duty was not necessary, each man seeming to realize that he was his own captain.

When leaving Dalton, I received orders the night before as to the route to provide the next night's forage for man and beast. Riding out of the city early in the morning, I heard a train stop just over the hill and out of sight. Soon the hill top was bristling with bayonets and blue coats, and the bullets spattered around me lively, but my good horse soon put the required distance between us. This occurrence cut me off from my command for four or five days, and when I put in an appearance I was warmly welcomed with the shout, "Why, here is Ed Thomas! He wasn't killed at Dalton after all!"

On this raid the horse I rode became lame on account of casting a shoe. At first I tried to put a shoe on; I found an old shoe at an abandoned blacksmith's shop, and having nails I fastened the shoe to the foot. Pretty bad job, and did not help much.

My Confederate "promise to pay" was all the cash the army had, and they were only accepted by these East Tennessee bushwhackers when handed out at the point of sharp sabres; but I had to have a horse. The question to decide was whether the bushwhackers should get me, or I get one of their horses. Being both judge and jury in deciding this matter, it did not take me long to come to a conclusion.

I started out early one morning determined to be sufficiently in advance of the corps to get a good selection. As forage master and quartermaster I had passes to go and come as I pleased. It wasn't long before I came to a farm yard. Just at the roadside I saw two horses in a pole stable. I opened the gate, went in with my lame horse, intending to force a swap for one more serviceable. The pretty sorrel mare I first examined, but her shoes were much worn, so I selected a gray horse, quite recently shod, and was about putting my bridle and saddle on trim when the owner came rushing from the house, some hundred yards away, swearing at the d—n scoundrel about to steal his horse. As he came he picked up an ugly, heavy stick, and when near me I ordered him to halt, with pistol in hand; but I believe he would have rushed on me requiring me to kill him, for horse I had to have, when he saw the head of our cavalry coming down the hill, and looking at my gray coat, he mounted the little sorrel and scampered for his life. Those poor border states! It was either the infernal Yankee, or the rascally Reb, who were constantly sapping their existence.

During the raid we lived by impressing what the country afforded, and whatever we did was done with despatch. To provide pork from an adjoining farm, and no hot water to get hair off, resulted in great waste; stripping the hide from a hog by amateur butchers, almost as much flesh was left at the pen with the hair as was taken away on the bones.

I remember going into a flour mill in Tennessee and asking for a certain amount of wheat flour, which the miller promptly furnished, and then, of course, wanted his pay. He would only receive my "promise to pay" after it was

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stuck on my sword and I quietly but determinedly let him feel how sharp it was when pressed against his abundant stomach. Then after getting the flour, how to prepare it for food? Found a lot of large flat stones, which I had the men heat very hot, and mixing the flour with water in a large barrel, spread it over the stones, and thus we had very large pones of eatable stuff. These, in large hunks, were handed the troopers as they rode by, and all shouting "Hurrah for Captain Thomas."

On these cavalry raids, which were within the confines of the seceding states, where our "promise to pay" was expected to be valid, we lived on what we could get in the immediate surroundings, but when Lee went into Pennsylvania, while he assessed the towns in accordance with military tactics, yet everything he consumed was paid for, and the strictest order maintained – no outrages or pilfering were permitted.

After feeding the boys, I began to scratch, for I was infested with what the boys now call "cooties" but we called "gray-backs." So the idea struck me I would beg a shirt of the good ladies living in this cozy town, stretched out for about half a mile on a pretty stream. I rode up to the first place and told the lady I had a sick friend who needed a shirt. "Certainly," she said, and presently she brought me what the boys call a "biled" shirt, all white and starched stiff. Of course I had to thank her for it, and stuffed it under my saddle blanket; and riding out of sight of this house repeated my lie to another lady, who brought me another "biled" shirt, which, as before, I thanked her for and again stuck under my saddle blanket. These shirts were about as much use to me as though she had given me a palmetto fan. So riding again further down the stream, in a quiet nook I took a bath, made a big fire, and holding my shirt and coat over the flames, singed those miserable things until I could hear them pop in the fire, and then, after throwing the biled shirts in the woods, dressed myself and caught up with the command.

After searching the country one night, I could only find a pen of sheep – no hogs or cattle and the boys did so dislike this horribly butchered mutton. But this or nothing, so I rode up to the pen where perhaps forty or fifty sheep were corralled in a good pen, and directed my men to get eight or ten of them. None of us knew anything about sheep, so the boys got down from their horses, found heavy sticks and went at the sheep. We knocked their horns off, crippled a few, but killed none. One of my men, coming up a little later, said, "That aint the way to kill them; just catch them and cut their throats." Soon we had all our horses could carry to camp. I have often wondered, when the owner came by daylight to see this destruction, what he thought had happened.

On this raid it was learned that the Yankees meant to destroy our salt works at Abington, Virginia, a small town in the southwest of this state. We were sent to defend the place, and quite a skirmish ensued. The Yankees retreated, and hearing of a mountainous short cut, our command was ordered to take it, hoping by this short cut to head off the enemy. 'Twas the darkest night I ever saw, and this mountain path as crooked and slippery as could be. In marching over it a large torchlight was carried at the head; each man dismounted, leading his horse and holding to the tail of the horse before him, for if the chain had been broken all might have gone over the precipice. At times the torchlight would be at our backs, so tortuous was the path, and frequently we would find ourselves slipping down a slide – but for God's sake don't let go the tail! By daylight we again reached the public road, just to see the rear guard of the enemy pass by. My comrade, Lawrence, was captured on this raid. The dead negro soldiers dressed in blue were lying so thick on the grass that it was with difficulty I rode without having my horse trample them.

While this raid temporarily destroyed the railroad over which Sherman received most of his supplies, I doubt if it accomplished any good to the Confederate cause. When we got back off the raid General Hood was on his unfortunate campaign northward, and Sherman on his march of devastation through Georgia to Savannah.

The Confederate cavalry furnished their own horses and equipment, and after we got to our line again, an order was issued giving a thirty-day furlough to any trooper without a horse. I had a good horse, but I gave him to a fellow trooper who had lost his horse in exchange for his thirty-day furlough. I made haste to get home, and there found my baby boy had grown out of my and his recollection. He looked upon me as an intruder, and if his legs had been strong enough would have kicked me out of the house. A few days, though, made him my staunch



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friend.

At this time Sherman was devastating the state, letting us know what he thought war was. Judging from what he was doing, I feared he would permit ill treatment of the women, so thought best to take my wife and son, two young lady sisters, and a niece who was stopping with us, out of the city. I stacked mother's store room with rice, about all that could be purchased in the city. No vehicles could be hired to leave the city, so I got from my grandmother's plantation near by, a horse and wagon to take the four ladies, my boy, and two negro girls – for the ladies must have their maids – and four or five big trunks, over the Savannah River to Hardeeville, S. C., the nearest railroad station; all other railroads were in Sherman's hands.

How I expected to accomplish the journey, I never knew; was like the darned fool who, knowing a thing could not be done, tried it, and did it. Good luck played in my hands, and at last we were in Hardieville.

WHEN I arrived there I saw a woman waving a handkerchief. Going to her, I found it was my wife, who told me that arriving at this station, the party was rushed on the train, saying that it was the last train to leave as the Yanks had cut off communication; that she began to cry, when General Beauregard, who happened on board, asked "why that lady was crying." Being told, he took from his pocket a small memorandum book and wrote: "Captain Thomas has permission to go to Charleston and return. G. T. Beauregard." But by and by another train did come, on to which we all tumbled, bag and baggage, and thus I had accomplished by luck what seemed at first impossible.

By some hocus–pocus I went as far as Columbia, S. C., where friends were met, and I turned my head southward, feeling for the first time since the war began that we could hold out but little longer. I never got back to Savannah to get my equipment. Sherman was there before me, and of course my horse and wagon were gone, and not knowing where my command was and not having any change of clothing or blanket to keep out the December cold, I felt disconsolate indeed. By some hook or crook, though, I got what I needed, joined my command, which, with the other troops, was endeavoring to make a junction with Lee in Virginia. Before this could be done, however, Grant had pressed the great Lee so severely, by overwhelming bodies of troops, that he had surrendered. Joseph E. Johnston was at this time again in command of what was left of the Western Army, after Hood's unfortunate battles, and with him I continued my duties until he, too, surrendered to Sherman.

As before mentioned, my wife and son and two sisters had refuged to Limestone Springs, situated in the northern part of South Carolina. Hence my first journey was to see them. Riding a mule towards home, I took a mental inventory of my condition. The plantation we had bought in Baker County, we had given notes for; I had been informed by my brother that these notes had not been paid. When they became due they could not be found. It seems a firm of bankers in Savannah had purchased them, and knowing they were well secured by mortgage on the plantation, had taken the notes to England. Without the negroes to work the land, we could not make the cotton to procure the money to pay these notes. Hence that, too, was gone.

This is the way my inventory looked: a wife and babe to take care of; a mother, four sisters and little brother to help to support. How? It is true I had a good education. I had taken special work in engineering; but no money to make improvements, and hence nothing for the engineer. I could not look to that for support. The negroes were all free, and in fact I had no money to hire them if I desired to plant. Well, I will say one thing; to be sure I had the desire and the pluck, and these two carried me through.

Arriving at Limestone Springs about May first, I was truly rejoiced to be with my folks again, although I was almost as destitute as though I was an immigrant from another country. All the earnings and savings of my forefathers had been destroyed by the effects of the war. Yet I felt hopeful and confident that I could pull through.

Limestone Springs had been noted for its fine female college, founded and operated by one Dr. Curtis, who married my wife's oldest sister. His idea was to open the seminary again, and he offered me the position of teacher

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of mathematics if he succeeded. As a beginning I immediately opened a free school for the neighboring community and the doctor canvassed the state to see how matters looked. He returned in less than two weeks, disheartened; everybody too poor to send their daughters from home. I remained with Dr. Curtis for a while, but after seeing no prospect of his college opening again, I was convinced that I had got to get other work. The railroads were, of course, all destroyed; so saddling my mule, I rode to Savannah with only my two silver dollars, and how I did it seems strange to me now, yet I remember giving a small piece of even those two dollars to a poor family I met on the road just before entering Savannah. There I met my good mother and sisters and little brother, and what a lot of things they had to relate!

Sherman's entering the city had proven a blessing in disguise. He maintained good order; the soldiers had plenty of money to buy whatever the citizens had, and paid well for it. My mother had reserved a sack or two of peanuts, which my little sisters roasted, and sitting on the front steps sold to the soldiers passing by. The ladies made cakes and pies of all kinds, and sold to the soldiers. The officers roomed or boarded at the various dwellings, and materially assisted the inhabitants, and in this way everybody was doing very nicely.

I remained in Savannah only long enough to extend such assistance as the emergency of the case required, and then mounted my mule and rode to my place in Baker County, two hundred miles west, to see if anything was left there to assist me in my efforts for a living. Walthourville was directly on my route so, of course, I passed that way to see my wife's folks. I found these ladies, who had owned abundant slaves to do their bidding, doing their own work, and they were very cheerful. Luckily I found Mr. Bernard in Walthourville, with wagons and teams preparing to make the same trip I had set out on. Of course I joined him. In due time we reached Baker County, where I found I was still possessed of four mules, a horse, wagons, and several bales of cotton. I made preparation at once to arrange for vehicles to go after my folks at Limestone Springs in South Carolina. Proper harness could not be purchased, so I bought leather and thread, and, with the exception of the mules' collars, which were made of corn shucks by one of our slaves, I made harness for a four-mule and a two-mule team. These I loaded with cotton, six bales, and returned to Savannah where I easily sold it at a good price.

After assisting my mother in many ways, I started for Limestone Springs. Arriving there I rested for a day and again turned my head homeward, with wife and boy, sisters, the two maids and my brother Hugh, who had made the trip with me, camping on the way at night. We finally reached Savannah in very good shape. But the high prices of all things prevailing then, and the necessities of the occasion, soon depleted my pocketbook to such an extent that I found it necessary to renew it before beginning my return journey to the Baker County plantation. Freights from Savannah to Augusta were \$4 a hundred. So, taking three thousand pounds of cotton bagging and my six-mule team, and hiring a colored man, Frank, to accompany me, I made the trip there and back in seven days, getting my \$120. The day I left Augusta on my return, the man Frank complained of feeling sick. He soon became so ill that I had to take his driver's seat and allow him to lie in the wagon. This made the three days' trip down very laborious, as I had to drive all day and watch most of the night, the country being full of stragglers always ready to steal a horse or mule. On approaching Savannah, I went to the rear of the wagon where Frank lay sleeping and removed a cover from his face to find that he had an awful case of smallpox. He feared on my finding this out that I would abandon him on the road, and cried out lustily for my clemency. I relieved his fears, drove him to his home in the city, helped him out of the wagon, paid him for services rendered, and gave him over to his kinsfolk. Frank recovered, and today is one of my most loyal friends. I had spent three days in company with this man, riding the same feverish saddle he left, and yet did not take the smallpox.

In a few days I started off to Baker County to finally settle up matters there. The plantation was too firmly held by that unfortunate mortgage to bring that away, so by the first of January I found myself in Savannah with two wagons, six mules, and several bales of cotton – my entire available resources. In this short space of time, either on mule back or in wagons, I had made three trips across the state of South Carolina and four across the state of Georgia. I arranged for my wife and boy to remain in Savannah with my mother, and I went on my grandmother's plantation, seven miles out of the city, to plant cotton, rice, corn, and so on, and only visiting my folks once a week. There, with my soldier's blankets, which I found as I had left them on my going from the city on the eve of

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Sherman's coming, and a bale of straw for my bed, I lived for about three months; but I found it luxury, for an ex-soldier. I was up early and late, encouraging my hands in the performance of their various duties, untiring and indefatigable at all hours. The second year I fixed up the old residence, doing most of the work myself, and had my wife and son with me. While these years were laborious to me, I yet was happy with my little family.

I HAD NOT as yet, since the slaves were free, visited our old plantation home, Peru, in McIntosh County, but I had heard that a goodly number of our old slaves had returned, and, without leave or license, simply considered it their privilege to come home, after they were scattered by Sherman's raid.

They had taken up their abode in what cabins were left standing and had begun to cultivate the land. I was pleased to hear this and made up my mind to pay them a visit. So, just before Christmas, with a pair of mules to a buggy, I drove to the old plantation. If I had been a king returning to his subjects, I could not have been more regally received. The men gathered around my buggy, and bodily carried me to the front piazza of the old home, and some of the women pulled out an old arm chair in which I was deposited in state. I had soon, however, to get up from the chair and stand as erect as possible, to keep old Mammy Peggy from putting her arms around my neck and kissing me. My mules were soon stabled and well provided for, and then the preparations began for entertaining "Mars' Ed." One provided a mattress, another the sheets, and so on until a most comfortable bed was secured. At supper I found that each of my old friends insisted that something should be on the table from his or her larder, and I never expect, during my life, to sit down to such a supper again: fried chicken, pork, smoked raccoon, eggs, fried fish, oysters, crabs, shrimps, honey, rice, corn, corn bread, peas, collards, potatoes, and coffee! And Mammy Peggy insisted on my eating some of her stewed 'possum, which she brought me in a nice little bowl with a silver spoon. When leaving home I had intended spending my nights at my cousin's, Mrs. Anderson, who lived on the adjoining plantation, but they would not listen to it! "Marse Ed wan't gwine to leab 'em to go nowhar else."

That was not long after the war when they had many of the comforts provided them by their masters. Should I go there today, I know I would find no such bed and supper, and as the old folks are almost all dead, no such welcome. The feelings of the old slaves for their master, and of the masters for their slaves, will never be understood by coming generations.

While living on this farm near Savannah I was elected magistrate of the district. I accepted the place that I might use my influence for good, for the Freedmen's Bureau was stationed in Savannah, as also in other cities, and gave us much trouble in the proper discipline of our laborers, who thought that freedom was to be idle, to be untrammelled by law, and I used my office to counteract these unfortunate ideas.

About this time a negro man, by name Dick, killed another in cold blood. Governor Bullock of Georgia, a carpet-bagger elected by the negroes – most whites disfranchised – offered a reward of \$500 for his capture. I found out where Dick was in hiding across the river in South Carolina, and made up my mind to catch him and get the \$500 reward. I had a great big negro man as my constable, who was forever begging me for a horse I drove, so I told him if he would do as I directed and bring Dick to me, I would give him the horse. His reply, naturally, was that it would be necessary to have a requisition from the Governor of Georgia to the Governor of South Carolina before he, a Georgia constable, could arrest over the river in South Carolina. I told him I had the requisition. I got my sister to make me a rosette of red, white and blue ribbon, which I pinned to his inner coat and told him to keep it hid until he saw Dick, when he must approach him with great dignity, throw open his coat, display the rosette, and say "Requisition from Governor of South Carolina. You are my prisoner" – and just take him and bring him along. I gave him the needed money, and two days after he brought me the man, whom I turned over to the proper authorities, and in due time got my \$500 and the constable got the horse. This was my first piece of detective work, and my last.

It was about this time that my sister Mattie died, and was buried in Bonaventure Cemetery. This sister was particularly gifted, remarkably pretty, large black eyes and light hair; was very smart; wrote well, and had a

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decided talent for drawing and music. Her young life was spent during the hard times of Civil War, and her opportunities for schooling were very small. Father died when she was quite a little thing, and it was always to my lap she ran to be petted and loved. Poor girl, she passed to her eternal home before the devastations of that cursed war were mended, having spent her entire young life in the midst of strife and confusion. A noble, gentle and modest girl. How I have wished she could have lived to spend some happy days. As a young man, when she nestled on my knee, and even then showed such undeveloped talent, I resolved to give her the best opportunities to develop her talents for music and drawing. But even as I was building these castles in the air the murmurs of war were heard over the land, which soon dispelled all my well laid plans.

THE CONFEDERATE ARMY in and about Savannah consisted of only such scattering stragglers and men on furlough, as could be rounded up for the occasion. It was more of a mob than an army, and when this mob was safe over the Savannah River, the mayor of the city, with an escort, visited Sherman and surrendered the place to him. His entrance into the city was made with so little noise and beating of drums, that the citizens were surprised upon awaking in the morning to find blue coats everywhere. Many encamped in the pretty parks in and about the city. The magnanimous terms that both Grant and Sherman gave to Lee and Johnston took out much of the sting of defeat, and I am sure every Southern soldier, when Lee said "Stop," obeyed, knowing we had done our duty to our state, as demanded of us. Yet – "My country! Right or wrong, my country!"

I was in Greensboro, N. C., at this time, in charge of a large quantity of stores and some two hundred men, and was given a certain amount of silver dollars (I think \$300) to pay to the command I was attached to. It counted \$6 to five men, and as we had no change, each man was given a dollar and the sixth was drawn for. By luck I got the extra dollar. This was all the money we got for some three years' service to our states; but no murmuring was heard. We asked nothing in return for doing our duty but health and powder. And if Lincoln had not fallen a victim to fanaticism, the horrors of reconstruction would have been averted. He always declared: "Let the Southern states come back into the Union, we don't want to punish them further;" "stop your fuss and come home" – and I am sure, after our three years and a half fighting we were anxious for peace.

My state, Georgia, by election, sent to the Senate the two most noted Union men of the state, Alex R. Stephens and Hershell V. Johnston, for neither of these men advocated secession, always declaring we should contend for our rights within the Union, and we so hoped that, now slavery was abolished, the trouble was settled; but at this time the Northern Radicals were in the saddle, the great heart of Lincoln was still in death, and our poor bleeding South passed through a period, called reconstruction, that cannot now be approved even by the most radical of our land. To quote from a Northern writer (H. T. Peck, LL.D., Columbia College):

"The bitterness of the war would soon have passed away, but the horror of reconstruction sank deeper into the soul of the South than even the memory of devastated lands and of cities laid in ashes. It is painful now to dwell upon the folly and fanaticism which made that period the darkest in all American history. The wise and conciliatory plans of Lincoln were forgotten by the Northern Radicals. Legislative halls which had been honored by the presence of learned jurists and distinguished law-givers, were filled with a rabble of plantation hands, who yelled and jabbered like so many apes. . . ."

Is it to be wondered at, then, that the South, of almost pure Caucasian blood, would not submit to this indignity? Surely the real man of the North must have sympathized with us when, as by magic, thousands of white-robed, resolute men sprung from the womb of our dear old Southern mother and scattered the wretched scalawags to their own respective slums! The poor black man was not to blame. He reaped none of the reward – was only used as a tool; he was accustomed to follow his white master, and when this master was supplanted by the scoundrel, he knew no better.

Well, my story is finished. I am an old man now, in my eighty-third year, but young in every feeling. I am white and wrinkled, but my soul shall be young. Providence has been good to me; my health is good, and I have the respect and confidence of all who know me; my children are all grown and are my greatest comfort. Many

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grandchildren have come to me, all fine chaps, and at my knees frequently my two little great grandsons sit and hear me tell of that war which I passed through fifty–seven years ago.

As time passes how vividly is reflected from Memory's mirror the stirring events of those historic years. How loyal we of the South have always been to the teachings of the Constitution of the United States, and the highest decisions of our Courts, and how safe we felt under these protections, when lo! to our amazement, we heard these things classed by our Northern fanatics as "being in league with the devil." All this is now in the past; but we shall always stand in the presence of our God, proving by our pious homage to the dear old Confederacy, our loyal devotion to the living Union.

EDWARD J. THOMAS, Savannah, Georgia