

① The Abercrombie Family Scatters

Grandmother Abercrombie found little to her liking in the new era that dawned on the South after the war. And whenever things were the likings of this imperious lady and she could not change them nor to ~~the~~ ~~habits~~ ~~its~~ ~~liking~~ it was always ~~her~~ her habit to go away from that place.

So it was when, as a quite young girl on a South Carolina plantation, she found herself motherless and the most ~~the eldest and~~ responsible member of ~~her~~ ^{consisting} a large family of 9 boys and one other girl ~~on~~ ~~motherless~~. She persuaded her father to send her and her sister to school in Philadelphia.

So it was when, as a popular young lady, she visited ~~around~~ in her brother's home, ~~and~~ ~~and~~ he attempted to enforce his will on her, she departed without an ~~and~~ adieu and did not for many years see that brother again.

So it was when association with her mother-in-law grew irksome, because of that lady's meticulous house keeping, she began to be enthusiastic about Texas and finally achieved

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an exodus.

~~So it was after the war~~

Stories of these various departures were very interesting to us. Particularly we delighted in the one from the doctor brother's home. That was romance indeed.

Grandmother was a ^{young} beauty. Everyone who ever saw her ~~would~~ ^{said} that. And

she was charming and cultured. A great belle.

Conversationalist of ~~great~~ ^{great} ~~disposition~~ ^{amiable, generous disposition}.

~~like~~ A hostess of renown. A poised personality, securely confident that she could not be wrong. An indomitable

will ~~marvellously~~ ^{marvellously} ~~confronted~~ ^{confronted} with many foes.

At ~~any~~ ^{any} age she was irresistible to ~~any~~ ^{all}

men persons who met her; but at

18, apparently, she was devastating. ~~It~~ ^{It} was ~~when~~ ^{then} she went from ^{finishing} school

in Philadelphia to Montgomery Alabama

③ to visit in the home of the doctor
brother - James Marion Sims - who
was himself a strong character and
the most stable member of the Sims
family. Great grand father Sims had
broken up the South Carolina home, and
he and the ~~large family of~~ ^{other brothers} ~~boys~~ ~~with~~
~~mostly grown~~, were also in Alabama.

Young doctor Marion Sims was married,
had a ~~small young~~ ^{baby or two,}
~~and~~ was not very strong. ~~He~~ ^{even then} was engaged
in the thinking, studying, ^{and} experimenting
which were later to bring him great fame,
some fortune, a summons to the bedside
of the Empress Eugenie, and ^{honoris} ~~for~~ ^{status} in
~~Bryant Park, New York and South Carolina.~~

He had ~~no time~~ or neither ^{the} time nor patience
to deal ^{toctfully} with a gay and beautiful
young sister, ^{just} ~~just~~ ^{emerged} from school and
beset by enamored beaux.

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Her way with the beaux was to
say "yes" ^{to the most importunate} and become engaged until
the importunities of the next one made
it necessary ~~to~~ ^{to} break the tie
so as ~~to~~ ^{to} say "yes" again.

His way with her was to urge her
to marry at once the one ^{to whom} she happened
~~to~~ ^{when} be engaged. ~~at the moment.~~
It made things very difficult for her.
And both of their natures being willful
it resulted in many quarrels.

Grandfather Abercrombie was one
of the beaux. But not one of the so
importunate ones as to become engaged.
Merely deeply in love and desperately
despondent about the situation.

Upon a day young Minerva Sims
yielded to the persuasions of ~~the doctor~~
the doctor's best friend in Montgomery.
And "By my halidame" quoth the doctor, or

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something stronger, "You are not going to make a fool of Tom". He himself named the day; told Tom to be on hand with the preachers and the licence; ^{and} wrote Great grand father Sims to come on for his eldest daughter's wedding!

Minerva was fearfully ^{sure} ^{with a young gentleman to} that she was on the way to the altar, ^{whom she} ~~not~~ only meant to be pleasantly civil. ~~That~~ ^{was} disconcerting. It upset her. Particularly she didn't like having decisions taken out of her hands.

Along about that time Great grand mother Abercrombie, noting the despondency of her son John, said to him; "John, take the carriage and drive down to Montgomery and ask her again". ^{in Montgomery} ^{took the carriage} And ^{for the moment} happened on Minerva in the house alone, ~~with~~ ^{with} the servants, ~~and~~

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the children and her frightened dis-
comfort at ^{the prospect of} being married will-ye-
nill-ye to Tom.

John asked her again. The answer
was "yes, at once". The carriage was
convenient because John took back
to the plantation in it a bride, her clothes,
and a ^{scared} ~~small~~ ^{mulatto} serving maid,
named Emily.

We knew that Dr. Sims was mortally offended
and that he and his sister didn't speak for
years. But the result of thatelopement which
most interested us was the quoted remarks
of a rich widow to whom John had been
paying desultory court for no better reason
than that her lands adjoined his own.

"To think," the lady said in deep exasperation,
"That I've let that chuckle headed John
Abercrombie make a fool of ~~me~~ ME!"

⑧ All of which being true it is no wonder that the post war discomforts and humiliations ~~have~~ ^{started} ~~me~~ my Grandmother & ~~my~~ ^{my} casting speculative eyes on far horizons again.

Mexico now - that was a place - probably very interesting. Certainly new. So in almost no time at all after the war Grandfather Abercrombie ^{again} fared forth on horseback prospecting for a new home. Some of the price of good cotton was invested in what purported to be "good pineapple lands" and ~~Don Juan Grande~~ ^{government land} Grandfather rode back with a grant and a ^{not alone to} ~~new~~ name, "Don Juan Grande", credited ^{to} his handsome ^{length, and breadth, but also to} ~~his~~ rather magnificent way with gold. ~~the assumption~~ Grandmother's idea was that my father and mother would come along too. So on the next trip Grandfather was accompanied

⑨ His son-in-law. ^{my father} returned to report
that the land was well enough for pine
apples, ~~perhaps~~. Indeed he brought along
some of the crop to the great enjoyment of
the family. But in the same breath
he pronounced the situation unfit for
rearing a family and declared against
taking my mother and their eldest son
to live in Mexico. He was willing to agree
~~there~~ to a partnership which would take
him to Mexico for long intervals. But was
not willing to break up his new home in
Texas and transplant it.

My mother took the position that if he
intended to be gone for months at a time
her place was with him and she proposed
to occupy her place. Since she was firm
about this my father declined the
partnership in the Mexican venture and that
seems to have been its death blow.

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While grandfather was going to and
for and working at the proposed move
into Mexico his wife continually ~~to~~ kept
it before him that he did not know
the technique of managing free negro
labor, having all of his ~~adult life~~ ^{life} been a slave
owner. Giving this as her reason she
urged that he "turn everything over" to
Jack, the second Abercrombie son, at
this time a stripling barely 21.

The madness of this seems now so
clear ~~that~~ one wonders why every one didn't
see that while it ~~was~~ ^{may have been} true that
grandfather had never managed anything
but slave labor; it was also most certainly
true that Jack had never managed any
labor at all. Grandfather had a way with
the land that had won him the respect of his
fellow plantation owners who stoutly maintained
that the ~~C.~~ middle initial, ^{C.} of his name stood

(11) for "Cotton" rather than Comer - his mother's maiden name. But Jack had no practical farming experience at all, being reared ~~as the~~ in a planter's home was his sole qualification for the management to which his mother nominated him.

According to his wife's importunities in this was the line of least resistance to grandfather. He had always tried to give her everything she wanted. He had brought up his large family on one maxim "Do what your mother says" which ~~and~~ he had enforced ~~it~~ when and as needed. He must have been a dear.

My mother adored the ground he walked on. His memory was her most cherished one.

But "Chuckled" headed John Abercrombie" the jilted widow had called him and I suspect she may have put just a dash of truth in with her fury, basing that

Suspicion ~~based~~ on the fact that this man, in the fullness of experience, ~~and~~ facing the greatest economic crisis of his life, did as his wife urged and turned the management of his affairs over to his young son.

What followed, could have been predicted. ~~Though hardly with~~ a mortgage was slapped on the good Walker County plantation and the money used to buy mules and supplies to furnish the free negro ~~farmers~~ ⁱⁿ who were set up ~~as~~ individual farming units with no adequate supervision. The whole "live-at-home" economy of gardens, meat animals, and

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feed crops was sacrificed to a credit system based on cotton production.

It failed. The mortgage was due. The place was sold. ^{with} The balance of the ~~money~~ purchase price, after the mortgage was paid, my grand mother achieved the desired move. The Abercrombies went to live in Marlin and ^{Jack} invested the money in a Brazos river bottom cotton ^{crop} which he raised with hired labor and mules fed with bought corn.

~~In time~~ ^{either} That was not a financial success. And Jack - "poor Jack" my mother always called him - bowed down with care and over work, deeply distressed at the losses attendant upon his management, contracted Malaria and ~~died~~ died.

glad to escape from the family reproaches, my mother thought.

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During the years of successive new beginnings engineered by my grandmother the three other Abercrombie girls married. Carrie and Lina to widowers ^{much} older than they. Minnie, ^{the youngest, the beauty,} after a brief span of school teaching shared by my grandmother, to a swash buckling gentleman of more pinture years and much more able to cope with the problems of the times.

After ~~the~~ Jack's death my Grandmother decided that a West Texas sheep ranch was the way to recoup the family fortunes and so attended by Jim and Charles, the ~~the~~ last of the boys, she boldly adventure the ~~last~~ remaining bit of the once Abercrombie respectable fortune. ~~It~~ It seems incredible, but this is a true tale.

The Fisher's Lose the New Home

During the first year or so after the war ~~Sept~~ my father carried on under the impression that things would ^{sooner or later} ~~soon~~ adjust themselves comfortably ~~some~~ in the patterns I which he was accustomed. Reconstruction by the Carpet bag system did not hit Texas the day after Appomattox. Apparently it rolled westward in waves and the Texas wave was retarded somewhat. But something else did hit and hit hard. That was the difficulty of paying ^{in gold} for the land bought during the war at Confederate money prices. It was

soon evident that here was present
an open and shut case of defalcation. The
gold due to be paid on the one new
piece of land was ~~more~~ more than the
whole place, including the beautiful new
home, was ^{now} worth on the open market.

But the seller would not take back his land and release
the mortgage on the hope ^{peace}. While my father and mother struggled

to find a way out of
~~with~~ this distressing ~~situation~~ situation
my grandfather Fisher died. Because my
father's affairs were in such a state that
whatever he owned might become in-
volved in a forced sale grandfather
had changed his will and left my
father's share of the estate to my mother and her
step-daughter, Mary Fisher, and ~~my oldest sister~~ ^{my oldest sister} and such other

and such other children as my father and
mother ^{would} have by the time Mary was 21.

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when grandfather dies

The gold money on hand was easily divided between the heirs. But when it came to the ~~Be~~ lands it was more difficult. Finally disinterested appraisers worked out blocks of unequal size but of approximately equal value, and the heirs drew lots for their portions. This gave to my mother and ~~the~~ ^{her first three} children more than two thousand acres of land in San Jacinto County. My father's brother Dr. ^{in Walker County} Fisher drew the old Fisher Homestead. As his own home was already well established he did not want the Homestead for a residence and all the family were averse to selling it become a rent house. This led to the idea that my father and mother ~~to~~ solve their ^{deflection} problems ~~with~~ by letting their place go ~~in~~

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I'm not really sure that she
clearly distinguished between cause
and effect in that matter. Deep
feeling and clear thinking did not
always go hand in hand with her.