

• TREE TALK •

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Editor's Letter

This issue of TREE TALK is devoted to the childhood recollections of Dovie Stowers Nicholson who was born in Little Will's Valley near the town of Keener, Etawah County, Alabama, married Charles Chester Nicholson on April 14, 1894 in Attalla, Alabama. She lived in Jacksonville, Cherokee County, Texas from 1910 until her death in 1960. She....

Well, I'll let her tell her own story.

A note for modern readers. Some of the statements and opinions stated by Mrs. Nicholson would be considered today by some as "Politically Incorrect" or perhaps, even offensive. I suggest that she not be judged harshly as she was a product of a different time, culture and place. She wrote her story in 1938. Who can say what will be said of your and my thoughts and actions in 7 decades?

I hope you enjoy the visit to a time over one hundred years ago.

Thanks to Alyson Owen Ezell for permission to publish Potpourri of Memories by Dovie Stowers Nicholson.

This issue includes the index for the entire Volume 37 of TREE TALK. This index would not be possible without the help of the volunteers who listed the names, places and events in TREE TALK. This listing requires extreme attention to detail because (as Marcella Snow learned) some families like the Lattimores in Issue 3 use the same names generation after generation.. The others who helped were: Eileen Jones, Helen Marable, and Dannie George. My sincere thanks to these volunteers.

Gordon Bennett
Editor

Dovie Stowers Nicholson



Potpourri of Memories

By Dovie Stowers Nicholson

Foreword

It is the winter of 1937-38; cold, gray, and bone chilling. Owing to my ill health, the doctor has advised me to take life easier and to stay quietly at home. I am going to pass the time by writing an account of some of the incidents, both happy and sad, that were a part of my girlhood.

I was born in Little Will's Valley in Etawah County, in the northern part of Alabama, near the Georgia line. Our post office was at Keener, and the towns of Gadsden and Attalla were where we shopped or went to the doctor and dentist. Although I now consider myself a loyal Texan, this little spot in Alabama has the love of my heart. I can close my eyes and see our dear farm home, nestling in the valley, with Sand Mountain behind it and Lookout Mountain in front and it is like a little bit of heaven to remember it.

I want my children and grandchildren, and, it may be, even great grandchildren to read these little recollections for a better understanding of life as it was in my girlhood. Then my relatives and friends will be made more real, instead of being vague and shadowy figures.

If my stories seem to tell of too many deaths, it is because death or the threat of death, was a constant companion. Doctors were few, hospitals were almost non-existent, medical practices were crude, and diseases such as typhoid fever, malaria, consumption, pneumonia, diphtheria, and cramp-colic (appendicitis) were common. All mothers expected to lose at least one or two babies or young children. Many men buried one wife much too young and re-married, for the wives, in many instances, were shorter lived than the men.

In spite of these things, however, we had many happy times, and my memories, for the most part, are satisfying.

Early Days

My mother, the former Nancy Roden, taught school on Sand Mountain during part of the Civil War while my father was away, receiving one hundred dollars for a term of three months.

My brother Fred was born in 1864 and a baby sister in 1866, but she died in infancy. Then I was born in 1870 and my brother Ben in 1872. My mother died in February before I was four years old in June.

Father had a series of housekeepers but none was satisfactory. Most of them neglected us in one way or another. Fred, as the oldest child, tried to look after us as best he could, but he was only a little boy. He was so kind and sweet that I adored him then and to the day he died.

The crisis came one day when I asked the housekeeper for a plate of biscuits and honey. She was working and did not want to be bothered. Perhaps she was extra cross that day. Anyway,

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she poured more honey than she had intended to and then said I had to eat it all or she would whip me.

Well, I managed to get it down, then I became deathly sick. Frightened, she told me that if I told my father she would kill me. Fred kept asking me what the matter was and I finally told him. As soon as Pa came in, Fred told him and he ran the woman off the place.

Later he said that he had had many difficult days in his life, but that that hour was the darkest of all, knowing that his children were mistreated. There was no grandmother to help out and other relatives had all the responsibility they could bear.

On her death-bed, my mother had told Pa that she believed that Elizabeth Walker, a young neighbor woman who lived about a mile up the valley, would make a good stepmother. So in a few months after my mother's death, my father married "Lizzie" Walker.

Grandma Walker said, "Now, John, if Lizzie isn't good to those little motherless children, you bring her right back home." But she was good and kind to us and we loved her. Her people seemed like our own blood relatives and we visited them many times. "Ma" never had any children of her own.

The summer I was ten years old, my father built a two-story, seven room house. It was painted white with large front doors, with transoms above and on each side. I thought it was beautiful.

When my father bought the farm, which his heirs still own, he cut down some large black walnut trees, had parts of them planed into lumber, and other parts left as they were. He stored them in a loft to season. Owing to the war and the struggle to start again almost from scratch, years went by before the new house was built. When he took the lumber to a cabinet maker, it was pronounced a very fine quality. The cabinet maker made stair rails, newel posts, and bannisters of the walnut, highly polished and in natural finish. He made a lovely drop-leaf table for the dining room. He made several other tables with large pedestals and hand carving. They would be heirlooms today.

Fred had been working away from home; and when I began to have "beaus", he furnished the "parlor." He bought a flowered carpet, a pretty suite of furniture with chairs and settees, a center table, and lace curtains tied back with brass chains for the window. How proud I was of this nice room.

I had an organ and learned to play and sing many songs. My father would come in tired and say, "Play and sing for me, Dovie." He enjoyed it very much. On Sunday afternoons he would say, "Play everything you know." Then when I would say, "That is all I know", he would say, "Start all over again."

Our new house was destroyed by fire, together with all its furnishings when I was about twenty years old. Many handmade quilts and coverlets, made by my own mother and saved for me, were burned.

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Ben was our pet and the things I remember about him in childhood are the funny, naughty things he did. Once when he was still very small, he called out to our stepmother, "Look at me, Ma!" She almost fainted, for he was standing astride the open well. Getting control of herself she said calmly, "Yes, I see." Then moving in closer, she clasped him in her arms and lifted him to safety. They were more careful after that to keep the well closed.

When he started to school, a lizard got in the room one day. He watched it, glad of diversion, and forgetting he was in school, laughed out loud. The teacher said, "Ben, you mustn't laugh in school." Ben replied, "Well, keep the lizards out then." I draw a curtain over the rest of the story.

All of us went to a baptizing at a creek one Sunday. Ben climbed a tree in order to see better. When one man was dipped under the water and came up struggling Ben shouted, "Bully for him! Dip him agin!" Ma and Pa were so embarrassed they turned scarlet.

I was in the next two episodes with him. He had a stereoscope that I wanted for my very own worse than I had ever wanted anything. Finally, worn out with all my offers, he said that if I would ride Old Ned from the barn to the house, standing on his back, I could have his stereoscope. Well, to the surprise of my unsuspecting family, I did just that and got the stereoscope!

Ben and I wondered if it was true that on Christmas eve at the stroke of midnight, all the animals in the barn knelt to worship the Christ Child, as we had heard. So one Christmas we made it up that when all the family was asleep, we would take blankets, creep softly out to the barn, and watch. We did this, and settled down in the hay, wrapped in our blankets. Time passed, and the next thing we knew, dawn was coming. We had slept through the witching hour of midnight, and we never found out if the animals really knelt. I still wonder.

All Christmas day we giggled whenever we looked at each other until the family got very curious. But we didn't tell them until much later.

One more story about Ben and I am through. My father bought a new horse and cautioned Ben to stay away from him, as he kicked. Ben said, "No, he doesn't." Pa asked, "What makes you say that?" and Ben answered, "Because I've already pulled hairs from his tail, and he didn't kick me!"

Influence of the Civil War on My Life

My first memories as a child were of peace and plenty, for my father, John Stowers, was a prosperous farmer-admired and respected. But since I was born in 1870, only five years after the close of the Civil War, the shadow of the war and the bitterness of reconstruction were still very real to my parents and their generation. Actually, I can remember only one personal bit of hardship and that was that only on Sunday mornings for breakfast did we have wheat biscuits. The rest of the time in those early days, we ate cornbread, for wheat was scarce ; and we grew our own corn.

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But all around us I knew many widows and orphans, who had a hard time simply keeping body and soul together. There were also many crippled or otherwise maimed ex-Confederate soldiers, reminding us of the terrible toll that the war had taken. The manhood of the South had been decimated, so men my father's age were few. I was brought up on stories of courage, suffering, and hardship; for by this time the men and women liked nothing better than to reminisce about Civil War days, Sherman's March to the Sea, and the troubles of reconstruction.

The South had passed through her Gethsemane, and everyone was trying to rebuild that which had been lost, in their hearts knowing that a way of life was over, an era closed. So because my childhood was so greatly influenced by the war, I will tell something of my parent's participation.

My father, John C. Stowers, served in the Third Confederate Cavalry Regiment under General Wheeler. He was wounded in the ankle in the battle of Chickamauga, sometimes called the "Great Battle of The West." It was fought September 19 and 20, 1863 near Chickamauga Creek, about twelve miles east of Chattanooga, Tennessee. He was sent home to recuperate but suffered the rest of his life from his wound.

Father often told us of the cold, hungry days of the war. Once he lived nineteen days without any food except parched corn. On the other hand, the Yankees were well fed. Once after a battle, the Yankees retreated so fast that they left behind a huge store of food; but it was unfit for even starving men to eat, for turpentine had been poured over it. This had even penetrated the hams so that only a little meat around the bone was edible.

Toward the end of the war, Father was made county tax assessor and was excused from further military service.

The women of the South rallied to the cause of their country. They nursed the sick and wounded. They patiently scraped the household linens to make lint for dressing the wounded. They carded, spun, dyed, and wove the raw wool from the sheep's back and made it into warm uniforms for the soldiers. They worked the farms, often with little help, and cared for their families.

I heard tales of the Ku Klux Klan, which had done a necessary work in the days of reconstruction. They were a set of brave men, driven to the wall and desperate, far different from the Ku Klux Klan of the 1900's. I've heard it said that thousands of Klan uniforms were made on which no one except the makers and wearers laid eyes except in parade.

The war ended in defeat for the South, and the bitter reconstruction days were over by the time I remember. The Negroes had been freed and were scattered far and wide, although many of them drifted back to their former masters, among them two of my father's old slaves, although they returned some years later.

Aunt Molly had been my mother's cook, and my mother knew absolutely nothing about cooking.

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She tried to learn, but found it very difficult. My father had learned a little cooking during the war, and they would go to the kitchen to experiment together. They would make a batch of biscuits or a pan of cornbread, try to decide what was wrong, change it the next time, so that my mother became a fairly good cook.

The part of North Alabama where my parents lived had been in the path of Sherman's march across Georgia to the sea. He had destroyed homes, furniture, crops, wagons, buggies and carriages; and his men had stolen all the silverware, jewelry, horses, cattle, chickens, etc. It was his boast that not even a crow could live on what he left in a sixty mile wide path.

Now, the Yankees would get advance information concerning anything worth stealing or destroying, so they knew that my father had a brood mare. Just before they came to my father's farm, the alarm was given; and a young Negro boy, one of Aunt Molly's and Uncle Andy's sons, jumped on the mare and rode off pell-mell to hide her.

Soon Sherman's men rode up and demanded the horse of my father. He replied that he did not know where the horse was. Again they demanded the horse. My father explained that one of his servants had ridden off on the horse to hide it and that he did not know where. They threatened to hang him if he did not divulge the information they wanted, and put a rope around his neck. He still repeated that he could not tell them, so the end of the rope was thrown over a tree limb, and he was pulled off his feet. Then they rode away. My mother and Aunt Molly quickly cut him down, and he revived. His mare was saved.

One story that I heard many times was that of a brave young farm girl named Emma Sansom, who showed General Forrest a well hidden ford across flood swollen Black Creek near Gadsden, after Federal troops had crossed on the only bridge and burned it. The ford enabled General Forrest to catch up with a Union raiding force and prevent it from reaching its objective, which was an important Confederate supply point at Rome, Georgia. Today there is a monument in Gadsden to this brave girl, and the high school there is named in her honor.

These few incidents will explain why I still thrill to the stirring music of Dixie, and why my emotions overwhelm me when I think of the Civil War.

School Days

In the 1870's and 80's, schools were few and far between. Ours was a little one room log cabin, heated by a fireplace. On cold days, those in the back of the room were never warm, and those in front had blistered faces. We had three months of summer school and three months of winter school. Attendance was spasmodic, for in bad weather those who lived any great distance away could not attend. We had rough benches to sit on and planks for desks. Everyone had to buy his own books; and since some parents could not afford to do so, we who had books had to share

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them. We carried our lunches in syrup buckets, and the usual lunch would be biscuits with bacon or ham slices, perhaps a little jar of syrup, a cookie or piece of pie (fried peach pies were favorites), hard-boiled eggs, and an apple, if available. A great joke was to crack your hard-boiled egg on some unsuspecting boy's head.

Schoolbooks that I remember best were the old Blue Back Speller and McGuffey's Readers. We really learned to spell and we read our readers over and over and memorized all the poems, even to the very long ones. To this day I can still recite many of them.

I started to the Keener school when I was eleven. The school was a pretty little white school-house. In 1881, Andrew Buckanan Small came to Keener as our teacher. He was out of college and theological school and could preach very sweet sermons. He organized a union Sunday School of Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, he and his family being Presbyterians. His mother was Harriet Charlotte Nicholson, a sister of Bradford Harrison Nicholson, Chester's father. The Smalls were a fine old family of ambition and pride, as were the Nicholsons. Henry Small had commanded the 3rd Confederate Cavalry Regiment in which Edmund Nicholson, Bradford Harrison Nicholson, and John Stowers served, and he married Martha America Nicholson.

We called our new teacher "Professor" or "Fessor," but his nickname was "Bucky." He did not become a minister after all, but studied medicine and became a prominent and successful surgeon. Many years later, in 1914, he performed a major and successful operation on me. Of course, at the time he was my teacher, I did not know how we were to be associated, or that he would be a cousin of the man I married.

At any rate, "Professor" had many new ideas and innovations for the school, church, Sunday School, and community. We were delighted to work with him, and soon we were a "bee-hive" of industry. Miss Josie, Mr. Small's sister, had a music class, of which I was one; and soon we were playing and singing for everything.

Friday afternoon was the bright spot of the week, for then we had spelling matches. Two captains were chosen, and taking turn about, they would choose the spellers for their sides, always choosing the best spellers first. Webster's Blue Back Speller was used; and when a word was missed, the speller would take his seat. As the match went on, those left standing would get more and more excited and sometimes miss a word they knew perfectly well. Finally, when only one was left standing, he or she was declared the winner. It became a matter of pride to stand up to the last, and that spelling book was studied all week.

Next to the spelling matches, we enjoyed the Friday recitations, all taken from McGuffey's Readers. Many of them I still remember. About this time, our teacher introduced us to Dickens, Longfellow and other good authors. We were hungry for reading material, for books were scarce, and he instilled in us a love of literature.

Certainly, by today's standards, we learned nothing fancy in that school, but three things we

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learned that stayed with us always-love of good literature and memory work, the multiplication table, and spelling. We respected our teacher, but the noon hour belonged to us for fun and play and laughter. Sallie Green, Fannie, the twins (Ira and Ida), John and others, come to my memory as good students and companions.

The boys and girls played separately, the boys on the east side and the girls on the west side. We girls played croquet, jump rope, see-sawing, Molly Bright, base, and swinging. The boys played baseball, townball, bull-ping, marbles, mumble-peg, leap frog, and so on.

About this time, some of the boys began chewing tobacco, and some of the girls started dipping snuff. My stepmother's brother, Uncle Bent Walker, detested the habit and told Ben and me that if we would not "chew" or "dip" he would give us a nice present. We stuck it out, although we were laughed at and called yellow; and at the end of a year, he gave us our gifts. Mine was an adorable little writing desk with a tiny, silver key; and Ben's gift was a stereoscopic glass with many views of interesting places.

The church near the school was a union church, having been built by Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, and each sect had its own Sunday for services. Our teacher appointed committees of girls to sweep and tidy the church each week and place flowers there, The boys built the fires and kept the grounds raked and clean. The church was in a beautiful spot, and we loved it dearly. The trees, plants, and rocks had been left as nature placed them. There was a spring of clear, cool water. A rock wall had been built around the church and school, and it was a peaceful and attractive setting.

On Thanksgiving, Mr. Small directed us in a "social." We met at a certain house with baskets of food. Then we visited other houses, raking leaves and burning them, sweeping the yards, etc., after which we spread our lunch and had a fine picnic.

At Christmas time, we had a community Christmas tree, with a program and gifts for all.

A few years later, my father sent me to Collinsville to school. He would take me on Sunday afternoon and come for me on Friday afternoon in the buggy. How glad I would be to go back home after a week away. I boarded with two sisters who ran a boarding house. I continued my music lessons, and my father bought me an organ. He dearly loved to hear me play and sing hymns and lively songs, too.

It was in Collinsville that I met Chester Nicholson, who was to be my husband.

Our Smokehouse

My grandchildren may wonder what a smokehouse is, so I will explain and tell about our own smokehouse. When I was growing up, much of the year's food depended on homegrown meat. This was salted or smoked to preserve it, for refrigeration was unknown. Each year when the

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weather turned cold, my father and the hired hands butchered from ten to fifteen hogs weighing two or three hundred pounds each.

Our smokehouse was some twenty or thirty feet from the back door and consisted of one large room, with a fireplace and chimney in the center of the back wall. A stone hearth was across the entire end. The meat was salted down for a few weeks. Then the hams, shoulders, slabs of bacon, and some of the bags of sausage were tied with strong twine and hung on the rafters. A smudge fire was set to burning in the fireplace and kept burning for days at a time to permeate the meat with the delightful flavor of hickory wood.

After the required number of days had passed and the meat was judged to be sufficiently smoked, it was taken down, plunged into boiling water, then coated with a paste made of molasses, flour and red pepper. Then it was wrapped in brown paper or sewed into cloth and packed away in boxes or hung from the rafters. It kept sweet and fresh over the months until it was gradually eaten .

Several busy days followed each "hog-killing" day. First of all was the sausage making, when choice lean portions of the pork, with some of the fat, were ground in the sausage mill, seasoned with salt, black and red pepper, sage, or other seasonings, and packed into little clean cloth bags. Small portions would be fried and tasted until exactly the right flavor was reached. This sometimes resulted in tummy aches among the children, as we were always ready and willing to eat a sample and add our suggestions for more pepper or salt or sage to the opinions of the grownups.

Then came the "trying out" of the lard in big pots over the fireplace or perhaps in the yard over a fire. The fat of the hogs was cut into small cubes, then slowly heated to extract the lard. This snowy white, sweet leaf lard was used for all breads, pastry and frying, for vegetable shortening was unknown. A by-product would be the crisp, juicy "cracklin's" from these bits of fat after the lard was drained off. If you have never tasted cracklin' cornbread, you have missed a delicious treat. A cupful of the cracklins, added to cornpone and baked brown made a bread so delectable that my mouth waters at the recollection. Served with turnip greens or collards or peas or beans, this bread would be Oh! so good.

All around the walls of the smokehouse were bins and barrels full of black walnuts and scaly-bark hickory nuts gleaned from the woods on nutting expeditions in the fall, popcorn, sweet and Irish potatoes, apples, pumpkins, turnips, dried peas and beans, etc. Large jars, pots, churns, and other vessels held peach pickles, cucumber pickles, sauerkraut, syrup (both sorghum and ribbon cane), jams, preserves, and jellies made from blackberries, huckleberries, and dewberries, peaches, apples, plums, etc., all in quantities to feed our family and many guests through the winter. Hanging from nails or rafters were onions tied in bunches and strings of red pepper.

Hominy was another good food which required time and patience to prepare. Field corn was shelled and put to soak for several days in lye water. This softened the kernel and removed the outside husk. Then it was thoroughly washed again and again to remove all traces of lye.

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Cooked tender and seasoned with bacon drippings, it was delicious.

Our meals were varied by chickens, turkeys, and geese from our flocks. Occasionally we had beef. If a man had fresh beef, the neighbors were all given a share, and then the favor was returned when they killed a beef. Uncle Will Crump often brought us wild turkey, geese, or squirrels, as he was a great hunter. My brothers liked to hunt quail, which were so plentiful we sometimes got tired of that tender, white meat. Fresh fish could be had almost any time someone could go fishing or Uncle Andy could visit his fish traps.

In the late fall, if a freeze seemed near and we still had tomatoes on the vines, Pa would pull up the tomato plants, roots and all, and hang them in the smokehouse. There they would continue to ripen and we sometimes had tomatoes until Christmas time. Collards would be left in the ground, but bent over and covered with dirt to protect them from the freeze, and so give us a green vegetable after all else was killed.

I know now that our diet was lacking in certain vitamins, but at that time I only knew that it sometimes grew monotonous and that as spring drew near there was a lot of sickness. We did as other people did, boiling the roots of sassafras to make tea, which was said to be a blood purifier. About the first green shoots to put up in the early spring would be poke salad, and Negroes and Whites alike would search it out, cook and eat it. Old timers said these greens were equal to a dose of medicine, but they had to be cooked just so or they were poisonous. These leaves were parboiled a few minutes, the green water drained off, and the leaves cooked again with bacon seasoning.

Sometimes the wives of tenant farmers on the place would knock at the back door, and in an embarrassed manner ask for sauerkraut or pickles. Ma always gave them some; and when they left would say, "Well, I guess she's pregnant again and craving something sour."

Our smokehouse had another use, for it was a grand place for us children to play on cold, rainy, winter days. We would build a roaring fire in the fireplace and pop corn, make syrup candy, roast peanuts, or bake sweet potatoes in the ashes, for our appetites were healthy and unspoiled by bought candy, soda pop, gum, or ice cream. Then we would play noisy games without disturbing our elders, or curl up in front of the fire and tell stories or read aloud.

I will relate an incident that has nothing to do with food but which occurred in our smokehouse. It is funny to look back on, but it was not funny when it happened.

I was invited to spend the night with two sisters after I was a big girl. I enjoyed being with them, so went happily home with them. That night my sleep was disturbed by their restless scratching. Shortly afterwards I took the itch, having caught it from them. I felt disgraced and determined that I would try everything to cure it, for I knew "the itch" could sometimes hang on for many months. In fact, it was called the "seven-year itch."

Now, somewhere I had heard that bathing with lye soap was a cure. So without telling my

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stepmother, I took a piece of new, harsh, unbleached domestic, went to the smokehouse, locked the door, and took off my clothes. Dipping the cloth in the barrel of soft, strong, lye soap, I proceeded to scrub my body vigorously. I began to burn, then it was like fire and so painful that I started running in circles, screaming at the top of my voice. Ma heard me and came running out, frightened terribly. I was so blinded by the burning that for some minutes I could not see to unlock the door and let Ma in.

When she did finally convince me to open the door and saw what had happened, she got a crock of milk covered with thick cream and began spreading the soothing cream all over my body. She kept this up every few minutes all day until the fire on my skin subsided.

What? Oh, yes, it cured the itch.

The Walkers

A few months after my mother went away, my father married Elizabeth Walker, who lived about a mile up the valley with her father, mother, brother, and sister. She was about twenty-five years of age-about to be an "old maid," as people thought of it then. She made a good help-mate to my father, a kind mother to us three children, and in return, she had a good home and the dignity and position of a respected wife.

We loved her people as if they were our own, and they loved us. We often visited them, and it was a treat to be in their home. They lived in a pretty log cabin, with many beech trees around it, and we enjoyed eating the beech nuts. We ate fruit from their many large fruit trees, which must have been very old. There were many sweet-singing birds in the trees around their home, and wild flowers were everywhere. We would lie in the grass and eat "sheep sour" (sheep sorrell) with salt. They had pretty, dainty, pinkish blooms. There was another plant with a small, heart-shaped thick green leaf with little cups, which we called "heart-leaf." I'm sure that "heart 's-ease" was its proper name.

Grandpa Walker was the finest old gentleman. He was a member of the Primitive Baptist Church and was very devoted to his church and the things he believed to be right. He had a great many sayings that I remember. "There are always two sides to every question," and another was, "Be sure you are right, then go ahead." He prefaced many sentences with "I yi."

Grandpa Walker never owned any slaves. When they wanted thread spun, they would hire a certain slave from a neighbor, so they told us. This slave was an African negro and was so tiny she was almost a Pygmy. She could speak no English but could spin a great amount of beautiful thread in a day. She would eat nothing but corn bread crumbled in dishwater. When not at work, she would climb a mulberry tree near the back door, sit on a limb and mumble and chatter. No one knew what she was saying. If someone started to punish a child, she would come down out of the tree and very tenderly take the child in her arms and climb back. There she would sit and sway backwards and forwards, crooning softly, and soon the child would be

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asleep. If anyone went under the tree she would shake her fist, scowl, and mutter angrily. When the child awoke, she would climb down and set it on the ground.

I wonder what her sad story must have been. Perhaps she was seized by slave traders, torn from those she loved perhaps from a little child of her own, and sold into a strange country and a life foreign to everything she had known. Poor, pitiful little woman.

Grandpa and Grandma Walker had moved from Tennessee to Alabama when wild animals and Indians were all around and the land was still covered by dense forests. Grandma was a natural-born story teller, and she told us many true stories of adventures she had in the early days. When we children were going to spend the night, and supper and the evening chores were over, we loved to sit in front of the fireplace and get her started. She smoked a clay pipe, and Fred would light it for her with a coal from the fire. She would talk and puff on her pipe, and we would shiver in delighted fear of the things she told.

When they had first arrived in Alabama, Grandpa Walker had built a one-room log cabin for them to live in. Soon after, he had to go away on business and left her alone with the children. He had not yet had time to complete the chimney, so that it consisted of a fireplace for cooking and a low chimney only a few feet high. Some little pigs had been born a few days before, and so, as night approached, she brought them and the old sow into the house. Only a portion of the wooden floor had been laid, leaving the rest just dirt, so she penned them up on the dirt part, to protect them from wild animals.

There were still wolves, panthers, bears, wild hogs, and catamounts to fear. On this night, soon after dark, a pack of wolves gathered around the house, attracted by the scent of the new born pigs. From time to time a wolf would try to jump down the chimney; but she would thrust a lighted pine torch up the chimney, and the blaze would frighten the wolves off for a little while-then they would be back.

By and by a live coal fell into the dry leaves around the house. Grandma peeped through a crack between the logs and saw them burning and smelled the smoke. She was terrified that the cabin would catch on fire and drive her and her little children out to be devoured by the wolves. Then she thought of a scripture, the seventh verse or the Thirty-fourth Psalm: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." She fell on her knees and earnestly prayed that He would deliver them. The fire went out.

When daylight came and the wolves were gone, she went outside. The fire had burned out amid those dry leaves, leaving a big burned patch. Her prayer had been answered.

She told us of the time she was going to the spring for water one day and saw a big rattlesnake on the other side of the fence from her. She got a rail, got on top of the fence and pounded and pounded it until she killed it. She said that it was so big and fat that it took her a long time to kill it. Then she sat down on the ground and cried and shook and broke out in a cold sweat. The thought in her mind had been that she had to kill the snake for fear one of her children would be bitten.

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Another tale she told us was about the time she caught some Indian women trying to steal their hogs, which were to make their winter supply of meat. She tore into them with all her might, scratching, pulling hair, and hitting right and left. One Indian woman had long "ear-bobs" in her pierced ears. Grandma caught hold of both of them and pulled them out, tearing her ears. With howls and screams, the woman ran away and the others followed.

Grandma said that after some of her experiences she would look into the mirror, expecting to see that her hair had turned snow white. Once I said to her that she was very brave. She replied, "No, child, I wasn't brave. I was scared to death, but I had to take what came to me and do the best that I could. I guess all pioneer women were the same."

She had another terrifying experience one night when her husband was away. A bunch of Indians rode into her yard, jumping their ponies over her yard fence, then drinking from their jugs of whiskey, dancing and whooping. Just before dawn, they began fighting among themselves. One young Indian was cut up so badly his companions thought he was as good as dead, so they carried him to a sink-hole and threw him in. Then they all went away. A day or two later, Grandma Walker worked up her courage and went out to peep over the edge of the sink-hole. The Indian was still lying there. But after a few more days, he recovered enough to crawl out and go away.

One interesting thing Grandma told was about the time "the stars fell." It was sometime in the 1830's that this happened. It seemed that all the stars in the heavens were falling, and the night was as bright as day. The ignorant and the learned alike thought that the end of the world had come. It appeared to them that the stars were about as large as a quart cup; and when they struck the ground, they shattered in bright sparks and disappeared. It was a bitterly cold night, making the scene even more weird.

When the Civil War came, Grandpa and Grandma Walker had seven sons to march away to the war. Five returned, all having been wounded, one had been a prisoner on Johnson Island for many months, and two were left on the battlefield. One daughter, Prudence, had had her lover killed in the war, and she lived with her parents. I loved Aunt Prudence; she was so sweet and refined. She died when I was about sixteen years old. She was one of many unmarried women or widows in the Country, for the manpower of the South was decimated.

Grandpa Walker died when I was about eight. I missed him and grieved for him. Grandma lived to be eighty-six years of age, dying shortly before I was married. My step-mother spent one day each week with her, come what might.

A son, Uncle Jack Walker, lived near Grandma. He had two grown daughters, Bettie and Jay. They were pretty girls and could sing well, their voices blending beautifully. They would spend at least one night a week in our home and sing late into the night. We all enjoyed this very much.

One night I woke up and heard my father and Jay talking. I guess I eavesdropped. She was

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weeping and saying, "But, Uncle John, I love him." She was in love with her cousin, Wylie Petty. I remember to this day how he looked. He was handsome, with dark, wavy hair and dark eyes. Then I heard my father plead with her not to marry Wylie, saying, "Your mothers were sisters and you would regret it."

She did not marry Wylie but later married another man . I never let on that I had overheard this conversation; but every time I saw her, I would remember it and to me she was always a sad and lonely woman.

The Walker children all had musical talent and could play different instruments, my stepmother playing the accordian. They were also artistic and could draw anything, or fold and weave paper into all sorts of pretty designs. My stepmother used to entertain us by making shadow pictures on the wall, by twining her hands into different positions and letting the light reflect them as shadows. I remember the birds she could make, and one seemed to be flying. She made different animals, one of which, a rabbit, could twitch his ears, move his paws, and nibble at food.

Yes we had our own entertainment at home or at neighbor's, and my happy days with the Walkers are treasured and remembered with pleasure.

A Sunday to Remember

One Sunday, a very special friend of Grandpa Roden's was going to preach in the 'hard-shell' Baptist church, and my father took me with him to hear this preacher.

The men and women, boys and girls did not sit together but on opposite sides of the church.

The preacher's subject was "Predestination"-one of their strong beliefs. I do not remember much about the sermon, except that Grandpa and the other men agreed with him on all points and would say "Amen," loud and often. The Preacher must have known much of the Bible from memory, for he quoted many passages, and even pages, without reading a word.

The sermon must have lasted two hours. The seats were hard and uncomfortable, without backs. My feet did not touch the floor but I dared not move, even though a little girl behind me kept pulling my braids. Once I reached back and pinched her hand; whereupon, she gave my hair such a jerk that I almost said something. At last she got tired of pulling my hair and started unbuttoning the buttons on the back of my dress. I got very brave and started to move away, when -Oh horror!-the bench gave a loud squeak, and I thought all eyes in the church turned on me. I wanted to sink through the floor, but there was only one thing to do-grin and bear it.

When the service was over and there was noise and confusion, I gave her a good hard pinch. I'll bet she had a black and blue spot for days to come.

After the sermon, they had the sacrament and foot washing. The unleavened bread was broken into small bits and passed to all members of the faith. The wine was blessed, then passed in a

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large goblet, all, men and women, taking a sip from the one goblet.

Next the members and visitors of the same faith and order were invited to partake of the ritual of washing feet. The visitors were invited first by the old faithful members to have their feet washed, then relatives and friends would follow. A woman would ask, "Sister Jones, will you wash feet with me?" The other would answer, "With pleasure." Then the first would drape a long towel around her waist and kneel with a pan of water, while the other would be removing her shoe and stocking. After washing and drying Sister Jones' feet, they would exchange places and the first woman would have her feet washed and dried. On different sides of the church, men and women would be observing this custom at the same time.

This ritual symbolized humility and had its origin in the washing of the Disciples' feet by the Saviour.

After the service was over, we had several invitations to dinner. We accepted the invitation of a Mr. Barksdale, for he lived on our way home, so it was more convenient. He was a well-to-do planter, owning a large, rich, bottom farm worth a great deal of money. The mother was very over-worked, with no conveniences at all and little help. They had several children, all dark and foreign looking.

They were building a new home and living in it at the same time. Each summer, after crops were laid by, something would be done on the new home. The furniture was crude and ugly, the floors rough and bare. One pretty thing was the hearth and fireplace made of fieldstone. The mantel had a clock on it that was old and different from any I had ever seen. I wish I knew where it came from.

When we went to the table I thought I had never seen such coarse dishes and food. The table was covered with a "turkey-red" cloth, and there were no napkins. No chairs were used at the table, only home made benches with no backs. On the table there was a dish of field peas and at each end of the table there was a platter of big pones of cornbread from which each person broke a small portion. Soda biscuits as big as my fist, yellow with soda, and almost dough in the center, were passed. There was a large platter of fat, poorly cured ham, big dishes of ham gravy, coffee without cream or sugar, warm buttermilk and oily butter. For dessert we had green apple pie sweetened with molasses and with the toughest pastry I ever tried to eat. The Barksdales ate heartily and thought they had a fine dinner.

After dinner I went with one of the girls to take dinner to the six paupers- all women, for whose care Mr. Barksdale was paid by the county. At the back of the Barksdale home there were three little one-room log huts with two old women in each. Each cabin had a fireplace, and one window with a wooden shutter. In bad weather when the shutter had to be closed, the hut would be dark and oppressive. On the wall were two pegs on which the old ladies hung their clothes. The furniture consisted of a bed, two chairs, and a small, homemade table. A bucket of water stood on a bench in the yard and all drank from the same gourd.

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The meal we took to them consisted of a bowl of field peas, salted but with no bacon seasoning, with two spoons to the bowl-both eating from the same bowl. A big pone of hard corn bread was on the plate, with two glasses of buttermilk and some of the pie.

One of the poor old women commenced to cry and said, "I can't eat this food again." But she crumbled some of the bread in the peas and ate a little.

Five of the women were common looking and acting. One, they said, had been well-to-do before the war. She had soft, white hair which lay in natural waves, and in her hair there was a beautiful comb. There was an air of good breeding about her.

I felt so sorry for these women and kept wanting to cry but held my tears back. Soon after Father and I started home, I went at it in great fashion, with the tears streaming down my face. Father kept saying, "Child, what is the matter?" All I could say was, "Poor old women," over and over. Finally I told him what had been taken to them to eat.

Father stopped the buggy, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "Dovie, are you sure?" I vowed and declared it was true. He then said, "Grand jury meets this week. I am one of them, and we will see about this."

It was the duty of the grand jury to look after the paupers and ample funds were provided for their care. He reported it to them, making them promise to protect my name. Instead of going to the farm to inspect conditions the last of the week, as was their custom, they went unexpectedly the first of the week, and found things as I had reported. By telling the women that they were their friends and they would be protected, the women told them of the poor food that was so poorly cooked and seasoned they could not eat it; it was in actuality a starvation diet. It was decided that the women would be taken away from the Barksdales, moved to a different place, and watched after more closely.

I don't believe the Barksdales realized they were mistreating the paupers. But in trying to make a profit off their meals, they took the view that anything was good enough for paupers and they should be grateful for it. They were so grasping to make money that they failed to enjoy the abundance they had accumulated, and so primitive in their own habits that this did not seem unkind.

Even now, when I hear the song, "Rocking Alone in an Old Rocking Chair," memory turns back almost sixty years, and I can still see these women in their loneliness and despair.

Aunt Molly and Uncle Andy

When my father and mother were married, my Grandfather Roden gave them a slave woman, Aunt Molly, for a wedding gift. Then my father bought a man, Uncle Andy. As far as I can remember hearing, those two were the only slaves they owned, for my father, who was born in 1840 and so was quite young, was just getting his start.

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Whether Uncle Andy and Aunt Molly were ever legally married, I don't know. But they lived happily together as man and wife and raised a good-sized family on our farm. Their children were Henry, Rose (Uncle Andy's daughter by former woman of his), Andrew, Jim, Anna, and Stacy Eugenia. Uncle Andy always said that Stacy Eugenia was named in memory of his "sainted mother." Anna was a mulatto and Aunt Molly said candidly that her father was an Irish peddler who once passed through the country.

After the slaves were set free, Aunt Molly and Uncle Andy were among the many who left their former masters and old homes to tryout their freedom. They were gone for several years but returned some time after my father and step-mother were married. They were glad to be back and grateful to have someone to look after them, to take responsibility for them in sickness and hard times, and for someone on whom they could depend.

They lived in a one-room log cabin back of our apple orchard. Their little children were as fat, slick, and shiny as could be. Aunt Molly saved all the grease from the dish water with which to grease them. Uncle Andy had made a nice, smooth, wooden trough for the children's food. Aunt Molly would pour the children's food into the trough, then each child would serve his little tin plate, and their little tin cups would be filled with milk. They could drink gallons of milk. They would sit on their little wooden stools, and laugh and talk. Often I would slip away from our house to eat with them. How good their pot-liquor, cornbread, and milk tasted. After the day's work was over, the family would sit in the yard, if the weather permitted, and sing spirituals and mournful songs, the kind all conquered peoples sing. In bad weather they sat in front of the fireplace and Uncle Andy told stories very similar to those collected by Joel Chandler Harris and known as the Uncle Remus stories.

Since Aunt Molly was our cook, Uncle Andy usually ate at our kitchen table. He would always say a blessing on the food and always say, when he was through eating, "Bless the Lord and bless the good white people." He was very religious, and it was his custom to have family prayer at night before retiring.

When Christmas time came around each year, my father would ask Uncle Andy what he wanted for a present. His answer was invariably, "A new wes-kit." He meant waist-coat, or vest, as we would say now. He must have had a dozen. Aunt Molly always wanted a snuff-colored mereno dress and she, too, got what she asked for.

They lived on our farm during all the years I was growing up. I believe they loved our family just as sincerely as we loved them. Aunt Molly was a fine cook. Her cakes, pies, beaten biscuits, fried chicken, and chicken Pie were so delicious that my mouth waters even now at the thought of them. She looked down on "po white trash" and frankly said she would rather be a negro than "po white trash." She was always lecturing us and cautioning us to be careful of our associates. I've heard my step-mother tell her many times that the war had done away with aristocracy and that all were equal in helping to build a new South. Her answer was a disdainful sniff and "Humph!"

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Anna was the daughter near my age and she was my playmate, my constant companion, my pal, my bosom friend, my shadow. When my brothers and I started to school in the mornings, she would walk a short distance with me, carrying my books and lunch basket. When we returned in the afternoon and neared home, she would have a little treat for me-perhaps a bit of sweet gum on a chip, a handful of nut meats, a cookie, or a piece of fruit she had saved. Anna kept my room spotless and as soon as she was old enough, she began watching after my clothes. When I had girl friends to spend the night, she would come in the next morning and, if the weather was cold, build a fire. Then she would bring in hot water and fresh towels and wait on us.

On the other hand, I shared with her. She got part of whatever treat I had. In those days I never questioned our relationship. It seemed right and good. If she ever noticed the disparity in our lives, she never let on. She was happy and had a secure life. Years later, when Chester and I and our children visited in Alabama from our Texas home, she came to see me; and it was like greeting a member of the family whom I had not seen for a long time.

Uncle Andy helped my father with all the farm work, and he was dependable and trustworthy. Among the many things he could do was to make all sizes and shapes of baskets from willow. He knew exactly what kind of strips to cut and how to weave baskets for every conceivable purpose, such as for storing grain, nuts, apples, for clothes baskets, etc. He wove fish-traps, which he placed in the creek. Almost any time he could go "lift" his fish-traps and bring back enough fish for us and for his family. He sold many of his baskets for what he considered good prices.

Uncle Andy's death came much too soon and in a sad manner. One day he was cutting down a large tree and it fell on him, breaking his hip. How he did suffer. We lovingly did all for him that could be done and had the best doctor available, but we seemed to know from the first that he could not live. Aunt Molly said "I Spec Andy done got his death" After he died, my father had one of his own suits pressed and put on him. We had his funeral service in the yard and a negro man preached to a large crowd. My father stood over the box and cried as though his heart would break. He said "Andy, enjoy heaven. I will see that Molly and the little ones are cared for as long as I live." This promise he faithfully kept.

The Rodens, a Wedding and a Funeral

We had visited my mother's ancestral home many times, but the visit I am going to tell about now is the first one that is clear in my memory. I think I was about eleven or twelve years old when we received an invitation to my Aunt Sarah's wedding. She was to be married on a Sunday afternoon in April to a Mr. Lawson Melton and invited us to come on Saturday.

My father wanted to start early and visit along the way with some of our friends in Big Will's Valley. He and my step-mother were riding in the front of the buggy, Ben and I were in the back, and Fred was on horseback.

After we crossed the ridge and Big Will's Creek, we started up the valley, stopping first at the home of Brother Reeves, a Baptist preacher. Next, we visited Captain Beeson's home. It was a

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beautiful white house, located in a grove of lovely trees. The Beesons had a large family of children, all of whom became college graduates.

We started up the valley and met a half-wit named Ed Satterfield. He was a character something like Smike in "Nicholas Nickleby." He never worked a moment in his life but wandered around the countryside, making the rounds about twice a year. Anyone would feed him, let him sleep in the barn, and give him clothing if he needed it.

We stopped at the Coats, Newmans, Tabors, and other homes for a while. Then we crossed Sand Ridge to get to Sand Valley. Living on poor little farms on the ridge were the poor white folks. I do not know how they could keep body and soul together.

It was only ten miles to Grandpa Roden's, but it was a two-hour journey. Their home was a one story, painted white house, built of hand planed lumber, in a beautiful setting at the foot of Sand Mountain. A front porch extended the entire length of the house. The door step was made of a long sand-rock about ten feet in length. We entered a large hall with a fireplace at each end. On cold days, fires would be burning brightly in each fireplace, as the hall served as the living room also. There were comfortable chairs and on the wall were a few pretty pictures. The dining room was large, with a long table that was always set with extra plates for guests, with a real damask linen cloth and huge linen napkins. The hob-nail glassware was gorgeous, and a beautiful light hung above the table.

Grandpa had a cotton gin, a grist mill, and a government distillery, where peach and apple brandy was made. He also had a store and carried in stock groceries and dry goods to sell to the public, to his tenants on the farm, and to a crowd of wage hands. It was a busy place, with people coming and going all the time.

As soon as we got there, Uncle Jerry took us to see his pets. He had a place all his own just back of the smokehouse, where he kept them. There he had wooden cages hanging in trees and bushes and resting on the ground. He had a fine bird dog named Pointer, two Persian cats named Licker and Slicker, and he had two black crows named Romeo and Juliet. He had a fine cock named Chanticleer because of his lusty crow, and other pet chickens. He had special food for the redbirds and mockingbirds, and it was a treat to see him feed them. Squirrels would eat out of his hand. People brought injured or sick animals and birds to him, and he tenderly nursed many of them back to health.

Uncle Jerry was a great lover of Shakespeare and often quoted passages from his plays and poems.

We next visited the vegetable and flower gardens. A man, half negro and half Indian, took care of the gardens, orchard, and the flocks of geese, turkeys, ducks, and chickens. The rows of vegetables that he grew were just as straight as could be, for he laid them off with string tied to stakes. Walks were left beside the rows and beds. In addition to the vegetables and flowers, he grew strawberries, raspberries and dewberries. Around the border he had many herbs, such

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as thyme, sage, mint and lavender.

A game of croquet was going on in the yard, and there were young people everywhere. .

When we went into the house, there were neighbor girls decorating for the wedding: Food enough to feed many people was being prepared in the kitchen, under the supervision of Grandpa's housekeeper, Mary Tally, as my grandmother had died some years before. One thing I remember about Mary Tally was that she was a plump little woman, who never walked anytime or anywhere but went in a fast little trot.

Several members of the family had already arrived to stay until after the wedding. There was Aunt Margaret, who lived nearby and was married to a Mr. Jones. They were there with their four children. Aunt Margaret was a blond, very lady-like and careful in everything she did. Her clothes were always in perfect order, her children well cared for and her home neatly kept.

Uncle Nip was there, with his wife, Aunt Lou, and their two children. His Name was Napoleon Bonapart, but he was called Nip for short. He talked in Biblical terms and often quoted poetry. He could recite many beautiful poems from Tennyson, Longfellow, and others.

Let me pause here to say that the Rodens were a handsome family, with a mixture of type and coloring. Some were very dark, others were blond, and others, including my mother, Nancy, had auburn or red hair. This red hair was passed on to me and my two brothers in varying shades of red, and to one great grandchild that I know of and my granddaughter, Margaret Carol Schultz.

Aunt Sarah, the bride to be, had long black hair and black eyes, and was tall and stately. After she showed us her clothes, she then packed her trunks. She had many pretty things, but uppermost in my memory was her exquisite parasol of black satin, lined with red, with black and red lace around it. The handle was ebony, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and Oh, joy!-she let me take it into the yard and walk around under it. I was so happy I almost died.

Sunday, the wedding day, arrived, and the weather was perfect. The house was lovely with flowers everywhere. Among the wedding gifts was ours, a silver caster for the dining table. Aunt Sarah was dressed all in gray and looked so pretty. Aunt Dicey had dressed her with all the ceremony that a Negro mammy could think of.

The groom, Mr. Melton, lived in a small town on the A.C.S. railroad not far from Birmingham. He came to Collinsville on the train, then to the house in a livery outfit. We all liked him; he was so pleasant and so in love with Aunt Sarah. When the ceremony was over and it was time for them to leave, her father could hardly bear for them to go. Aunt Sarah hated to leave, too. She would look at the house and say, "My lovely home; my sweet dear ones. It is hard to leave you." But we sent them off on a note of cheer, tying old shoes to the buggy and throwing rice after them.

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Aunt Sarah wrote letters back, telling us how happy she was in the old home Uncle Lawson had inherited from his mother. One year went by. Aunt Sarah came home for her baby to be born and to be cared for by the family doctor.

On her first wedding anniversary, with her dead baby in her arms, we buried her in the Roden plantation burying ground. In a row, as they had died, they were buried. First, my grandmother, who had died when I was two or three weeks old. I don't remember the order, but there were Uncle Ben, Uncle Fred, Aunt Kate, Aunt Missouri, my little sister, Talitha, my mother, Aunt Sarah, and later, Aunt Margaret, Uncle Nip, Uncle Jerry and Grandpa.

The same girls who were at Aunt Sarah's wedding were present at her funeral. They put flowers everywhere-white and purple iris, dogwood, azalea, and others. We left her in a bower of flowers, but such a sad farewell.

I thought her family could not bear to give her up. We stayed on for several days after the funeral; and when my father would say, "We must go home," Uncle Lawson or Grandpa would say, "No, no, don't go." But the day came when we had to leave for no matter what happens to us, we all have our jobs to do.

In a few years after Aunt Sarah's death, Uncle Jerry married a friend of mine, and Grandpa married a widow with three daughters. These girls became my friends, and I visited them often.

The Old Mill

A trip I had long wanted to make was with Fred to the mill to have a "turn" of corn ground in to meal.

One Saturday he told me I could go with him. I rode a horse, and he rode a mule with the sack of corn strapped to his saddle. We started early, as it took a long time for the corn to be ground. When we got there, Fred went fishing, while I went all over the place and saw everything,

The mill was made of large timbers. The wheel was turned by water in a small stream called a creek. The miller called it "crick." The corn was ground between two large stones. So slowly did it go through that it did not heat the meal, and it made delicious bread.

The miller, Mr. Murdock, was the kindest old fellow with long snow-white hair and beard and always with a twinkle in his deep-set, blue eyes. His father had moved from the Cumberland Mountains in a covered wagon, bringing the mill stones with him. He bought a few acres of poor sandy, land between Sand Valley and Big Will's Valley. The miller was an only child and inherited what little his father had. This included their Cumberland Mountain pronunciations, as they said "gwine" for "going" and "warn't" and "whar".

Mr. . Murdock said to me, "Sissie, play and have a good time ; then go to the house and visit the womenfolks. "

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By and by I went inside. Mrs. Murdock was a small energetic woman, always busy about the house. Since it was a Saturday she, her three daughters, and one son were preparing for the Sabbath. With white sand and lye soap they were scrubbing chairs, tables, water buckets, and floors alike-all unpainted. Pillows and feather beds were sunning on top of a hedge of cedars, kept trimmed flat on top. After being in the sun all day, they would smell so sweetly of cedar.

The Murdocks had three large rooms made of logs. Perhaps I should say three cabins, as you had. to go outside to get to one room from another. One big room was where the girls lived. They had four beds made with big feather beds, just a fluffy as could be. The beds were so high you had to step on a stool to get into them. Then you would sink down until only the tip of your nose would be visible.

The boy had a room in the loft and had to climb a ladder to get to it.

Near the house was a pond of water and on it about a hundred big fat geese were swimming, and about that many ducks were in the yard. There were many young chickens, goslings, and ducklings running around. One girl attended to the hatching, raising, and picking of the geese, ducks, chickens, and turkeys. They sold many pounds of feathers every year. They got fifty cents a pound for the feathers and one dollar per pound for down.

Another girl did all the spinning, carding, dyeing and weaving of the cloth. They had a room where the work connected with all this was done. There were pots and pots of dye all around the room, with thread being dyed. Commercial dyes were almost unknown at that time, and they made their own dyes, using barks and plants of many kinds.

Walnut bark made a beautiful brown, while indigo made blue. They used elder berries, sumac, and many other things from the woods for their colors. A beautiful shade of gray was made from the inner bark of young pines and sweet gums and "set" by boiling with copperas. For beauty and durability, this delicate shade of gray has not to this day been duplicated. It is beloved by the entire South as "Confederate Gray. " A woman whose cloth ran or faded was looked on with contempt.

The Murdocks had sheep for wool, cotton was grown For the cotton cloth, and they even grew flax, which they spun on a tiny flax wheel. I've seen these girls attractively dressed in homespun "linsey woolsey" dresses, trimmed in velvet ribbon, and in beautiful shades of red, green, brown and blue.

These people raised hops and made their own yeast for their bread.

When dinner time came, the father stopped the mill and the entire family, with me as their guest, gathered around the long unpainted table, scrubbed a snowy white, and covered with a home-woven flax cloth that was beautiful. The dishes were thick, heavy crockery. The knives and forks were horn-handled.

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After all heads were reverently bowed, Mr. Murdock returned "thanks" something like this, "Good Master, for food, shelter, raiment, and love, we thank thee." Then all at the table said, "Amen."

Such a dinner!-cooked on a fireplace in pots, dutch ovens and skillets, . There were tiny new Irish potatoes, tiny English peas, pickles of all kinds, big slabs of fried ham, brown gravy, pone corn bread and hot biscuits with honey from their own bees.

They ate "out loud," chewing with their mouths open, and using their knives to convey food to their mouths. But they were very jovial and had some sweet customs. For instance, the mother's plate was served first and the choicest food was put on her plate. No one left the table until all were through. All was calm, with no fuss or rushing about. After dinner, the father smoked his pipe in peace and content for awhile, then went back and started his mill. As I write this I wonder if in all America there is left a home life like this.

After dinner, they brought in the feather beds, pillows, and quilts, and "made" the beds. First, they smoothed the feather beds as smooth as a table top, with a long round stick. Then the sheets were put on; then a home-woven counterpane with wide fringe, hanging to the floor. Over this was placed a woolen coverlet or laidwork quilt but the counterpane was left showing all around. Large pillows with snow-white cases trimmed with hand-knitted lace made from thread they had carded and spun themselves completed the bed making.

Everything in the home was plain except a clock that was very old and a lamp they had brought from Tennessee.

One of the daughters made all of the clothing for the family, sewing all of it by hand including the men 's suits. Much of their cash money went into buying Calico for quilts which they made and sold. They had many beautiful patterns for their quilts, some pieced and some "laid work", and they made tiny little stitches in their quilting.

When Cousin Ben Roden built his new home in Birmingham, his wife, Cousin Ella, got us to buy five beautiful coverlids and some down pillows from them for her. She paid twenty-five dollars each for the coverlids. They were much admired, for such things, even then, were already getting scarce and much work went into the making. .

By and by, Fred came in with a long string of small fish. He dressed everyone of them, had them fried, and sat for a long time patiently eating the small, bony things, for he dearly loved fish and oysters.

So we both had a good day, with these proud and happy people, who loved each other and their work.

(To be continued)

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