

"THEN AND NOW"

Reminiscences and Historic Romance, 1856 to 1865

BY JUDGE D. F. MORROW

Rutherfordton, N. C.

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CHAPTER SIX

At the Muster Ground, 1862

(Continued)

Just as the crowd began to quiet down and talk about the things that had happened, Aunt Julia and Uncle Johnny found me and Tom and Dixie. Aunt Julia said, "why bless my life, Tommie," for she called Thomas Jefferson, Tommie, and we all just called him Tom, you know. "Where have you been all this good day. Me and Pa have been looking all over the crowd for you and thought you were lost, Haven't we Pa?" For that is what she called Uncle Johnny. There were other mothers looking for their boys that day, for they were scattered all over the muster ground. Now that the speaking was over the folks scattered and were walking about and talking, as well as the boys and girls. For just as we were talking to Aunt Julia and Uncle Johnny, Bill Sniffles and Mattie passed us, and were walking just as close together as they could. And, Mat, for that is what Tom called her, was laughing right out loud and Bill, he was just stepping high like, you know, and looking right down at Mat same as if there were no one else on the grounds, but them. Now that is the way they were doing for Tom said they were and they were. Tom and I now started to take in what was going on around the grounds and right ahead of us, up under a big old oak tree, stood that same old big wagon with the old woman sitting in the rear end and had her cider, cakes and brandy, same as she had at the muster a year ago, and was smoking that same old pipe and selling things just like she did then. I told Tom she was here before, for Tom wasn't. We wondered if she just stayed here all the time, but she didn't.

All was now in a general mix-up. For everybody was talking with everybody else, just like folks do at such places and times, you know. For right out in the thickest of the crowd stood William Buster, and just a few yards from me and Tom. He had his hat (no—it was his Rebel

cap), off, in his hand and was "kinder" looking down like and had a big smile on his face and looked like he was listening to some one talking, and me and Tom began to rush thru the crowd to get where he was, for we had not seen him since he threw Sid Gitsome away. For that is the way Tom said he done Sid, and it was. Just as we got close up to him Tom said, "Look, if 'yander' ain't Annie Lightfoot and she is talking to Uncle Bill," and she was laughing till the tears were running down her pretty face.

Now Annie and William Buster had been sweethearts for ten years or more, so Tom said, and it was so, for Aunt Julia and Uncle Johnny said it was so, or rather Uncle Johnny said through his nose, "Well, probably it is so, or it may be so." For Uncle Johnny never was positive about anything. Anyway, it was generally said in the community that Annie Lightfoot and William has "split up," for this is what they called it in those days, when young people who had been courting for a time and quit, folks said they split up.

Now, if you know what that means, that is what they had done, for they had not spoken for several months for Aunt Julia said they hadn't. Aunt Julia and Tom both said they had fallen out about the war, and split up for good.

Now, Annie Lightfoot was a Secessionist or Rebel of the very strongest kind. Annie's Pa owned lots of negroes, and most of this kind of folks in the south were strong for the war and hated Yankees. Now William Buster had for some time, been, as the old folks said, on the fence, and it was this that he and Annie were talking about when they had split up. Annie told him never to come to her home again, and he didn't. The first time they had met was at the Muster Ground, on the day of the speaking and dog fight. The same day that William Buster had thrown Sid away.

Annie Lightfoot, as we have seen, was a rebel, Secessionist and a Confederate. She had an old servant

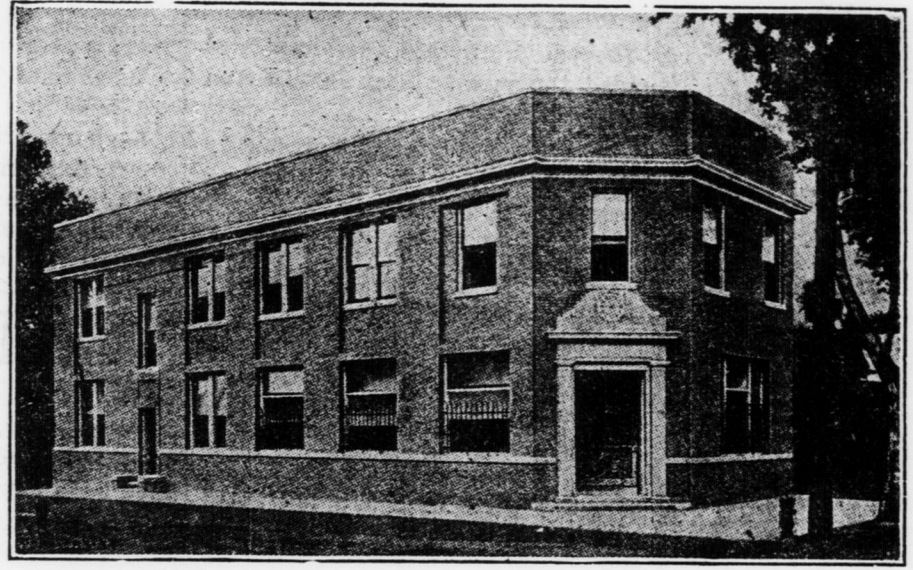
whose name was Charles. This was her old negro slave who cared for Annie's riding horses, drove her carriage about the country when she wanted to ride in the carriage and when she wanted to ride horse back, Charles would put the saddle on one of the horses and lead him up for Annie to mount. Then Charles would mount another horse and ride along behind, so that if anything should happen to Annie or the horse, Charles was on hand to look after things. When she would want to dismount, Charles was there to hold the horse and carry him to the stable or hitching post and wait till Annie was ready to go again.

On this July day, 1862, Annie decided to ride horseback to the Muster Ground. And of course, old Charles had the gay steed ready and waiting for her. Soon they were on their way to the grounds. When she arrived old Charles was there to take the horse. Annie with some friends of the upper strata of society moved away to the speaker's stand and there remained to hear the speech and wave her handkerchief and cheer for the Confederate or Rebel cause. But, like other folks, after speaking was over, was attracted to the crowd around William Buster accordingly made her way down that way. Before she got there some one told her that William Buster was the grandest Rebel on Muster Ground. For he had just then whipped one Union Scalawag and run all the rest clear off the grounds. And Annie didn't do a thing but just raise that lily white hand and handkerchief and shout "Hurrah for William Buster!" And made a bee-line through that crowd till she was standing right up close to him and just as me and Tom got there, she was saying something—Tom said she said, "she wanted to get down on her knees to him and thank him for what he had done that day," and was begging his pardon for telling him he could not come to her home any more. Tom said she was and she was. And if they ever had a split-up, as folks said, it seemed now that they were going to split down or back, Tom said they would, and they did.

Now Annie Lightfoot was one of the most handsome of the Southern beauties of that day—rather tall, about five feet eleven, slender, but muscular and active. It was said that Annie could spring from the ground to her side saddle on a horse sixteen hands high. I have said side saddle, for in those days ladies only rode side saddles. But now they ride astride, but Annie didn't—Some difference, then and now?

But now the sound of the drum and fife was heard and the muster was in progress, Captain somebody was calling out the figures and giving commands. There was a step, for they were now passing down the road toward the east end of the grounds and right in the middle of the Shelby road, to the very spot where the dogs had fought and William Buster had thrown Sid Gitsome out of the country; when the Captain said "halt!" and the marchers stopped stark still, standing erect, all dressed in the Rebel gray, coats, cap, and all. The officer then walked along beside and said, "Right face." All turned and looked square at the captain. He said something and each soldier dropped, not his gun, but his spear or pike, down by his side. The command was given shoulder arms and those spears, or pikes, went back on the men's shoulders. And then it was "right about face; march." And the step, step, step again off up the road toward Rutherford Town, but stopped in front of the speaker's stand. Now I have said that they did not have guns for their drill. While writing this part of these stories, I saw my friend, K. J. Carpenter who was in Co. "I" and he said they first drilled not with

(Continued On Page Six)



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