

Mrs. Thompson
please make a wider
margin for this.

This book is dedicated to my Mother's great grandchildren Patsy, Comer Catherine, R. M. III and Beverly Jean. It seems extremely probable now that they will come to maturity in an age which will be as difficult in its way as that through which my Mother lived her active life.

May the same indomitable spirit, high purpose, good principles and unselfish character, which won for her success in her ventures and respect and affection of those who knew her, live again in them and serve them as well in their generation.

Foreword

A few writers have sketched glimpses of living conditions in the old South as back drops for their stories. Moonlight, roses, the song of mocking birds, the scent of magnolias in full bloom, the laughter of youth, the crooning of happy negroes on fabulous plantations ^{have come to} constitute the traditional setting ^{for stories of the Old South} for stories of the Old South. ¹ More lately ^{but} writers ^{or two} has essayed to present ^{ing} pictures of the New South. Often these pictures have featured poverty, disease, degradation and death. The pendulum has swung and we ^{pay} in sordid detail for that earlier ~~over emphasized~~ glamour.

However, neither ~~picture~~ is more than a thumb nail sketch; complete pictures would present the same dizzying range of scenes, events and emotions common everywhere to the great adventure of living. But even so, it is obvious that between the Old South and the New a bridge has been built and crossed. ~~A vitally significant fact, but the question of who built it and led the way across is almost never raised.~~ Those who were just beginning adult life at the close of the Civil War were the builders ^{of this bridge.}

Members of the generation before helped or hindered according to their several abilities to grasp the meaning of changes wrought by the war. Helped, or hindered, ^{were} and gathered to their fathers, leaving the bridge only partially built.

The younger brothers and sisters helped. Helped and benefited, passing from the old to the new in the inconsequent way of youth.

We, their children, helped by reason of our very helplessness. They built that they might carry us over in their arms.

That is the answer in general. To me, the answer can not be general because it is specific. My parents built that bridge. They built it.

~~My parents built that bridge~~ away from the desolation which had been the land of moonlight, mocking birds and magnolias but had become a land of poverty and sorrow. Away from that to this new land where the song of the mocking bird is often drowned by the sound of the steel riveter as we develop our industrialized New South. Away from that land where the primitive luxuries of a pioneering plantation-owner class contrasted blackly against the lives of their slaves; to

this, our New South, where the lives of mill owners, lumber knigs, and merchant princes still present contrasts to the lives of those who labor for them.

To me, my Mother is the heroine of that bridge building time. Just ²⁰~~19~~ at the close of the war; newly married; quickened by shocks and sorrows, I present her to you as typical of the women of the bridge building era.

In order that you may really know her, I must also introduce her family and neighbors and friends and take you at times into their homes, and I must tell ^{you} about her children to who^m she so fervently devoted her life.

With no intention of belittling my Father, I am only sketching him in. This is really a pity because he was by way of being a regular person, himself; humorous, charming, popular, rather dashing, playing a good part in the bridge building. But his was a political part, mostly, while that of my Mother was economic, ~~And since~~ the pride and glory of the New South is it's economic progress, ~~I give her the heroine's place.~~

As you meet her, let your imagination interpret to you the life of a generation of Americans who spanned the gorge between the thought and custom of the conservative agricultural world of the eighteen fifties and the tumultuous, rushing, revolutionized, industrialized world of today.

①

From Alabama To Texas

" ' Good morning breakfast! Come at last!' the sick lady said as her cabin door burst open and loaf sugar came flying in from the dining saloon." My Mother always concluded here the story of her childhood voyage from Mobile, Alabama to Galveston, Texas. This may have been because we, her children, were so awe stricken by the time we reached that point that further detail would have been wasted on us.

All night long, she told us, a fierce storm had raged over the Gulf of Mexico. It had driven their frail barque on the sand bar in Galveston harbor and there ^{had} seemed no way to avoid a watery grave. The sick lady had been forgotten not only in the matter of nourishment but in the more important business of preparation for life saving. And yet she welcomed the appearance of ^{this} ~~even~~ sugar with such nonchalance. Amazing.

In those days, Galveston harbor was just a good natural harbor. ~~The~~ Steam dredges ^{had not} then improved its native advantages, and the wash of the tide built up a sand bar which had a bad habit of changing base during a storm so that unwary boats sometimes stuck on it before the new location was charted. Indeed the boat which brought my Mother to Texas when she was five years old landed on the bar again on its next voyage and was beaten to pieces. That ~~fact~~ used to stun me. What if my Mother had embarked on her momentous journey just one sailing date later? ~~What about me?~~

It was back in 1850 that my Mother's father, John C. Abercrombie, removed to Texas from Alabama. A preliminary visit had been made by him in company with other heads of families to decide on a suitable location and to secure land. This trip across two states was made on horseback.

We children were fully apprised of the preparations my Mother made for her removal to the wilds of Texas. And we were not unadvised that she stoutly opposed the move. Chiefly, our impression was, because none of the fruits which abounded in Alabama were to be found in Texas. No raspberries adorned the garden walks,

no wild strawberries ran riot over the hills, no apple orchards put on glad pink dresses to welcome spring in Texas or celebrated Texas harvest time with the juicy red fruit of which she was so fond.

In order to overcome this drawback she busied herself with mashing berries on paper and putting them to dry so that the seeds could be conveyed to the new home. We children often tried that trick with strawberries and dewberries, plenty of which we had, and that they came from those first seeds I never questioned then. Raspberries ~~would not grow at all~~ ^{we did not have} and that was a life long ~~grievance~~ ^{grievance} to that staunch Alabamian, my Mother, who at the age of 80 was still wondering why her father chose to exchange such a splendid civilized state for one so primitive. "No schools, no fruits and only log houses at first" was ~~the~~ ^{her} summing up which we understood perfectly credited Alabama ~~with~~ as well as charged Texas ~~with~~ ^{being without these} virtuous attributes.

Raspberries must have become a symbol to her. Never will I forget my ~~disappointment when I tasted my first one. I was dismayed to think that this, to me, seedy, tasteless thing was what she had missed and extolled all her life. Raspberries have become a symbol to me too. I try not to exalt the pleasures of memory above those of the present. Even when the current present seems to have fallen on evil days I try to adhere to this policy.~~

The next part of my Mother's trip of emigration which touched our imagination and stayed in our minds was the pause in or near Houston, then a mere village, where they made camp and tarried for several weeks because of a cholera epidemic which had broken out in the party. I think that they went from Galveston to Houston ~~on another boat which plied between the two places~~ up the twisting length of Buffalo Bayou ^{on a boat.} ~~carrying freight and passengers. On the~~ ~~the boat~~ ^{also} ~~with my Mother~~ came my Grandmother and her oldest child, a son, Leonard Burford Abercrombie, ^{aged seven,} ~~who was two years my Mother's elder.~~ ^{and my mother constituted the party} In Houston they met Grandfather and the slaves. Grandfather had done that appalling horseback journey a third time, this time escorting a wagon train of his goods and chattels.

Not many of the household goods were found worthy of space in the wagons for the long trip, but my Mother, already something of a bookworm, saw to it that her

beloved books came along. Long afterward she used to chuckle indulgently at the memory of five year old Sallie Abercrombie bringing her little ~~child's~~ books to the side of the packing cases and handing them insistently one by one to the packers until all were in.

She was not so successful however in the matter of certain pieces of furniture which to her were inextricably mingled with the idea of home. The opinion of the elders seemed to be that it would be easier by far to get beds and bureaus^u after the new home was set up than it would be to take them out overland. That too was a fair sized grievance to my Mother who ^{always} liked nice things; ~~all the days of her life~~; frequently, she referred disrespectfully to the management of her parents who departed from Alabama "leaving a rented house full of old mahogany furniture".

Perhaps the original plan was to go back for the rest. Or perhaps it was to have been freighted out later. Or perhaps in those pleasant far off days it was the custom to shed one's goods as casually as a locust does its shell. Not so with land. The family acres were sold a whole year in advance of the move. That accounted for the rented house which really worried me until I finally put the pieces of the tale together. ^{Because I had} it never seemed proper for "us" to have lived in a rented house in Alabama, we were so obviously land owners by habit.

Grandmother and the children need not have remained in camp^m Houston. Certain cousins named Wood already living near where the Abercrombies were going to build came hospitably in a carriage to bear the family away to more pleasant and sanitary quarters. But Grandmother was a famous nurse and at the bare idea of her leaving them the negroes, both sick and well, fell into a panic and plead with her to stay.

"Don't go leave us Mis ' Minerva! Don't go leave us here to die!" they cried wildly, throwing themselves down in front of her as if to impede her progress if she should start. Probably she would not have gone in any case because medical help was scarce and nurses, except those servants which she had trained, were not to be had at all. At any rate she did not go then. But when the epidemic had been weathered all went together to establish the new home.

The building of those log houses for the family and the slaves; the clearing of the needed acres; the making of a home there in the Texas wilderness could all have been done by the waving of a magic wand so far as any story of it was passed on to us by our Mother. We knew that it happened. That was all.

My next vivid impression deals with candles on a table on one side of which my Mother pored over books reading, reading, reading. Sitting on the other side of the table my Grandmother always waited ^{for} the evening return of her husband from the plantation, and as she waited she sewed. Somewhere near by Uncle Len, my Mother's oldest brother, studied. There you have the three occupations which most engrossed these three--reading, sewing, and studying. ~~And though~~ after coming to Texas ^{six} ~~ten~~ other children were ^{born} ~~added to the family~~ ^{but} the two who came ^{with her} ~~together~~ on the boat ~~seemed~~ ^{were very close} ~~always to have been a special group~~ ^{to} with their mother ^{during those early years.}

~~This reading habit of my~~ ^{constant reading} Mother's resulted in the acquirement of a considerable vocabulary before years brought discretion in the use of large and unusual words. Consequently her contemporaries later teased her by telling her children stories of her exploitation of her learning to the confusion of the less well versed. For instance, one of my Mother's sisters declares she heard my Mother grandiosely ordering her maid, Hale, to call out of the window to to Sophy, the cook, ^{like this:}

"Hale, protrude your cranium through the aperture in the wall and vociferate loudly for Sophia."

Another effect of her reading was absorption in literary romance at an age when her girl friends were ardently entering into a more personal relation to sentimental matters. That gave the young men of the neighborhood the idea that Miss Sallie Abercrombie was disposed to be intellectually snobbish. Which in turn gave rise at times to battles of wits ^{that} ~~which~~ have echoed down the years.

One Alabama cousin who rode out on horseback to visit the Texas kin and see the new country found the big cool log house, with its deep gallery across the

front shaded by immense trees, to be ^{so} much to his liking; the abundant delicious country fare, served up to the "white folks" by numerous slaves from the log kitchen in the back yard, so acceptable; and the society of the community so gay and happy that he prolonged his visit to a six months stay. Which was well enough and no strain on the hospitality of the Abercrombies until he undertook to be facetious at my Mother's expense. He had thought it quite comical to find in the wilderness a young woman of immature years whose nightly candles had to be strictly numbered lest she spend too many hours reading. Thinking to get a laugh on her before a group of young people one day, he called aloud to her as she approached, "Now Miss Sallie, don't come here quoting Shakespeare to us!"

"Sir", she replied, with dignity, "I never quote Shakespeare to those who are incapable of understanding him!" And the laugh was on the gentleman from Alabama.

He seems not to have relished it either, for the story runs that he went to Grandmother and complained "That Cousin Sallie ~~had~~ ^{me} called ~~him~~ a fool before all the young ladies and should be made to apologize." Grandmother heard the evidence in the case and justly held that the young man, who was quite grown, had tried to get a public laugh on her daughter, much younger, ^{than he} and that no apology would be forthcoming for the laugh which had been turned on him. Not so long after that the visitor rode back to Alabama.

Another story we loved was that of a proposal of marriage received by my Mother from a proud gallant, several years her senior. After laying his heart at her feet with many a florid compliment he concluded his letter in these words which we children used to roll under our tongues for very joy in them--

"Spurn me not, Miss Sallie, for I am a Plantaganet"

To which my Mother demurely replied-

" How e'er it be, it seems to me
 'Tis only noble to be good.
 Kind hearts are more than coronets
 And simple faith than Norman blood. "

These pious sentiments she followed by a gentle though definite refusal to

accept the honor of becoming his wife.

Years afterward, when I was sixteen myself, I met that gentleman - an old man with a pointed white beard - it was quite a shock to me; to him also, I judge, because he came up to me and asked if my Mother "had been Miss Sallie Abercrombie?" When I said that she had he took my face in his hand and turned it to the light, scrutinizing me long - I wonder with what sweet image in his mind of my Mother at sixteen? The comparison with his memory was to my disadvantage and he turned away murmuring, " Not nearly so ^{beautiful} pretty as your Mother." I knew he was correct, but I thought him rude to mention it and I longed to ask him impudently if he was still " a Plantaganet "? But lacked my Mother's wit and courage as well as her beauty.

School Days in Early Texas

At first the charge of no schools was true of the new Texas community. But not for long. Because the men and women who deliberately came and created this community of plantations were educated folk, well read and patrons of the arts. They signified as much by naming the new community Waverly after ^{Sir Walter Scott's} ~~the~~ Waverly novels which were "best sellers" of that day.

When the buildings for homes were completed, a house was built in a central location for a school and the heads of families contributed labor and material to the building after which they made up a fund for the payment of teachers. These were "brought out", as my Mother expressed it, from older centers of culture. And not alone teachers of the three "Rs" were engaged, but drawing teachers, music teachers, and dancing teachers were set to work to bring up the young people with cultural graces - commonly known as "accomplishments" - fitted to their station in life.

The school was so successful that Waverly soon became a noted educational center to which friends and acquaintances and relatives of the settlers sought admittance for their children. But it was never in any sense a boarding school, just a cooperative community enterprise. To make and keep it fully a community undertaking the leaders strove to interest the head of every family in it. There was a story of one man who, upon being approached said briefly, "If you ask for money I are out. If you will take corn I are in."

Now, it being an agricultural community, everyone else had corn too, but just the same corn was accepted as that man's contribution to the support of the school and it was translated into money by some of the more well to do patrons.

Friday afternoons were set apart in the school for occasions when the parents were entertained by the attainments of their own and their neighbors' progeny. Declamation, composition, ~~voice~~ and ~~piano~~ music were the chosen mediums of expression. Judging by the reminiscences of my Mother and her school mates these

Friday afternoons must have been notable events. Many a later locally famous statesman got his first taste of spellbinding as a declaimer there. And traits of character more discernable in later life often made their first public appearance at these events.

There was talk of one Sam Scott, who having mastered the violin to the extent of one simple tune, was put on the program according to custom. Addressing his teacher sitting at the piano giving him the note by which to tune his instrument, Sam called out loudly as he gave his bow a professional flourish,

"What tune shall I play, Mr. Fitze?"

Getting the implication that Sam was selecting from an extensive repertoire, Mr. Fitze emitted a snort and in his broken English inquired bitingly, "Does you play but one?"

This incident was good for a laugh from my Mother as long as she lived and she always followed the story of the effort of the bombastic Sam to stand before his public as a virtuoso with one of a bashful lad who strongly desired to dance with one of the more popular girls but lacked the courage to ask her, realizing that he was not a favorite partner himself. Instructed by the dancing teacher that he only needed to bow before any young lady to have her arise and join him in the dance he tried this device - unsuccessfully. Whereupon he lifted up his voice and bleated to the dancing master on the other side of the room,

"Mr. Bland! Mr. Bland! I bowed three times and she won't get up!"

The effect of this was devastating ^{at} confusion to the young lady and all unintentionally Robert had avenged himself on the haughty beauty.

As a child, it was quite impossible for me to realize that those other children about whom my Mother told such fascinating tales were now as grown up as she. I always felt that if I could find my way through the woods to the old school house just such fun would still be going on there and I could participate in it. I think that school left a vivid impression on all its pupils. Just today a letter came from my Mother's most intimate girlhood friend who is now 87 years of age and yet she writes of those school days as though they were yesterday. I must quote:

" One room was for the boys, with sliding doors opening in to the girls' room; and oh, how we enjoyed the Friday afternoons, when the doors were wide open, the trustees present to hear the girls read their compositions and the boys to orate.

" Your mother was the genius among composition writers, introducing to us allegory, which we thought she had invented! Your Uncle Len made the most finished speeches, using gestures - so graceful and elegant! The other boys could not hold a candle to Len.

" One boy started an oration beginning it - ' There are three seasons, spring, summer, and fall.' When we girls laughed and applauded he began to swallow and swallow, finally retiring to his seat leaving his announcement of three seasons as his sole contribution to the program.

" The third room in the building (which was the first white painted frame one in our community and commanded great respect) was the music room presided over for many years by Prof. Fitze. At the end of the ten months school term he always had a fine concert. There was a stage and on it he had, for the concert, three pianos which in some numbers on the program were all played at once.

" How we young folks did enjoy trimming the stage for the event. The boys would go into the woods and get Smilax, a lovely, graceful evergreen vine, and how mad they would be when they returned to find the young gentlemen at the school house with us girls just enjoying ourselves eating the rock candy they brought us to clear ~~our~~ our throats for the concert singing the next day!

" After the first concert all the people were invited out on the grounds to a splendid dinner on a long table. Barbecued ^{meats, salads, beer cake and} custards ^{boiled} for dessert. I have seen some of the pioneer people take a big slice of cake and with a pocket knife peel the icing all off and then eat it.

" This outdoor feast was usually managed by my grandmother, Mrs. Sarah Lewis, and her brother, Col. Henry Elmore. They stayed to have everything cleared off while the crowd went home until time for the night concert."

The other day, I ran across the program for the first of those famous concerts. It is easy while reading to get the picture my Aunt paints.

CONCERT,

To be given by the students of

Waverly Institute,

at the close of

The First Music Session

Under the Direction of Professor C. Gustave Fitze

July 4, 1856

Programme--Part 1. Half-past 3 p.m.

- 1. Song of Praise.....Full Choir
- 2. Hail Columbia (Duet).....Misses Julia Bass and Mary Baldwin
- 3. Sailor's Grave.....Miss Emily Powell
- 4. Sounds from the Valley (Brillante by Fowler).....Miss Sarah Hill
- 5. Jamie (Scotch Ballard).....Juvenile Choir
- 6. Sontag Polka.....Miss Mary Mathews
- 7. Midnight Hour.....Misses Lizzie Elmore, Ruth and Clara Scott, Hester Spiller.
- 8. Ellen Bayne (Song and chorus).....Ruth, Ella and Clara Scott, Lizzie Elmore and Choir.
- 9. The Rose Will Cease To Blow.....Clara and Ella Scott
Acc. by Pr. Fitze
- 10. Early Dawn Polka (Francis Brown).....Miss Julia Bass
- 11. On to the Charge.....Misses Sarah Hill and Mary Mathews
- 12. Fashion Polka.....Miss Mary Baldwin
- 13. Thou Hast Learnt (Westmore).....Miss Mary Mathews
- 14. Nelly Bly (Song Chorus).....Emily Powell, Ruth, Ella and Clara Scott, Lizzie Elmore, Sallie Abercrombie, Hester Spiller

- 15. Had I Never Known Thee.....Sarah Hill
- 16. Evening Star Waltz.....Julia Bass
- 17. There's A Sweet Wild Rose (Duet).....Emily Powell, Julia Bass
Acc. by Pr. Fitze
- 18. Blue Juniata.....Lizzie Elmore, Ella, Ruth, and Clara Scott
- 19. Happy Land.....Julia Bass, Mary Mathews,
Ella Scott, Emily Powell.

Part 11
Early Candlelight

- 1. Natalie (Quartette for eight hands and one violin by Pr. Fitze)
Perf. by Misses Mathews, Hill, Bass, Powell, Pr. Fitze.
- 2. I Know I Love Thee.....Miss Clara Scott
- 3. Maggie By My Side.....Misses Mary Baldwin, Sarah Hill and
Chorus
- 4. I remember.....Full Chorus
- 5. Midnight Schottische (Fr. Brown).....Miss Mary Matthews
- 6. Old Arm Chair (Russell).....Miss Julia Bass
- 7. Saratoga.....Miss Sarah Hill
- 8. Sweet were my dreams.....Miss Mary Baldwin
- 9. March.....Miss Emily Powell
- 10. Some Folks.....Miss Ella Scott and Juvenile choir.
- 11. I'll Hnag My Harp.....Miss Ruth and Ella Scott
- 12. Old Folks.....Misses Lizzie Elmore, Ruth, Ella And Clara Scott
Acc; by Jos. Elmore and Sam Scott.
- 13. Texas Star Schottishce.....Miss Emily Powell
- 14. Hour of Singing.....Full Choir
- 15. Ben Bolt.....Misses Julia Bass and Emily Powell
- 16. Bell Brandon.....Misses Sarah Hill, Emily Powell,
Marry Mathews and Ella Scott.
- Massa's in the Cold gro nd.....Misses Clara, Ruth and Ella Scott
and Lizzie Elmore

- 18. Poor Folks Polka.....Miss Julia Bass
- 19. Old Log Hut.....Misses Mary Mathews, and Sarah Hill
- 20. Willie, My Brave.....Misses Mary Baldwin and Emily Howard
and Chorus

Part 111

- 1. Waverly (Polka di Concert for five violins and eight hands on pianos, by Pr. Fitze) Perf. by Misses Mathews, Hill, Baldwin, and Powell; Messrs. W. B. Scott, R. Lewis, Sam Scott, Joe Elmore and Pr. Fitze.
- 2. Try Again.....Solo and Full Choir
- 3. Theme and Variations.....Miss Julia Bass
- 4. La Gaité.....Miss Sarah Hill
- 5. Firefly Polka (Fowler).....Miss Mary Mathews
- 6. Rockaway (Russell).....Misses M. Baldwin, M. Mathews, E. Scott, and J. Bass.
- 7. Plume Polka.....Miss Mary Baldwin
- 8. He Never Said.....Miss Emily Powell
- 9. Duet, etc. (by Miss Sarah Hill).....Misses Mary Mathews, and Sarah Hill
- 10. Air Tyrolin.....Miss Ella Scott
- 11. Kentucky Home.....Misses Ruth, Ella and Clara Scott, Lizzie Elmore
- 12. Old Dog Tray.....Miss Mary Mathews and Juvenile Choir
- 13. Wild Flowers.....Miss Mary Mathews
- 14. Do They Miss Me At Home.....Miss Sarah Hill
- 15. Yes, we miss thee.....Miss Emily Powell
- 16. Julian Polka.....Miss Julia Bass
- 17. Joys the we've tasted.....Miss M. Baldwin
- 18. Spring Song.....Juvenile choir
- 19. White Cockade.....Miss Lizzie Elmore
- 20. I'd offer thee this hand.....Miss Mary Mathews
- 21. Farewell Song.....Evening Song.....Full Choir

My Mother, 11 years old at the time, appears on ~~no. 14~~ "Nelly Bly", with a chorus of girls. That must have been a trial to her because she was afraid of her voice when raised in song. Her childish escape from this fear was to whisper the words so that her lips moved but no sound escaped. When Prof. Fritze discovered this device of hers he made her sing solos. This was a great embarrassment to her.

Looking back I find that I have such a perfect picture of my Mother during her school years that it is hard to think I never actually met that slim young ~~panc~~taletted figure on its way to the halls of learning; nor stroked that glossy black hair and admired the golden sheen which overlay its dark beauty as iris overlays the plumage of a dove. Even to the clear ivory white of her complexion, which flushed rosily when she recited or otherwise made a public appearance, I know how my Mother looked when she was a school girl in the 1850's.

And I know who the teachers were and how they looked and some of the things they said and did. First of all there was Prof. James, a splendid, quiet gentleman, so competent that no ridiculous stories at all came down the years about him. Next was Prof. Devine, an emotional Irishman who wore his hair in long curls and was given to complimenting the girl pupils. My Mother he called "Miss Salie", no girl of that era being addressed by her first name by any gentleman except her very own father. He was, unfortunately, heard to say something nice about my Mother's hands. The boys, led by Uncle Len, took it up and made my Mother very miserable with their teasing. "What beuuuutiful hands you have, Miss Salie!" they would shout giving the "a" in her name the same long sound that Prof. Devine gave it. "Especially this finger!". And this finger! " They would cry, holding up the two fingers upon which she bore small scars which they knew she thought marred her hands terribly.

But the great man of the school was Prof. Hook. His wife taught the girls, but I am of the impression that though the sexes were segregated in the school there were certain ambitious young women who expected to "go off to school" in New York or Philadelphia when they attained such years of discretion as 15 and 16

and these had Latin and higher mathematics under Prof. Hook. Not with the boys. Oh, no. Certainly not. But separately with all due modesty. And even so not entirely with the approval of the more conservative boys. Uncle Len teased his sister Sallie, who was among this group of advanced students, by frequently stating that he wanted his wife to have no more learning than would enable her to count the money he should give her!

It was my Mother's proud boast that she kept up with her elder brother in all his studies. And it was distinctly understood in the family that when Uncle Len should be ready for university work he would be sent east to the University of Virginia, and at the same time, under the same escort my Mother was to go east for further education also. Her ~~own~~ Mother had been "finished" at a school for young ladies in Philadelphia, but my Mother was to be sent to New York there to be under the care of her mother's brother, Dr. Marion Sims, who was a famous physician; his stature stands in little Bryant Park in New York City now in recognition of his services to the world.

Before the school at Waverly was established my Mother and her elder brother "went off to school". That was the way she invariably expressed it though they only went to the county seat town 15 miles away. But the 15 miles to Huntsville through the deep pine woods on very poor roads was a real journey in those days. On horseback or in a carriage it was made, since there were no railroads in Texas when my Mother was ten and her brother twelve.

Leonard went to Austin College and boarded with one of the teachers who lived near it. My Mother was entered in the Andrews Female Academy at the other end of town and boarded in the home of a Methodist preacher. Brother and sister saw each other seldom and little Sallie Abercrombie must have been quite lonely and home sick because she wrote her mother "Alas! The happiest days of my life are *now* behind me!"

But as long as Leonard stayed she would not give up and go home, so determined was she to keep up with him and be ready to go east when he did. They really must have been an unusual small boy and girl. I do not at the moment recall any other children of ten and twelve so intent on their ~~higher~~ education. It ~~may~~ be because

other parents do not talk and plan with their children about such matters at that early age.

Perhaps it is just as well that they do not. When my Uncle Len had reached the age of 17 he had absorbed all that the local school could give him and was ready for the University. And that was where my Mother encountered the first great disappointment of her life. Uncle Len departed for the University of Virginia leaving her behind. Not that she was not equally well prepared to go. She was as ready as he, and that was saying quite a bit for a girl of 15, because my uncle stood his entrance examination with such credit that it was deemed proper to write a letter complimenting his family on his preparation and the fact that he was equipped to go into classes with much older young gentlemen. And she, a girl nearly two full years younger, had kept abreast of all his work in the home school.

It was not just the disappointment that hurt so. It was the feeling that her parents had not kept faith with her. That hurt. Really it never did stop hurting. You could ^{see} ~~see~~ that whenever she talked about it. But woe to us children if we took her side and condemned her parents. That she would not stand. The least punishment we rated was a severe rebuke followed by a dissertation on what a wonderful man her father was and how charming her mother.

All of which was true. But ^{just} ~~just~~ the same she felt deeply the failure to carry out the long accepted plan. My own guess is that their mistake was ~~that of~~ not explaining the situation. Uncle Len went to Virginia in the autumn of 1859. It was a period of great uncertainty, with war between the states hovering darkly over the country and coloring all the thinking and planning of the time. I fancy ^{her} ~~that my~~ ^{grand} ~~Grandfather~~ ^{parents} and ~~Grandmother~~ and the doctor brother in New York agreed that it was not best for my Mother to go north that year and thought the postponement a matter of no great importance to a girl of 15. ~~But~~ ^Better the unexplained disappointment than ~~actually~~ to put into words their fear of impending strife, they ^{probably} thought.

Be that as it may the fact remains that Uncle Len went to Virginia and word came back of his brilliant examinations while my Mother, if any thing more

brilliant than he, was left behind for the anti-climax of another year at the local school. It is true that she was only 15. But 15 then was quite grown up. One of my Father's brothers married his wife when she was only 14. Her boast was that she "took off bib-aprons to put on her wedding dress!" And two of my aunts who were great belles began their flirtatious careers before they were 12. One of them ~~boasted~~ ^{Confessed} ~~in~~ later ⁱⁿ life that she had received her first proposal when she was 11.

Stories of my Mother's last year at school indicate that it was a very happy time in spite of the grievous disappointment of not going east with her brother; and in spite of missing him greatly. That year she boarded in the home of her most intimate friend, which was within walking distance of the school. The reason given for this was to make it easier for the growing girl to attend school, but it might also have been that the arrangement was made because the family thought it would give her companionship to offset her loss and divert her mind. ~~At any~~ ^{whatever} ~~rate~~ ^{the reason,} that year she was in constant company with a bevy of girls her own age who were very gay.

Visions of their loveliness come easily to my mind. Many a time, as a child, have I whirled furiously round and round and then squatted suddenly to imprison air under my short full skirts and so help my imagination as to how they looked in their hoop skirts. Hoops were aided and abetted in those days by white cotton petticoats tucked, embroidered and ruffled to measure at least five yards around the bottom. They stood out bravely when starched and ironed by the good negro washer women.

But even slave laundresses complained bitterly of the burden put upon them by these belles of 1860 who each wore, daily fresh, six such triumphs of the seamstress' art. They must have looked like truant morning glories, with their slender waists and bouyant ballooning skirts of gay colors and fanciful trimm-
ing, floating down the road to school in the dewy freshness of a Texas spring day.

That dewy freshness was the cause, however, of the laundresses' woe. No

modest maiden would have considered it proper to lift her skirt for anything whatsoever, hence all six of each day's set of petticoats was ready for the tub by night. Cleanliness was sacrificed without a qualm to modesty in 1860.

Having so clear a mental picture of how these girls looked, I can easily imagine how the distinguished gentleman of the old school felt when, in the nineteen twenties, he first took cognizance of the passing of the petticoat. It happened at a dance attended by him in honor of the debut of a favorite granddaughter. His own shocked statement was -- "By gad sir! There were only two petticoats in that room and my wife had them both on! "

Beautiful, but not convenient, the girls knew their attire to be. Consequently discreet activity was, of necessity, the order of their lives. But there was one story of activity not so discreet. The story of a wild flower expedition broken up by the appearance of a bull in the meadow. The scattering and fleeing of the girls must have looked to the amazed bull like the breaking up and blowing about of light, soft, roseate clouds at sunset. One unfortunate cloud hung ^{over} rail fence and almost fainted before a companion came to the rescue and disengaged her hoop skirt.

Gay and delightful as everything was, heartburning was not lacking from the scene. However it was suffered by the boys who were of the same generation as the girls but not accepted by society as adults until they had reached their majority. The beaux with whom the girls danced and flirted; before whose ardent advances and extravagant compliments they blushed; and about whose dashing appearance and behavior they whispered confidences to each other, were all much older. The reference, in my aunt's letter, to the boys who hunted evergreens and the young gentlemen who brought rock candy indicates this situation. It also indicates that the girls were aware of the heart burning and that it enhanced for them, human nature being what it is, their joy in the impressive attentions of the older men.

Shocks too, being a part of man's lot on earth, had their place in my Mother's school days, halcyon though they were. The one which left it's vigorous mark most deeply on me was, of all things in the life of a delicate young girl

living in the most protected environment women have ever experienced -- a murder.

On the way to school the community doctor, a splendid well loved character, had his office. Next to it a shoemaker plied his trade, a rather important one in a machineless community. This man was a drinker and sometimes in his cups an evil talker. Passing the shoemaker's shop one morning on their way to school a group of girls were annoyed by his calling out personal remarks. "That's my girl!. That one is a beauty!"

Offended they went into the doctor's office and complained. Scarcely had they arrived at school before another girl came speeding with wide eyes set in stark white face crying out,

"O! Girls! Girls! The shoemaker has murdered Dr. Spiller! He stabbed him with a long sharp knife! I saw him lying there dead!! "

They guessed that the doctor had acted on their complaint and the impudent, drunken shoemaker had been enraged by the rebuke. They felt responsible and were very much upset. So shocking it was to them that even as old ladies they could still summon the vision of their white faced, hysterical schoolmate who brought the news. And they could make us see her ^{too,} as plainly as they did themselves. But they made amends ^{for our disturbed emotions} by declaring that this murder was the only crime ever committed in Waverly.

Another shock, not so tragic but still highly dramatic and exciting, was what we called the "panther story". It positively curdled our blood but we never tired of hearing it. Lately, in order to get it set down just right, I asked my aunt who wrote of the Friday afternoons and the school concerts to write this story for me. Here it is as she remembers it after so many years.

" Colonel Hill, a wealthy planter with a large family, had several plantations in different parts of the county, each directed by a paid overseer. An overseer named Jackson died leaving a wife and four small children. So to give the children the advantages of the school, Colonel Hill built a cottage nearby and moved the family into it. The next winter on a very cold night Mrs. Jackson heard her dog barking, seemingly at bay at the door. She opened the door to call to him and

in there sprang a vicious panther, knocking her down as he came. The oldest boy ran to the open fireplace and seized a stick of burning wood which he thrust in the panther's face, forcing him back from off his mother's body. Frightened by the fire the panther ran under a bed.

" Mrs. Jackson scatched her husband's hunting horn off it's hook, and frantically marshalled her four children out of the house shutting the panther inside. While the children loudly cried for help she blew upon the horn until Colonel Hill's family heard the distressing commotion. The men of the family responded at once, but returned for guns when the situation was explained to them. The family carriage was brought to fetch Mrs. Jackson and the children back at once out of the bitter cold. The driver stopped in front of the cottage and as the door was opened wide the wild animal leaped out knocking the negro from his seat to the ground and badly scaring the horses. After he was killed the panther measured nine feet from head to tail tip."

The happy ending to the story was that Colonel Hill moved the Jackson cottage inside his own yard so that there should be no more night frights for the widow and her children.

During that last school year my ~~Father~~, Horatio White Fisher, on ^{the} the young gentlemen guilty of monopolizing the attention of the charming sub-debs to the exclusion of the boys who were their contemporaries, must have made up his mind that Miss Sallie Comer Abercrombie was the lady of his choice. Evidence is found in old letters and family anecdotes that he began then seriously ^{to} "address" her -- a matter for much ~~delicate~~ excitement on the part of the girls. Also, with home making in mind, he began to build a house. This house was quite an affair. Not for him the logs of the first houses. But hewn timbers and sawn planks; a deep veranda all the way around the four-squareness of it; elegant plaster rosettes in the center of 14 foot high ceilings from which were to depend even more elegant ^{crystal} chandeliers.

Now it must be told that while my ~~Mother~~ was a few months over 17 years old when she married my ~~Father~~ on September 14, 1862, he was 35. Twice her age. And in addition to that a widower with a little daughter 11 years old. But this situation seems to have struck me with more surprise than it created as a current event. Indeed practically all the girls who were my Mother's intimates in school married those young gentlemen whose rock candy and attentions pleased them so mightily. My Mother's most intimate friend, ^{the lovely} ~~Miss~~ Ella Scott, was being courted by my Father's younger brother, Lorenzo C. Fisher, at the same time my Father was at his wooing. This finally resulted in another wedding but not until November 1865, after the war was ended, the course of true love having run none too smoothly for them, ~~because of family opposition~~.

My ~~Mother's~~ marriage met with no ~~such~~ opposition, my ~~Father~~ being considered a very desirable "catch" by the whole countryside. Owner of suitable lands was he, with a taste for fancy stepping horses, good service, and handsome garments. Then too, there was that particularly nice house about which there was talk aplenty.

With ~~natural~~ youthful embarrassment over the situation coupled with the formalities of the age my Mother seems not to have warmed too quickly under the sun of love. She used to tell us that she was very fond of ^{the wife of} my Father's older brother ~~s~~.

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~~wife~~, Dr. John Fletcher Fisher -- she who was only 14 when married. The Fletcher Fisher plantation was the nearest neighboring one to the Abercrombie home and the older children were not much younger than my Mother, so it was her custom to visit often there. But when my Father began making it convenient to see his brother more frequently than had been his usual habit, my Mother told us that she discontinued her visits for fear it be thought not delicate for her to meet him so.

Into this atmosphere of this romance, as graceful and formal as a minuet, burst the harsh clang and clatter of the disagreement between Messrs. A. Lincoln and J. Davis et al. First as the talk of the men ^{while} they visited ^{ing} on porches or ~~stopped in the road to exchange news and views sitting in their buggies or on their~~ ^{stopped in the road} horses. "Politics" was the vague term applied by the women to all this talk which obtruded itself so disagreeably into the real business of living.

Dim figures of notable characters lived in my Mother's recollections of that time. Sam Houston, in his effort to hold his beloved Texas in the Union, visited in the Abercrombie home ^{occasionally} ~~from time to time~~, but the things she remembered about him were his appearance, the famous vest, and the saddle which she thought had belonged to Santa Anna because it was of beautiful leather, adorned with silver ornamentation and was always brought into the house at night for safe keeping.

In her later years she blamed the "hot headed secessionists" who flouted General Houston's wisdom, but I do not know if she felt so at the time. It may have been the light of sad events shed backward which gave her that point of view.

The first sure knowledge that her world had fallen in ruins about her probably came with the unheralded arrival of her brother to break it to his family that he was leaving the University of Virginia to join the army of Virginia.

That this beloved, studious brother ^{is} full enjoyment of the educational opportunities which both he and she esteemed so highly was deliberately abandoning books for battles proved the seriousness of the business to her. It was incredible. It was unreasonable. It was unbearable. But it was a fact and as such had to be lived with. And living with it was hard, hard, hard. As a child I

thought it was still as hard for her as it was the day he came home. Such an effect her constancy to grief had on me that I was naively amazed when my own youthful sorrows were dimmed by the passing of days. I was sure there was something wrong with my emotional equipment, but I was relieved for my state when I read of a psychologist who had determined that the normal span of grief was six months. After that if mention brought tears to the eyes it was to be considered abnormal and treated accordingly.

This comforted me about myself but left me worried about my Mother until I remembered that there were no tears in her eyes -- ever. It is a thing to remember about her that crying was not among her habits. She was full of laughter. She could flash to honest wrath upon provocation. But if she cried at all it was not in public. And how she scorned a person who used the weapon of tears to soften opposition!

Texas seceded from the Union in the spring of 1861. My Father, who had been very active in the matter, at once engaged in raising a company of cavalry which his father and my Mother's father fully equipped with horses, uniforms and arms. The company was named the Abercrombie Lightguards by it's captain in compliment to his lady, although a polite fiction was maintained that the honor was intended for her father. Colonel Abercrombie teased his daughter by saying that only to save her blushes had he shared the expense of equipping the company so that he could publicly accept the honor of the name.

My Mother took neither the compliment nor the teasing in good part. The whole war business was repugnant to her. It's pageantry left her cold. Though in the end she was a good daughter to the warring South, sewing and knitting for the soldiers day and night; dancing with and cheering up those on home furloughs ~~of wounded~~; making over her old clothes; dying home spun cloth with wild roots, bushes and berries; weaving her hats from wild palmetto fronds; cooling her brow and smiling above a fan made of ~~the~~ tail feathers from wild turkeys; wearing gloves made from home dressed kid skins. But with her beloved brother in the active army of Northern Virginia and her most favored suitor in the campaigns west of the Mississippi, she had at all times too much at stake to take any bit of it lightly.

Oh, but they were good sports, those delicately nurtured women whose known world vanished as completely in those years between 1861 and 1865 as though it had been an irridescent bubble which had pricked itself upon the swords and bayonets ~~which~~ their men folk had unsheathed. High hearted they were, doing their part, where ever that part lay. And my Mother was as proud as the rest to serve. But the whole thing was fantastic and uneconomic, while my Mother was a realist even as early as that, and she hated it.

Still the pictures of those times she created for us had little of sadness nor anything of useless repining in them. Moonlight and mocking birds were definitely out, yet candle light still gleamed on dark mahogany where generous country fare was spread with no diminution. It gleamed, too, on the rosewood of pianos, more used now than ever before as release from anxiety was sought in music.

Colonel Abercrombie's home had in it four daughters, who, with his wife - a lady noted for beauty, charm, certain talents and great executive ability, constituted it's bulwark against gloom. Each of the girls was so much of a personality that they had been allotted a role in life and a color to wear, probably unintentionally but so perceptibly that years afterward a young orphaned cousin whom the Abercrombies had reared said;

"Cousin Sallie was brilliant; Carrie was musical; Minnie was beautiful; and poor Lina was good."

It ^{is} ~~was~~ the musical Carrie who ^{comes} ~~came~~ oftenest into the picture of those war days. Returning soldiers, whether old friends visiting or wayfarers spending the night enroute to their own homes, kept her nimble fingers flying up and down the ivory keys evoking "Lily Dale", "Listen to the Mocking Bird", "Dixie", and "The Bonnie Blue Flag".

There was even some rivalry as to the naming of the melody to be played and one of the jokes with which Colonel Abercrombie, an inveterate tease, plagued his daughter Carrie had to do with two soldiers who, ^{overtaken} ~~caught~~ by ^{night} ~~dark~~ near the Abercrombie home, ^{availed themselves} ~~took advantage~~ of the hospitable custom of a country of no taverns, to have supper and spend the night under the Abercrombie roof. Supper over, the family and guests repaired to the parlor where candles, protected from the summer

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breeze by great cylindrical glass ^{hurricane} shades, shed soft light on music spread on the rack of the open piano.

Miss Carrie was persuaded and duly escorted to the stool; a necessary treaty was negotiated between modesty, her hoop skirt and the pedals of the piano; and one of the guests was swift to name his favorite piece. At it's conclusion the other guest, sitting stiffly on the upholstered walnut chair which should have induced in him a position of greater ease, spoke at once with stern formality,

"You have played for Mr. Taylor. Now play for Mr. Curling", meaning himself and naming his choice. The pianist obliged, but ^{never afterwards} was ~~not~~ allowed to forget that she might play the piano, but she must not play favorites.

My Father's popularity served to rally to his call a great company of men, few if any of them of the plantation owning class. Years afterward one of his own men said that no other person could have carried that group into the war, but that they would have followed "the Cap'n" through an even hotter place - which he named. The carpenters engaged in building the momentous house went into the Abercrombie Lightguards as one man, and the Captain perforce abandoned that enterprise until after the war was ended.

My Mother was honest with us in admitting that she was scornful of the personel of Captain Fisher's company. I hate to write that down against her. But I hope that the honesty which made her acknowledge her ~~sc~~obbishness, together with her youth at the time, may win forgiveness for her. She was pretty sharp with him about it. Asked deferentially by her lover for suggestions in regard to a proper uniform for the Lightguards, since he, though willing to waive blue blood, had no idea of leading a company not sartorially correct, she bitterly replied that probably a neat arrangement of penitentiary stripes would be suitable. A remark intended not so much as an aspersion on the characters of his men as a withering of him for his audacity in involving her in the matter.

Not all the young ladies were so difficult. Certain ones of them gathered together and concocted a flag which was presented to the Abercrombie Lightguards at a public celebration held in their honor. Presented in a speech a-bloom with all the flowers of rhetoric read by one of the donors. But not received by the captain

in person. Discretion prompted him to appoint his first lieutenant to do the honors for the company. Bravery on the field of battle he felt fully capable of exhibiting, but I am guessing that the doughty captain lacked the courage to risk getting the silken cords of that flag enmeshed in the already tangled skein of his love affair. The manuscript of the speech, however, the orator of the day pressed into his hand and fitly so since it was rich in allusion to his gallant bravery, dashing chivalry and protective manliness. It had its own place in our family archives from which it was withdrawn only by my Mother and then only when she was in an impish, teasing humor.

Arms, uniforms, horses and the flag all in hand the Abercrombie Lightguards were off to the wars. As plain Company G, 3rd Regiment of Sibley's Brigade, they took part in that strange western campaign of the Confederacy, going as far toward the setting sun as Arizona. From that terrain the Captain wrote his love of cold so penetrating as to cause suffering in the troop. The menace of Indians was so great that fire was not kindled except in a limited way to cook with now and then. He, himself, had been so desperately cold from exposure that upon one occasion he had been forced to put his camp chair above a few coals, surrounding them and himself, sitting in the chair, with his great coat until his body's warmth had been restored.

Now that was an entrancing idea which we children longed to try for ourselves, but dire threats of punishment and gruesome tales of people burning to death prevented us from determining how practical this heating system was.

Indian fighting in the West resulted in several arrows passing through his uniform but only scratching his body, while one bullet went through the Captain's hat. Visible signs of perils encountered were these holes, causing the tender flag makers much anxious fluttering. But they were lightly treated, in the spirit of the times, by his brothers who rudely declared that he probably hung his garments upon a tree and shot them himself!

To my Mother the circumstances were all related in letters. Those wonderful letters! Both of our parents were distinguished correspondents in a

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day when letter writing was a polished art, and letters rather than newspapers were the main source of news. Sealing wax, quills for pens, ink in bottles designed to be carried safely, and pink note paper may not have been standard army equipment even in those days. But Captain Fisher deemed them so for himself and felt badly when there was any scarcity of these supplies, as indicated in a letter to his sister-in-law neighbor to Miss Sallie Abercrombie. This letter was preserved by her, for which all praises. Here it is:

San Antonio, Dec. 17, 1861

Dear Sister Bettie

I this morning, according to promise made you before I parted with you, started my picture by mail addressed to Dr. John F. Fisher. I hope it will reach you in due course of time, and I have no doubt it will be appreciated by yourself and husband.

If I had known that we would have been detained at this place as long as this I certainly should have visited you all again. Since I left home I have felt very melancholy at times, owing to the contents of a very short note I received through your aid, notwithstanding it contained all I asked and I assure ^{you} all that ^I could have desired at that time.

Tomorrow we leave this place for Arizona "the far, far West" and when I think of it my eyes turn involuntarily to the east and sigh after sigh escapes for those I leave behind.

You may, indeed I would be glad, if it ever should be convenient, let Miss Sallie see the likeness of your brother H. and I would not object if you were to ask her if she would not like to have it. If she says yes, let me know and I will with a great deal of pleasure send one to her. I hope though that she would much prefer the original, but in the absence of that she might possibly accept the likeness. Please let me know what she says on beholding the face of one who would be devoted.

Tell the Doctor I am early expecting a letter from him giving me all the news of the neighborhood and what he may have heard from Brother Lorenzo, as I have been informed that he has written to Mrs. A. (you may guess how I got that information) and I have no doubt that it was quite an interesting letter.

Let me know how Mr. Thompson succeeds in his matrimonial trip to Ala. *abama.*

Sister Bettie, you must excuse this coarse paper as it is the only kind I have except a few sheets of pink note paper which I must keep for a certain purpose. And when you write direct your letter to San Antonio and be sure to give me all the news.

Give love to all the family, and kiss the children for me. Remember me kindly to Mrs. Abercrombie.

With love, your Brother _____

H. W. Fisher,
Company G, 3rd Regiment,
Sibley's Brigade,
San Antonio, Texas

— Tell Miss Sallie I desire to be kindly remembered.

Fortunately for our youthful joy both parents cherished each letter received from the other. So, as treasure trove for us, the old secretary held two fat packages of faded blue and pink envelopes adorned ^{by} seals of many hues, filled slenderly with fine long sheets of paper covered with the elegant script of the day, and tied up, the one with narrow black velvet ribbon made fragile by the years; the other with still strong pink linen tape, the like of which some historians maintain did more damage to the Confederate cause than all Grant's stubborn fighting.

In turn, as our years permitted, we sat absorbed before this noble piece of furniture. Bookcase above it was, housing behind glass doors The State Papers of Washington, Fox' Book of Martyrs, Pilgrim's Progress, Hannah Moore's Prose and Poems, William Gilmore Sims' Poems ~~and~~ of the Confederacy together with the works

of Fielding, Smollet, Victo Hugo and other lively tale tellers. Bookcase below it was too, holding, behind paneled doors, school books of many generations; fat *little* volumes of Latin and Greek and awe inspiring larger ones of higher mathematics all of which defied and defeated the hungry searching "for something to read" which we kept up endlessly. In between the upper and lower bookcases there was a cross-ways panel which opined downward at the touch of a spring and enclosed an enticing array of drawers and ~~pigeon~~^{key} holes made of polished light colored wood. The panel itself, lined on the inside with felt, became a writing desk supported by stout steal sliding arms.

Here in a drawer was Confederate money, more than a little of it. Here were the lists of the families' slaves, kept carefully because everybody believed that sooner or later the government would pay for them. Here was the ink bottle home from the wars. And here the dear letters, cherished through such perils and sorrows, resting at last in peace together while the sun of a new day slowly and painfully mounted the Southern sky.

To each of my parents' six children who survived infancy those letters were sources of infinite delight. They enrolled before us with truth and grace and delicacy the history of our land garnished with romance and adventure. They restored to our mazed eyes the youth of those who had seemed to us to have been born aged. And gracelessly we turned upon them and teased them for their lovelorn state so obvious between every line. Obvious in spite of the formalities so well observed - my Father's invariable salutation, until they were married being, "Miss Sallie" while hers was "Captain Fisher".

Once he sent her a tiny posy gathered by him on a western mountainside, say-
ind - "As a token of my esteem I send you this small sprig of cedar and this handsome blue flower, hoping that it will remind you of him who would be always with you."

Even to the last those faded flowers still lay in the discolored fold of the letter that brought them; secretly deeply respected by all of us for being a token of that which we perceived to have been an important factor in the establishment of our home. But in spite of that our native naughtiness sometimes prompted us

at awkward moments to quote the stilted phrases of my Father's wooing - never without dyeing my Mother's cheeks a rosy color. (29)

O! Those wonderful letters! When they were lost in the burning of the old home place my feeling was that something very valuable had gone out of our lives. Paying a call of respectful condolence to my Mother after the fire, "Uncle" George Wood, the old negro who had served my Father as "body servant" before and during the war said sympathetically,

"I was sho' sorry about the fire, Miss Sallie. It aint just the house you lost, 'cause I know you had so many old family relatives that can't never be replaced."

Well, he meant relics, of course, but for the feeling I had for those letters his word was better than he knew.

During the last months of 1861 and the first seven of 1862 people on both sides of Mason's and Dixon's line were learning to their sorrow that war, though an easy beast to unleash in the heat of anger and the irritation of disagreement, once loosed became a hard taskmaster requiring continual sacrifice; constantly encroaching on the amenities of life; gradually taking over the whole scene; absorbing all of everybody's attention; demanding all resources; stealing away all joy; undermining all security; making of life itself a heavy thing where light and lovely thoughts were maintained with increasing difficulty.

The Abercrombie home shared the common lot. Their daily lives became set to martial thinking. Their hearts came to know with unmentioned anxiety that even if they held in their hands a newly arrived letter from Leonard in the Army of Northern Virginia, yet he, himself, even that moment, might be lying cold on some trampled battlefield. The promise of his beautiful young manhood wiped out by an insensate shard of iron or pellet of lead.

It was hard to live with such an idea. Daily it grew harder. And the longing for word from the soldier was never satisfied by the reception of the letters themselves, because of the time that elapsed between their despatch and delivery. Never at any time did this feeling of apprehension lift after the grim reality of

casualty lists was comprehended. And all effort to comfort bereaved friends was colored by personal apprehension.

The blow, so desperately anticipated, fell indeed when news of the second battle of Bull Run came filtering through. Fell heavily and with all the horror and shock the worst nightmare of imagination could have given it. Leonard Burford Abercrombie was dead on the field of battle. Dead under the August sun in the Virginia hills. Dead in his nineteenth year, all the splendid future so blithely planned by him and his sister now lost to him and blackened with sorrow for her. Dead of a wound from which he suffered all night on the open battlefield and a bullet which ended his agony as he tried to crawl to safety in the battle haze.

O! Poor young Sallie Abercrombie, so unused to sorrow! So overwhelmed by it. Never to be entirely free of it again. Poor father and mother and younger brothers and sisters to whom this brilliant lad had been so dear. The pity of it. The waste. This was war. This from the first had been masked behind the waving flags and playing bands. How shameful and humiliating that man in unmastered passion should destroy the ^{brightest} ~~highest~~ flowers of ^{the} ~~his own~~ civilization which he had striven so valiantly to create.

A Wedding In Waverly

Weddings in wartimes are not unusual. Nor is it unusual that sadness mingles with joy at such events. But my Mother's wedding which took place within a month of her brother's death, always seemed to me to have lacked some of the redeeming features common to the celebration of most war weddings. It was not good for a girl so young to go all steeped in new made hopeless grief to take her marriage vows. It made for sadness in memories which should have been set to a happier strain.

My Mother seemed to realize this at the time and was all for postponing her marriage. But the date had been set far in advance in order that the soldier bridegroom might be sure of a furlough and Grandmother saw that it would be hard to make new arrangements with mails and addressees so uncertain. She it was who settled the matter out of hand by dismissing all idea of postponement. The pity is that in doing this she gave voice to her own deep despondency in a way to leave a lasting scar on her daughter.

"No," she said, "Don't postpone the wedding, Sallie. It wouldn't be right to Captain Fisher. He may not be able to get another furlough. And it doesn't really matter when you marry, now that Len is dead. If he had lived, I would have wanted you to wait until he could come home for it, but now that he is dead nothing matters about it."

All very well for a mother in her first grief over the loss of her eldest and most loved child. But pretty hard on a young girl whose wedding is after all an event of some importance to herself at least; even in spite of great sorrow. It put her at a disadvantage and belittled her at a time when she needed family support.

Because of the bereavement all plans of a gala nature were abandoned. No bevy of fair maidens attended slim young Sallie Abercrombie to the altar. No brother officers bore the gallant captain company. In the language of the day, they had no "waiters" ^{to stand} who stood up with them. The house, always garlanded with vines and decked with flowers for social events ^{and} was the custom of the day, was not decorated for this night. Very few persons were gathered in the parlor to witness the ceremony. There was no "in-fair"; but the customary delicacies for such an

event were not lacking--chicken salad, beaten biscuit, custard, and white cake.

Dr. Fletcher Fisher, brother to the groom, and his wife, the "Sister Bettie" of the letter, walked over. My father's father drove from his plantation bringing with him the bride-grooms' little daughter. My Mother's younger brothers and sisters were there of course--and when there was need of music, Carrie made it at the new piano which "Pa" had given her. Of the others, Minnie and Lina, Jack and Jim and Charles nothing was related except that Minnie, aged 12 and fully embarked upon the career of a beauty, was heard to rejoice that her eldest sister was being married "at last"!

"One thing certain", she is quoted as saying, "I'll never be an old maid like Sallie is, when I get married!"

The ceremony was performed by Dr. James Scott, a neighbor who was also an ordained Methodist minister, I do not know if his wife came with him. Nor do I know whether his niece, the lovely Ella Scott, who was my Mother's well beloved friend, was invited. She was no relative, though later to become a sister-in-law; her lover, Lorenzo C. Fisher was away with the Confederate army in Virginia at the time of the wedding.

This small company gathered in the Abercrombie parlor at "early candlelight". When all were assembled, Captain Fisher and his bride walked in, and across the room stopped face to face with Dr. Scott standing before the great fire place filled with fragrant pine boughs. And there for my Mother really began the great business of life, though to the young people in the room it seemed an ending rather than a beginning.

The one physical reminder left of my Mother's wedding is a lovely hand embroidered "under body" which she wore that night, under what kind of a dress I do not know, except that I am sure it was not black. The Abercrombies were pioneers in breaking the custom of wearing black for the dead. In an age when widows went heavily into crepe and frequently never quite emerged again, Col. Abercrombie often said to his wife, "Minerva, if I go first I do not want you to wear black for me. If you feel

that you must put on mourning, put on white, like they say the Chinese do, then I know you'll mourn for me in the winter anyhow when you are cold!"

So I know my Mother at least did not have to go to her wedding swathed in the trappings of woe, however sad a heart she carried within her breast.

There was a certain delectable silk dress which still lay in an old trunk when our house burned; it alone having escaped the making over process that all other pre-war garments suffered in the post war era. Soft, sweet colors were in it, mingled and crossed in slender lines. If the pattern had not been an indeterminate plaid, it could have been mistaken for shreds of rainbow. We called it "Mama's green silk dress", so I assume the general effect must have been green though it was trimmed with tiny pink satin buttons and a narrow pink silk braid ornamentation

y8clept "^{passementerie} ~~passamentarie~~."

I remember participating in the outrageous naughtiness of cutting the smocked Watteau pleat off ^{of} a lovely old rose cashmere robe to make a "tea gown" ^{for a} ~~to adorn~~ ^{doll} an especially dainty lady belonging to my sister. But I would as soon have cut off my own hand as to have done violence to "Mama's green silk dress." Set apart and preserved as it was, I think it may have been my Mother's wedding dress.

Captain Fisher and his young wife did not take a wedding journey, the times being what they were. And because the enlistment of the carpenters had interrupted the building of his new house it seemed best for the newly wed couple to remain under the Abercrombie roof. This was convenient in spite of the size of the Abercrombie family because when my Mother returned home from her last year at school her devoted father had built for her a separate room at the end of the front gallery. This was no mere "shed room," enclosing one end of the gallery, but was in fact a small attached house of one room of generous proportions. Here she had housed her beloved books, collected from earliest childhood; here she had often locked herself in and so avoided much of the turmoil attendant upon the life of a large family; here she had taken refuge with her lover's letters from the voluble curiosity and teasing of younger sisters and brothers.

So here began her married life. Grandfather Abercrombie, generous as always, celebrated the event by furnishing the room with a beautiful imported set of furniture known to us as "Mama's wedding furniture". It was French, and gay with bunches of morning glories on a soft gray background. This, in a day when one's common place furniture was heavy walnut, was very new and very smart--expensive too, I have no doubt.

And here, surrounded by her new effects, not yet really aware of her new estate, Captain Fisher reluctantly left his bride and returned to the business of war which was becoming each week a grimmer affair.

That really is all I know about my Mother's wedding except that on the very day of it she stepped on a needle and broke it off in her foot. Her father tried--unsuccessfully--to cut it out with his pocket knife. ~~so~~ The bride, and one can only believe that she had her destiny to fullfill so the hovering cloud of tetanus germs were powerless, went limping to the alter, which gave occasion for a bit of merry twitting on the part of one Cousin Billy Wood.

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The War Bride Turns To Domesticity

Back to her sewing and knitting for the soldiers went Mrs. Sallie Comer Fisher né Abercrombie when her Captain returned to his campaigning company. But what was her surprise to learn, as she emerged from the vagueness of being both deeply bereft and newly wed, that she was expected to perform her patriotic duty in the company of sedate married women rather than with the gay group of girlhood friends who were formerly her co-workers. Moreover she also learned that she was not expected to do any ^{further} cheering ^{up} of ^{the} furloughed soldiers, whether wounded or not.

"Now that you are a married woman, you ----" was a phrase constantly on the tongues of her family, limiting and circumscribing her life in a way truly amazing to her. Retreating before it she turned to household management, as a sphere suitable to any married woman's activity, determined to fit herself adequately for administration of affairs to which her new alliance called her. Here her honest endeavor delivered a blow to her family pride, as she realized that her Mother, so beautiful, so cultured, so perfect in the eyes of an admiring and adoring family, was not so good a manager as women in that handi-craft era were expected to be. The Abercrombie home lacked nothing of good cheer, but the results, young Mistress Fisher came to see, were achieved by the simple process of having great numbers engaged in its service. She had a new understanding of an exchange of ^{re} marks which took place periodically between her parents.

"John", Mrs. Abercrombie would say, "I need another house girl. Send me up Laura, or Becky, or Janey, as the case might be.

"Minerva," good natured Col. Abercrombie would respond, "you have enough negroes 'round the house already to raise fifty bales of cotton. You will ruin me if you keep on!" But Laura, or Becky, or Janey, as the case might be, would, without fail, ^{move up} from the plantation quarters, ^{and report} ~~reporting~~ for duty at the back door of the "Big House"

So little interest had my ~~Grandmother~~ in the details of house keeping that it was her custom to order the carriage at the same time she ordered ^a general house cleaning; and off she would go to spend the day with friends or relatives, leaving the servants to conduct the affair without the supervision of the mistress of the house. Sparing herself the boredom of such business she considered much cleverer than the meticulous house keeping of my great grandmother, her mother-in-law.

The carriage with two good horses, the driver Reese, and one younger negro to open gates were always held at my Grandmother's disposal. Reese, the carriage driver, was a notable figure on the place. So gifted in telling tales, so dignified and responsible that the younger children called him "Daddy Reese". His word in regard to behavior withing ^f the carriage was law when he was driving. If the horses became alarmed and he said "Sit still Miss Minerva, I can manage them," Grandmother remained calmly certain of his ability to do what he promised. If on

the other hand he said, "Better ~~get~~^g out Miss Minerva!" All haste was made by every-
one to scramble to safety.

Probably ever since the begining of the Texas adventure, Mrs. Abercrombie
had been accumulating ^a staff and by the time Sallie began to study home management,
house maids, personal maids for each of the girls, laundresses, cooks and kitchen
maids were almost falling over each other, so thick were they around the Abercrombie
premises. This state of affairs, with its obvious lack of efficiency, pleased the
bride so little that in her youthful inexperience she tried to correct it. Where-
upon, Emily, ~~Grandmother's~~ own personal maid, nurse and general factor~~um~~ who was,
in fact, the housekeeper ~~is~~^{so} far as there might be said to be one, inquired as to Miss
Sallie's proposed methods of training her own servants. In the same breath, with
the freedom gained from having nursed the young lady as a baby, she devoutly prayed
that "Miss Minerva ~~would not~~^{won't} will me to Miss Sallie, 'cause she ~~was~~^{'s} going to be a
hard mistress!"

To this, again betrayed by youth, Miss Sallie retorted that in her new home she
would have no lazy negroes wasting their time and not keeping her house fine and
beautiful, but that she meant to have splendidly trained white servants.

After the war, Emily as a freed woman married and lived on a farm about 10
miles away from us. Whenever any of Mama's sisters came to visit, she came and
"paid her respects." And never did she come into the house, that she did'nt say,

"Miss Sallie, where is your white servants?"

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Always having a great ^{Sense} ~~sense~~ of humor and in the end being a great philosopher, my Mother explained this salutation fully to us children as something exceedingly funny, even if the joke was on her. Sometimes it would bring on talk of "slavery-times" about which we were curious and asked many questions. It was inconceivable to us that our clever, busy, Mother had once been so incompetent as she plead guilty to having been when married; or so petted and pampered and waited on as never, before the war, to have so much as washed her own feet.

These questions of ours were her opportunity to give us a happy point of view, whether she did it consciously or not, I do not know; but she brought us up to rejoice that the negroes were freed, and to have a sense of responsibility toward "our negroes" because they had been put on their own without previous preparation in how to take care of themselves. Her idea was that the freedom of the slaves was of the greatest benefit to the white race, which had suffered through holding other human beings in bondage. The only pity of it all she saw in the fact that it had taken a war and irremediable losses to bring the change about.

After I was fully rooted and grounded in this faith I learned with surprise that there existed a less philosophical, idealistic school of thought; members of whom were said to be "Unreconstructed." I thought, and I still think, they existed on a lower plane of intellect than that on which my Mother lived.

terrible
~~awkward~~
and the close of the war

Those long ~~awkward~~ months between the close of the war and her wedding in the Autumn of 1862 gave my Mother ample time and opportunity for becoming better acquainted with her husband's father, William Philip Fisher, and with her small step daughter, who lived under his care.

It became a pleasant habit with her to drive over to Grandfather Fisher's and stay with him a week or more at a time. He was a widower, very unassuming, very quiet, but, she came to know, a very clever old gentleman. In his home, his son's wife was warmly welcome. Her dignity was satisfied; the full stature of a married woman was accorded her there as in the nature of things it could never be in her childhood home.

Here too there was no ~~humiliation~~^{mit} put on her night reading. All the candles she wanted were freely forth coming. There was no need to veil her windows and the cracks of the doors to escape a scolding from members of the household happening to arouse at night and see her light. It was all very pleasant and harmonious. A place of refuge to a young thing trying to find herself while the world she knew was shifting under her feet.

The only possible subject of disagreement between Grandfather Fisher and his new daughter-in-law was the wardship of Mary Fisher, the Captain's 11 year old daughter. This the old gentleman feared would revert to her father and new step-mother and Mary be removed to the new home after the war was ended. He didn't

want it to be so arranged. He loved the child and wished to be assured that she would remain under his care, even though that care took the form of sending her to stay with a married daughter, my ~~Father's~~ ^{Sister}, Emily, in Huntsville for ten months of the year to attend school.

He explained his hopes to my Mother who assured him that his arrangement with my Father in regard to little Mary would meet with no opposition from her and so the matter was happily settled and never was disturbed.

My Mother came not only to like but greatly to admire the quiet old gentleman who was her father-in-law. "Breakfast by candlelight, on horseback by daylight" my Mother used to say was the way his day began. And all day long, except for suitable hours at noon taken by master and slaves alike, he rode the plantation ways supervising, instructing, planning. His diligence in the management of his business became her standard in later life.

None of his affairs were slackly managed though a native quietness coupled with a humorous, objective point of view often obscured public vision of his efficiency.

A tale my Mother used to chuckle over included a ^{visitor,} ~~neighbor,~~ self advertised as a farm management expert, who gratuitously ~~mistrusted~~ ^m ~~Mr.~~ ^f Fisher in the matter of cotton production. Led on from time to time by the ^m weekly ~~drawled~~ ^{drawled} ~~comment~~ ^{comment} of ~~sur-~~

"S-u-r-prising," he expanded gloriously, later to learn to his discomfort that the Fisher plantation outranked his own in every way.

My Mother respected her father-in-law for a certain bookishness she discovered in him too. In an age when most men "talked dogs, hunting, farming and politics", as she expressed, it, here was a man whose library held all her old friends together with many pleasant new acquaintances, and supper table talk was all about what the bride was reading, ^{with a lively} and an exchange of ideas and opinions.

This quiet atmosphere helped my Mother ^{to} steady herself and conceal the hurt she felt at being left out of the gay social affairs of her unmarried contemporaries. Waverly, following the ^{imm} memorial war pattern, became increasingly, feverishly ~~ely~~ gay as soldiers laughed and sang and danced trying to forget the past and future horrors; and fair ladies smiled and flirted and were kind in pity and sympathy and admiration. So social events followed swift upon each other, each one at first bringing a sort of surprising blow to the lovely bride. ~~She was grateful for that help, as when in later life those quiet weeks spent by my Mother in close observation of the administration of affairs by that competent farmer, W. P. Fisher, were of untold economic value to her, though at the time they seemed only personal~~ ^{she was grateful again,} ~~the experience had great value for~~ ^{social value to them both in relieving each others loneliness.}

She was grateful for this aid in attaining peace. And in later life she was profoundly grateful for those quiet weeks spent in close observations of that competent farmer W. P. Fisher. The experience had lasting value for her. For them both in fact because it relieved their loneliness and gave to each of them a new and interesting friendship.

The Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of the Potomac came finally to the end of their long drawn out engagement. The end of the old ways came then too, but for a time people acted as though the task ahead was reconstruction when indeed it was the construction of a new scheme of things altogether.

Home from the wars came my Father with a distinguished military record behind him and his mind intent on home making. Participation in active service ranging from Arizona to Louisiana under Sibley, Hood and ^{even} ~~finally~~ Magruder, at the battle of Galveston, brought him recognition and official promotion to which neither he nor his devoted followers paid any attention, as for as title was concerned. "Cap'n" he was when they enlisted under him and "Cap'n" he remained to his dying day.

Home with him came also such of the crusading carpenters as remained alive and forthwith they resumed the task of completing the house begun under very different auspices. So little did anyone realize the changes that were come upon them that none of the plans for the house were adjusted to the needs of the new day. Even the kitchen was built in the back yard just as in the days when small pickaninys, in training to become house servants, plied back and forth supplying the piping hot biscuits, "batter cakes" and corn bread that everybody expected as a matter of course.

It seems strange now that they ^{should have} had no inkling of what had happened.

So far from even a fore-boding had my Father been during the war years that he had rashly gone into debt to increase his holdings of land. Cotton was bringing a great price and from Texas at least some of it was finding its way into the world market. Across the Rio Grande today you find in the border towns the china, glass, silver, and furniture of the '60's as a result of the prosperity of the cotton running game of that era. So when adjoining lands were offered for sale my Father bought, mortgaging his own lands as security for payments.

Not so many stories of the early days in the new house came down to us.

We knew that the first child was born there: born but did not live long enough even to have a name. It was strange to us that he had no name, and we pestered our elders about the matter. "What was his name?" "What did you call him?" We persisted and the peremptory reply "Nothing. Now ask no more questions," caused us to call this long dead infant "our little brother." ^{Nothing}

The doctor who attended our Mother with ~~"nothing"~~ her first child, was known darkly to the negroes as "Doc ^{too} Death", ^{Emily, the negro} and ~~her~~ nurse, ^{the patient} felt that ~~she~~ was lucky to have survived his ~~administrations~~.

We knew that, under the new arrangement with the negroes, servants were hired by the year. My Mother's cook died in the middle of the year while she was still an inexperienced house keeper and she was unable to secure another because all were under contract. So that kitchen in the yard became the first

intimation that she was going to have to cope with many new problems.

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About that first cooking, she told us that the only proportions she had ever learned were the ones used in the kitchen of her own family where at least twelve sat down to every meal. Consequently, she cooked for herself and my Father on the same scale, and as no one in those days ever used anything over she was deeply embarrassed by the mounting piles of food in her kitchen. As a device for getting rid of it she would watch the well for negroes drawing water and run out with gifts of it to be taken home "to the children". How she used to laugh at that as she told it. Almost as if that Sallie Fisher had not been herself at all, but some far off ancestress of the Sallie Fisher who had learned in a hard school that biscuits can be toasted and "left overs" have a worthy place in the next days bill of fare.

We knew that she was very sick with a fever there one summer, and that my Father extravagantly sent a messenger on a long trip to procure for her the first artificial ice ever brought into the community. My Grandmother was opposed to this, deeming it unhealthy, but my Mother craved it and my distressed Father was indulgent so the ice was brought and banked in saw dust in the fire place in the sick room. But none of Grandmother's other children were allowed to taste it because "it might give them chills!"

A few months after that illness, during which my Mother's lovely hair was cut, a beautiful thing happened. My Mother went to New Orleans! To us

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that was the equivalent to having been transported straight into fairy land
itself.

New Orleans was the metropolis of the Old South, it had romance and glamour
and tradition. From it came the new styles, the new music, the new books.

My Mother went in February - in time for Mardi Gras. She sailed from Galveston
while yet it was winter there, but it was already spring in New Orleans.

Flowers were blooming and women were wearing gay fresh spring dresses of silk.

She made us see how magical that was; how enlivening to sail away from

winter and ^{pink} spring! She bought lovely new things herself; and walked and

walked and lost her way enjoying the sights; and hurried back to her hotel in

time to keep an appointment with a "hair dresser" who bunched her lovely short

curly hair ^{to} together on her neck and made her ready for the great experience of

an evening at the French Opera. Even in her old age a faint pink flush of ex-

citement came to her cheeks when we would make her tell one of her grand

children the story of her trip to New Orleans. I know that her heart beat

quickenened in response to the memory of that happy time.

She went with my father's brother, Dr. Fisher, and he went to "buy goods"
to offer for sale in the community which had been so long shut off by the war

from replenishing its needs. He carried \$5,000 in gold for this buying, but

lest in the uncertainty of post war times it be taken from him he carried it

in ^{her} ~~his~~ trunk! That was simply the crowning excitement to us. Especially as

Stewards

stewards complained of the weight ^{of her trunks} when they loaded it on the ship.

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My Mother took along some gold of her ^{own} ~~won~~, and adventured it in this buying. Making a pretty profit too, one of my aunt told me. She remembered all about lovely hats in new ^a shops; and silks in new colors and patterns, sold to friends with advice about how to make them up in the new styles with cordings and puffings. All very exciting to this youthful aunt who was glad to turn away from the sadness of war to things of lighter and more joyous portent.

It was the year after the New Orleans trip that my oldest sister was born.

With her coming began that devoted Motherhood which was to be the keynote of life thereafter. The rest of us followed along ^{with} ~~in regular~~ two and three year ^{intervals between} ~~periods~~ and never again was she to be without care for us and our concerns.

Grandmother Abercrombie found little to her liking in the new era that dawned on the South after the war. And whenever things were not to the liking of this imperious lady and she could not change them it was 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 responsible member of a large family consisting of nine boys and one other girl, 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 in her brother's home and he attempted to enforce his will on her, she departed without an 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 ^{over careful} ~~meticulous~~ house keeping, she began to be enthusiastic about Texas and finally ^{contrived} an exodus.

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 famous beauty. Everyone who ever saw her said that. And she was charming and cultured. A conversationalist of great brilliance; a hostess of renown; a carelessly generous disposition; a poised personality; securely confident that she could not be wrong; an indomitable will marvelously

Camouflaged

~~commonflogged~~ with many graces. At any age she was irresistible to all

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~~men persons~~; but at eighteen, apparently, she was devastating. It was then that she went from finishing school in Philadelphia to Montgomery, Alabama 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 grandfather Sims had broken up the South Carolina home, and he and the other brothers were also in Alabama.

Young doctor Marion Sims was married; had a baby or two, and was not very strong. He was even then 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 honoring ~~statures~~ statues in New York and South Carolina.

He
He had neither the time nor patience to deal tactfully with a gay and beautiful young sister just emerged from school and beset by ~~engaged~~ *enamored* beaux. 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 break the tie so as to be free to say "yes" again.

His way with her was to urge her to marry at once the one to whom she happened to be engaged ~~to~~. 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 beax. But not one 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's best friend in Montgomery. And "by my halidame" quoth the doctor, or 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 preacher and the licence; and wrote ~~Great-grand~~ father Sims to come on for his eldest daughter's wedding!

Minerva was fearfully sure that she was on the way to the alter with a young gentleman to whom she had only meant to be pleasantly civil. That was disconcerting. It upset her. Particularly she did'nt like having decisions taken out of her hands.

Along about that time ~~Great-grandmother~~ Abercrombie, noting the despondency of her son John, said to him, "John, take the carriage and frive down to Montgomery and ask her again." John took the carriage and in Montgomery happened on Minerva in the house alone for the moment with the servants, the children and her frightened discomferture 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 small, scared mulatto serving maid, named Emily.

We knew that Dr. Sims was mortally offended and that he and his ^{sister} did'nt speak for years. But the result of that elopement which most interested us was the quoted remark of a ^{rich} ~~sick~~ widow to whom John had been paying desultory court for no better reason than that her lands adjoined his owned

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

Minerva was clever, educated, young, vigorous and — living with her mother-in-law — idle. That he might be with her as much as possible he ^{husband} kept her by him when he transacted the office end of the plantation management — and there was much of that in the farming of those days. That she might occupy her active mind she began learning the business ~~and~~ and finally accustomed herself to handling all the correspondence after ~~business~~ decisions were made.

Long before the Texas move she was a dominant influence in the life of the "chuckle-headed" John Abercrombie, who was a first class farmer, a devoted husband, and an ideal parent, from my Mother's point of view, but at that not a fire hazard to the ^{Thomas} ~~homes~~, so to speak.

All of which being true it is no wonder that the post war discomforts and humiliations started, ⁶ My grandmother to 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~~^{Texas} cotton was invested in what purported to be "good pineapple land" and grandfather rode back with a government land grant and a Mic name, "Don Juan Grande", credited not alone to his handsome length and breadth but also his rather magnificent way with gold.

Grandmother's idea was that my Father and Mother would come along too.

So on the next trip, Grandfather was accompanied by his son-in-law. My

Father returned to report that the land was well enough for pineapples. 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 born to live in Mexico.

He was willing to agree to a partnership which would take him to Mexico for long intervals. But ^{he} 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.

While grandfather was going to and from ~~and~~ working at the proposed move into Mexico his wife continually kept it before him that he did not know

the technique of managing free negro labor, having all of his life been a

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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 twenty-one.

The madness of this seems now so clear one wonders why every one didn't see that while it was 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 middle initial, ^C₆ of his name stood ^{for} ~~for~~ "Cotton" rather than Comer - his ~~Mother's~~ maiden name. But Jack had no practical farming experience at all, being reared in a planter's home was his sole qualification for the manager-ship to which his ~~Mother~~ nominated him.

Acceding to his wife's importunities in this was the line of least resistance to grand father. 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 he had enforced 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 "chuckle-headed John Abercrombie" ~~the~~ the jilted widow had called him and I suspect she may have put just a dash of truth in with her fury, basing ^{my} ~~that~~ suspicion on the fact that this man, in the fullness of experience, 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. A mortgage was ^{la}stopped on the good Walker County plantation and the money used to buy mules and supplies to furnish the free negroes who were set up in individual farming units with no adequate supervision. The whole "live-at-home" economy of gardens, meat animals, and 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 purchase price, after the mortgage was paid, my grandmother achieved the desired move. The Abercrombie¹⁰ 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.

That was not a financial success either, and Jack -- "poor Jack" my Mother ^{worried and} always called him -- ~~deeply~~ distressed at the losses attendant upon his management, contracted malaria and died. Died glad to escape from the family reproaches, my Mother thought.

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 ^wsnash buckling gentleman of more suitable years and much more able to cope with the problems of the times.

After Jack's death, my grandmother decided that a west Texas sheep ranch

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ranch was the way to recoup the family fortunes. So attended by Jim and Charles,

the last of the boys, she boldly adventured the remaining bit of the once

respectable Abercrombie fortune. It seems incredible, but this is a true tale.

The Fisher's

During the first year or so after the war, my Father carried on under the impression that things would sooner or later adjust themselves comfortably in the patterns ~~of~~ which he was accustomed. Reconstruction by the carpetbag 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 ^{deflation} defeat. The gold due to be paid on the one new ^{piece} ~~price~~ of land was 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 home place.

While my ~~Father~~ and ~~Mother~~ struggled to find a way out of this distressing situation, my grandfather Fisher died. Because my ~~Father's~~ affairs were in such a state that whatever he owned might become involved in a forced sale grandfather had changed his will and ^{left} ~~left~~ my father's share of the estate to ^{be divided between} my ~~Mother~~ and her step-daughter (Mary Fisher), my oldest sister, and such other children ^{as} ~~and~~ my ~~Mother~~ and ~~Father~~ might have by the time Mary was twenty-one.

The gold money on hand when grandfather died ^{was} easily divided between the

heirs. But when it came to the 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 her first three children, more than two thousand acres of land in San Jacinto County.

My Father's brother, Dr. Fletcher Fisher, drew the old Fisher homestead in Walker County. As his own home was already well established he did not want the homestead for a residence ^{but} and all the family were averse to seeing it become a rent house. This led to the idea that my Father and Mother solved their ~~deflation~~ ^{deflation} problem by letting their ^{own} place go, rather than continue the struggle to pay the exorbitant price they had let themselves in for, and trading with Dr. Fisher for my grandfather's place.

The gold, which was my father's portion, left to my Mother by Grandfather was sufficient to have bought the place out right. But Dr. Fisher had in him something of adventure and instead of accepting the purchase price in gold, he stipulated that he be paid 75 bales of cotton. Consequently, much of the gold went to hiring hands who made the cotton crop that paid for the place. To both the seller and the buyers this unique trade gave the whole affair a more spirited flavour than a simple sale would have had. And both parties were pleasantly innocent of the fact that they had defeated the purpose of grandfather's will and converted the inheritance into community property under the Texas

This fact, however, did not appear until many years later and the transfer of the family from their own new house to grandfather's great old fashioned establishment was completed without any ~~great~~ trouble. Of course my Mother was distressed to lose the house which had been so especially her own. She always had a very tender feeling for it, which was perfectly natural. ^{Perhaps that explains why} ~~but~~ somehow the changed circumstances of life ^{always} dated for her not so much from the war as from the move and 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.

Carpet-Baggers and Deflation Came Together. Settled at the old Fisher place

the young Fishers now entered fairly into the new era, still believing it to be a matter of reconstruction they had in hand. Four children were born to them in the 70's and two more after that, making in all eight. The first one, a boy, they lost at birth. The fifth one, a bright little girl named Emily *near the county seat,* after my Father's sister who lived ~~in Huntsville~~, died when she was about six years old.

The loss of "Sister Emily", as we children invariably called this sister, was a deep grief to my Mother. It was something else also which I think she never realized. It was a defeat. By the time it happened she had concentrated her energies, centered her devotion and invoked all her natural talents to aid in rearing these children of hers. Around her was a new world in which her husband and the other men folk struggled desperately with "Carpet-Baggers" and unto ~~ward~~ *ward* economic circumstances in an effort to stabilize life on better terms than had *as* yet been offered. Gone was the old pleasant, easy, abundant life, passing almost unnoticed. Gone was the school, scene of many happy profitable days.

Something else was gone too. The sense of security which young Sallie Abercrombie enjoyed so completely that she never knew she had it, which even the war had failed to shatter, now removed itself from the life of Sallie Comer Fisher in a neatly complete fashion.

It really was strange that the war so little upset the poise of the Waverly plantation folk. They seem to have maintained an atmosphere of serenity, most amazing all things considered, but very blessed to the war-worn soldiers who came to Waverly for furloughs. No one seems to have thought about it or planned it or analyzed it. It simply was. And it reflects itself in the letters and stories of the times.

~~General John Bankhead Magruder, when assigned to Texas duty, made Waverly one of his places of relaxation from war cares. And his presence with his staff was the signal for much social gayety. An official "Victory Ball" was tendered him in Austin after his recapture of Galveston, but the unofficial hospitalities tendered him in Waverly had in them no less adulation, plus a thrill added by the fact that the troops which manned the flat boats of cotton which went down Buffalo Bayou and captured the blockading northern battleships Harriet Lane were many of them Waverly men and boys serving in Sibley's Brigade. This Brigade was encamped at Houston en route from New Mexico to Louisiana when Magruder called on them for volunteers to go to sea!~~

Grief had come to many families in Waverly. And anxiety. And sympathy for neighbors and friends. But after all these things came along in the ordinary course of life even without a war. They never had and they did not during the war interfere with the systematic pitching of the crops, planting of gardens, harvesting and conserving the resources of the plantations.

It was after the war that this sense of security and atmosphere of serenity went away. As imperceptibly as dew drying up before the onslaught of a rising sun it took its departure under the sultry sun of the new day in the South.

It had been there. It was no longer there. Where it went, or when, none knew.

Nobody noticed when it was there, it was so natural. Nobody noticed that it was gone because all were ^{too} deeply involved in the difficulties of the new life. It is only in retrospect that both its presence and its absence can be discerned.

The ensuing state of uncertainty was compounded of several ingredients. Carpet-bag rule was one. ^{Deflation} ~~Deflation~~ of previously accepted values ^{was} another. The natural

but mistaken efforts of the planters to rebuild their old world instead of boldly planning a new civilization was another. The oncoming of the little understood machine age was still another. A veritable tide of ingredients went into that uncertainty. And born along with it went the Fishers, he fending for his family and his class in the topsy turvy civic world and for his negroes in the economic chaos; she completely absorbed in the development and protection of their children.

My Father was the first white man to be elected justice of the peace in our community after the carpet-bag rule was broken. He occupied the office continuously except when he went to the legislature. When carpet-baggers were in the hey day of their power and negroes were elected to most offices, the negro who went to the legislature from Waverly, was my Father's faithful servant and friend "Uncle" George Wood who had been with him before and all during the war as body

servant. When Uncle George came home from his legislative experience "Cap'n" settled on him a small farm and protected him in its ownership through all the vicissitudes of credit farming until death separated them. It was my Father who went on before and "Uncle" George who was left to mourn. And not long afterward a note unwarily signed lost "Uncle" George his farm. But he was not without recourse. He simply moved everything of his which was movable across the line onto Fisher Farms, after which he rode in to tell my Mother of the happenstance and assure her earnestly that he

"Knewed Cap'n would want me on the old place. And after I'm dead, Miss Sallie, yo' gals can inherit it back. If Cap'n had been here they never woulda' got my land."

It was a tribute to my Father and his dealing ^{with} the ignorant, helpless negroes and we so appreciated it.

My Mother's absorption in the children concerned itself with their physical well being, their education, and their future careers. She taught us, she cooked for us, she sewed for us, she planted and caused to be planted gardens and orchards and field crops. Poultry and cows and pigs grew at her command to supply us with needed food. She nursed us when we were ill and plied us with hot lemonade, gruel, soft boiled eggs, rice pudding and a very tiny delicate species of hot cake known as "mush batter cakes" made quite simply of corn meal mush, milk and ^{and} egg ^{mixed together and} dropped, teaspoon full at a time, on a buttered ^{hot} griddle.

When we were sick, everything else came to a stand still and all forces rallied round until the malady was conquered. A clearly defined procedure was followed. First the sufferer was put to bed after a scalding hot "foot bath" and a scalding hot drink had been administered. Tucked up warmly the patient viewed with dismay the withdrawal from the secretary of a large leather bound volume entitled, "Dr. Massey's ^{Plantation} Family Practice" which my Mother pored over seeking symptoms to identify the illness.

Calome?

~~Calome~~ and quinine and castor oil were apt to follow. The first, measured on the tip end of a pocket knife, then floated on water was pretty bad but not so bad as the third. The second was a quite simple matter of bread pills which no one minded until one ^{became} ~~got~~ old enough to connect ~~our~~ ringing heads with these innocent seeming pills.

If at the end of twenty-four hours the patient seemed not to be responding to Dr. Massey as interpreted by my Mother, the local ^{physician} ~~M.D.~~ was summoned. But that was expensive since "a dollar a mile" was the charge and cash was scarce. After Sister Emily's death my Mother took to hoarding the price of a doctor's visit, and never after that did any doctor leave our house without his fee in his pocket. Cash was indeed scarce in those days and there was never a minute's delay in responding to a call where it was going to be forth coming at once. No one blamed the country doctors for this because they had hard lives and did not have the resources of ^{an} ~~gr~~ gardens and poultry and dairy cows which enabled the plan-

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tation families to make out in those hard times. So precarious and so physically difficult were the lives of our doctors ~~that~~ it is'nt surprising that sometimes some of them ~~passed~~ ^{passed} the strain by drinking. That was what ^{had} happened when Sister Emily died. That and a spell of such bitter cold weather as rarely came and when it came made everything immensely difficult. I've heard my Mother say that as she sat, holding the little dying child wrapped in blankets, close to the fire to try to keep her warm, ~~that~~ water spilled on the hearth froze even when it fell right in front of the fire. It was pitiful to hear her talk about it. It hurt her so that she could'n ^{child} keep her warm and safe.

Liquor was quite a problem in the early days of the New South. It never seems to have been in the old plantation days. My Mother told us that whiskey by the barrel and kegs of wine were bought for the plantation by her father just as flour and sugar were when the year's supplies were laid in after the sale of of the year's crop of cotton. These supplies were freighted home on the same ox wagons that ^{took} ~~brought~~ the cotton to market. Green coffee in sacks and tea in tin ^a canisters and whole spices in smaller cans came too. And oranges and apples; a few vanilla beans; boxes of raisins in clusters; nuts and citron; and whatever Christmas surprises were to be revealed in response to the gay shouts of "Christmas gif'" in the gray dawn of the peak holiday of the year. All were bought when the cotton was sold.

were (64)

These supplies of whiskey and wine went into locked store rooms and issued ^{out} ~~forth~~ in decanters as needed. My ~~Mother~~ said that her father always had one drink when he came from the plantation to his dinner at mid-day. If the meal was late, he did not complain, but took a second drink while he waited.

"Ma always began to hustle the cook when she saw him taking that second drink," my ~~Mother~~ used to chuckle.

Drinks were issued to the servants at Christmas ~~ag~~ and for sickness. Wine was served at dinners of state and at parties. At my ~~Mother's~~ home the negro woman named Emily was the person who went into the locked store room and drew the current supplies. Once Minnie, the youngest daughter, before she was ten followed Emily into the dim store place and remained, after Emily had gone, to sip a bit here and there; later appearing quite intoxicated before the assembled company. She was put to bed and made to drink cream as soon as it was determined that she was not suddenly stricken crazy.

"Minnie, are you drunk?" my scandalized grandmother demanded. And "Yes ma'am!" drawled Minnie, settling the diagnosis.

That really is the only story of actual drunkenness that came down to us from the old days. Though of course, I don't think now that it was the only occurrence. It just wasn't one of the things common to the fabric of life in my ~~Mother's~~ girlhood. It wasn't, seemingly, a problem.

But new times brought new customs. No one issued drinks on high days and feast days to free Negroes. But plenty were glad to sell it to them every day, and because it was restricted in its use under slavery it may have been, I don't know, a symbol of freedom to them. No one studied social problems then. They only dealt with them. ^{at any rate} Drinking negroes became a serious problem.

Not drinking negroes alone, either, ^{of} the truth be told. White men were under terrific strain. They came home from the war shell shocked and weary and at home they found, not the release and relief of which they had dreamed through all of the war days, but difficulties and dangers multiplied. The old decanters stood empty in the homes because the crops did not bring in money with which to stock store houses as they had been stocked. Probably men missed that social drinking and felt an added humiliation in its enforced absence. At any rate it became a custom with too many men of the new era to ease their burden of taut nerves at the little rough saloons which sprang up all over the country, selling what the negroes called "rot-gut" whiskey.

It has been an easy thing to laugh at the "Bible Belt" which went so heavily for prohibition in the first two decades of the new century. It always is easier to jeer than it is to understand. But if understanding were wanted it might be found that the men and women who led public sentiment in the years from 1900 to 1920 were boys and girls in times of great uncertainty. And part, the most visible part at that, of that uncertainty was grounded in the disasters

obviously attending the unwise use of liquor by both blacks and whites.

Drunken negroes influenced by unscrupulous carpet-baggers were unsafe citizens. Drunken white men loosed by liquor from self control were unreliable co-workers in the hazardous business of creating a new world. These were incontrovertible facts, so liquor in saloons became a civic problem. On the other hand the tradition of liquor used for beverage purposes in the home was never challenged as an evil while those boys and girls were forming their ideas. Here, unless I miss my guess, is the makings of an explanation of the far heralded "politically-dry -- personally-wet" philosophy of the New South which has so shocked our mentors and menckens. But unless they had lived through carpet-bagging days they would'nt be knowing a lot of things, so they charge it up to pious hypocracy and let it go at that. It's that easy.

But going back to the sick children. If the current local ^{doctor} ~~M. D.~~ seemed no more successful than Dr. Massey my Mother issued forth from the sick room and said with pale lips and controlled voice, "Send for Dr. Fisher." and off a negro on horse back sped for my Father's brother, Fletcher, who lived five miles away. Uncle Fletcher did not practice his profession because he was not sufficently robust to endure the hardships of a country doctor's life. But he was instant in his response to the appeals for help which came to him from my Mother in the several crises of illness through which her children passed. And a tower of strength he was to her.

Next to bringing us through alive, Mother cared most that we should

grow up educated, civilized persons. Since we were her children she quite

sincerely

~~simply~~ expected us to have good brains, some ambition and whatever energy was

needed; she never questioned but that we could do whatever we wanted to with our

lives. And what is more she saw to it that we never questioned it either.

When I realize that even as she was creating this sense of responsibility and optimism in us we were daily becoming more poverty stricken and less likely to have a chance to become anything but drudges, getting a bare living from the soil, I am aghast at her indomitable will and courage. She knew better than anyone what was happening to us, but never did she concede that it was final. It was'nt that she was consciously and intentionally cheerfull in the face of overwhelming difficulty. It was simply that she never even considered it possible that we, as a family, could be overwhelmed. I have never known anyone who so definitely regarded obstacles as things only to be surmounted. That they could stop one was'nt even imagined.

Introducing a new element into the situation steel rails began to be thrust forward here and there in Texas during the 1870's. At the beginning of that decade there were only 500 miles of railroad in operation in the State. This rapidly increased through the stimulation of a more than generous public land grant policy; coupled with donations of right of way through privately owned lands; plus ^{the} pleasing habit ^{which} ~~on the part of cities and towns~~ ^{had} of donating land for stations and other terminal facilities with a sum of money thrown in for luck, ~~so to speak~~. This taken altogether worked so well that by 1890 there were 8,700 miles in operation.

Up from the coast, came the Houston and Great Northern ^{Railroad} ~~reaching~~ ^{for} freight business of East Texas ~~for the rich~~, following a line which ran for a mile or more through Fisher Farms. Right of way my ~~Father~~ and ~~Mother~~ readily granted them, as did every one else, donating their acres in return for the advantage of better transportation of farm products to the market.

*privately
privately*

It was the custom for the construction engineers to make a more or less permanent camp at some convenient place and work out from there surveying, setting stakes, and directing the labor of making a road bed. Because they could board at the Fisher table, put up tents under the ~~age~~ old oaks by a good well of water and enjoy a degree of comfort and pleasant association, the engineers of the Houston and Great Northern ~~had~~ their camp for many months on Fisher Farms.

My parents enjoyed having these ambassadors of the new day and made them very welcome. But when, as a return courtesy, the engineers offered to locate a railroad station on the farm and call it Fisher, in compliment to the owners, the suggestion was spurned with great scorn.

"What? You do not want the station?" The shocked chief engineer exclaimed when the offer was declined. "Think of the advantages of a school and a church for your children! Think of the increased value of your land! You should'nt turn this chance down."

"What?" in turn exclaimed my Mother, "Rear my children in a little railroad town? Send them to school with the riff-raff of such a place? Certainly not."

This being final the station was located three miles south of our home and named

Waverly after the community. But the post office when it came had to be named New Waverly, because Waverly already had a post office away to the east of the railroad about seven miles. That created confusion so, after many years, the station was renamed and became New Waverly also.

My Mother's refusal to send her children to any school which might in time appear in the new village did not signify on her part an intention to permit her brood to grow up unlettered. On the contrary, I venture to say that no child of hers ever reached the age of five without being able to read, having been taught by her or one of older children, education in our home being a family affair. Even my Father, himself ^{with} given to books, was sometimes pressed into service to hold the old blue-back speller and "call the words" of the lesson, ~~studied the night before,~~ to the children dressing before the fire in the big fire place while my Mother cooked breakfast.

As a teacher my Mother made up with determination what she lacked in experience or pedagogic method. So many pages of history or reading, or latin, or geography; so many lines of spelling; so many mathematical problems definitely defined the day's stint of work. Nobody failed in her school because if you came up to recite before you knew your lesson you just went back and learned it and were heard again.

If you were lazy or dull or stubborn or had stolen time out to read some furiously interesting book you took all day to get through your day's assignment. I often did but I don't remember that anybody hurried me. Nor do I remember that I was ever excused from completing my task, though some times as the sun slanted westward and I wanted to run out of doors I cried a bit ^{of} try to get excused.

On the other hand if you went to it briskly early in the morning aiming to be through in order to go fishing or otherwise disport yourself joyously no one denied your right to whatever of the day was left after recitations were over. Cleverer members of the family than I often finished by noon and had beautiful long afternoons to themselves. Even I did it occasionally and remember the feeling of spacious leisure it gave me. There never was so grand a sensation.

Along with that education wrested from books went education to fit us to cope with our surroundings. This came in the form of responsibility for chores and no toddler was too small to collect a basket of chips to be used for quick heat in the kitchen stove on a frosty morning. Your task was fitted to your age and capabilities and you labored in company with those matchless companions, the older members of the family, who talked as they worked.

My mother in particular was a talented teller of tales and the ones we liked best were those about her own experiences. It was easy to learn to cook and wash dishes while she told of old black Sophy, the cook on the Abercrombie plantation, who made cookies in the form of animals and petted your mother when she was a child.

So fascinating were these tales to all of us and so much did they enliven our working hours that once my youngest brother, the youngest member of the family, came in from the garden which he was supposed to be hoeing and begged pitifully for my Mother to come out and be with him. She couldn't go that day not being very well at the time. Rashe, my brother, was about ten years old and bicycles were the newest thing, he had ^{never seen one but he had} seen pictures of them and of ladies riding them so he had an inspiration.

"I don't want you to work", he said, "just get a bicycle and ride up and down the rows and talk to me!"

The garden, the well, and five great oak trees were on the east side of our house. On that side also ran the railroad, about the ^{length} ~~distance~~ of two city blocks distant. Further to the north, yet still in sight of the house, and bordering the railroad, was the old family slave burying ground. Indeed the railroad right of way was curved to avoid passing through this halloed ground. Just here a bit of rising ground had to be leveled for the road bed and this place was always known to the negroes and to us too as the "graveyard cut". The curve, the embankments and the great pine trees contrived a dramatic entrance and exit for the two coached passenger trains of those early days as they flashed by at the dizzy speed of 30 miles an hour. And the long lazy freights drawled their more impressive length across the scene and with apparent reluctance drew their "caboose" after them

into the unknown world that lay to the north of us.

After its coming the railroad played an important part in the lives of the Fishers. Gardening was a thing we all took a part in and always we gardened in sight of those shining steel rails and the brown ribbank which ran between them. Under the shade of those five great oaks many house hold tasks were carried on; the family laundry was done there weekly because of their nearness to the water supply; the wood pile which supplied the great logs to the four great fireplaces and the smaller split wood to the kitchen stove and chips and fat pine for kindling was there; often vegetables from the near by garden received their first preparation at the well side so as to carry no dirt into the house; and frequently in summer the great brass preserving kettle filled with peaches was set bubbling out there over a slow fire while my Mother sewed or read in the shade near by in her little low rocking chair brought from the house.

A lot of living really went on under those five great oaks, much play as well as much work. The little milk house was under the shade of one of them. In another the boys built a platform to which they often resorted with books to read, or just to lie there lazily all among the great branches and green leaves. But whether we worked or read or played always in sight was the railroad shaping our thoughts and imagination and offering us changing scenes and acquaintance with new and strange and interesting persons who appeared and disappeared like characters in a play.

Sometimes these characters were men who trudged by on the railroad sparing us only a side glance as they went. Sometimes they were railroad employes walking nonchalantly a-top of the cars of a freight train on the mysterious business of their kind. Sometimes they leaned from the windows of passenger trains and waved their handkerchiefs at us. That always set us guessing as to which of our friends or relatives had embarked on the exciting affair we called "a trip".

Once I remember a President of the United States went by while I, a little girl in her best gingham dress, gasped with the excitement of such an event. Ever after I cherished the mental picture of a bearded gentlemen in a frock coat

seated on the rear platform of a grand special train surrounded by other ornate persons clad in the habiliments of dignity. "I saw President Harrison," was my boast.

Then just the other day an old man died and the newspapers printed the story of how he doubled for President Harrison on that trip so that the country folk could make just that boast. It was funny how badly I felt for that little red headed gingham-clad girl which had been me and had been cheated.

Sometimes the actors did not pass across the scene so swiftly. Once, my Mother used to tell us, while her three first children were still quite young she took into the house to live and board a man who had charge of the maintenance in the repair of the railroad for a given distance north and south of our place.

With him came his wife and her sister. This man was at times a heavy drinker and when intoxicated a very quarrelsome person so the experience of having him in the house was not a pleasant one. It culminated in a grand finale in which the man attacked his wife with intent to murder her; and was in his turn attacked by his sister-in-law.

It happened when my Father was away from home so my Mother put trunks and furniture against her door and sat trembling on the barricade all night while these three fought up and down the hall outside. When daylight finally came and the battle simmered down my Mother emerged from her room, sent a negro for a neighbor, and with this reinforcement and much outraged dignity she ordered that man out of her house without delay.

Sometimes the new characters were tramps who were begging or working their way through the country. If they were begging my Mother fed them. If they were working, my Father hired them.