

"THEN AND NOW"

Reminiscences and Historic Romance, 1856 to 1865

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CHAPTER 39

The Aftermath of the 13th and Other Doings—1856-1865.

Now that the judgment day or the 13th of December, had past the folk in Burnt Chimneys Township and in other sections of the South where they had been effected by the scare of the uprising, which didn't come, were feeling that after all they might live, and do well yet. For on the Sunday following, the whole settlement met, at the church for a kind of a thanksgiving. Parson Loudlung was on hand with his Bible but with less fire and brimstone than usual. For the regular service was to be given over to Thanksgiving. Uncle Johnny, Aunt Julie, Mattie, Tom and Dixie ("Dixie" was Tom's dog you know), were first on the grounds. Aunt Julie had recovered from the shock and fall on the night of the 13th and had on her Sunday best and that big smile. Soon the yard and grounds were full of folks. Each telling the experience they had on the horrid night. They were many and varied much, for some had

failed to get to the places appointed for safety and had spent the night in the woods, in groups. But Aunt Julie could be heard above the conversation of the others and she said, "Bless my soul, it is good to be here again for when the guns began to fire that might I never expected to see this good place any more."

Tom was there, too, and talking, for he it was who said "look yonder!" And right up the road came a carriage drawn by the two big bay horses and old Charles setting up high on the driver's seat and within was Annie and Colonel Litefoot. Now this was something new for the Colonel rarely ever went to this church, for he was an Episcopalian. Tom said he didn't know what that was, but here he was and had the fine carriage. A carriage then was a curiosity, for there were but few in the country. Only the very rich could afford them then. Most of the people who went to church walked, rode horseback or went in wagons and carts, I mean of course, in the country.

Charles soon unhooked the horses opened the carriage door, for the thing had a door something like a Ford car of today. Henry may have gotten his patent from it, I don't know. The carriage had also a rear seat called "the negro seat," and here it was Rena rode, for she was along as well as Charles.

Out of curiosity or otherwise the folks gathered round that carriage like bees around a honeysuckle blossom. Charles aided the Colonel in getting out and turned to assist Annie but she had gotten out on the other side, for William Buster had made his way through the crowd and opened the door for Annie. Gentlemen then it seemed could always be in the right place and at the right time when their lady friend was about and boys and young men do that way now. It may appear strange that young folks then in war times could always get together and it is strange that they do now but they do even if they have to meet in a head-on collision in an automobile wreck forty miles an hour. They just somehow would meet each other then and they do now. Times change but human nature does not. There is no evolution business about this thing for it has been so since Adam and is so now. They will just meet somehow and somewhere.

Soon there was a song raised in the church and this was the signal for all to go in the Meeting House for that is what it was called then. And it was that alright, for everybody seemed to meet there. Now in the old meeting house of the South land before and during the war the white folk prepared seats either in the rear or up in the gallery for the negroes and here they sat during the services. That day Charles and Rena occupied one of those seats but now they have separate churches. After song and it was no jazz tune music like we hear in many churches today but of the old school music

and the old melodies, the preaching began. There was such a crowd Parson Loudlung could not refrain from not only giving thanks but for an hour or so he talked long and loud. At the close of the sermon Aunt Julie shouted and the Parson's voice seemed mild when compared to the hallaluhahs of the Aunt Julie's.

Just as Aunt Julie's shouts ceased their were many a sob and teary eyes. But things can change quick and fast sometimes in a church as well as elsewhere. For all eyes were turned toward the door and down the aisle came Bill Sniffles of one-hand fame and hanging on to his right arm was the prettiest little black eyed girl you ever saw. But it was easy to see that no one knew the girl but everybody knew Bill. Quietly they came down the aisle and that long white veil told the tale. Bill had caught a beauty and was bringing her right up to the altar. The worst of it was, if there was any worst about it, there was Mattie and Aunt Julie, right there in the church, but such things happened then and they do now sometimes. As Bill and the white veil drew nearer the aroma of cinnamon and cloves permeated the air. Mattie and Aunt Julie both sniffed and turned up their noses. People did that way then and they do now. It was cinnamon and cloves then; it's musk cologne, talcum powder and lipsticks now. But notwithstanding all this perfumery coming into the church the Parson did not falter but in that loud tone of voice there and then after a long sermon pronounced them man and wife and told them if they ever parted they would go to hell sure. After the benediction and handshaking with the parson, for he did not have to rush out and head the folks off to shake, for they came to him, all the folks poured forth into the yard again, for then they did not run home as soon as church was over like they do now, but stood around and talked. On this day there was something to talk about, the 13th had passed and Bill Sniffles had married a strange girl and left Mattie high and dry.

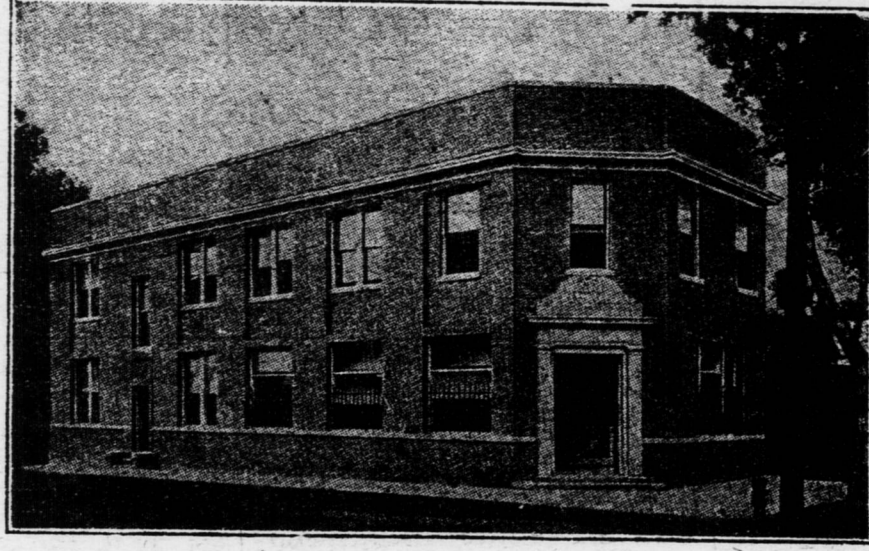
But Tom said "Mat didn't care for Bill nohow," because she said she didn't." Mattie did not congratulate Bill, neither did she meet Bill's wife. Aunt Julie said she could not stand to look at Bill's wife and was going home and she did. Such things happened back in the sixties and as many queer ones happen today. But now the talk began to turn to the condition of things at the front. For there was now no doubt but that the South was losing ground at almost every place. And while the people were delighted that the fearful 13th had passed and but little damage done, yet the news coming in from the front were becoming alarming. Defeat of States right seemed to be certain and what would be the results was becoming a topic of conversation. Squire Flaxen, one of the deacons in the church, was out in the yard and talking to Col. Litefoot and said "If the South loses, many of its leaders would be tried for treason and who they would be no one could tell." But Col. was of the opinion that we were not traitors but only rebels. While there were differences in the opinions expressed there was fear and cringing among many even at that time. Annie and William had met Bill Sniffles and his wife in the yard and congratulated them. It seemed that Bill's wife had lived in South Carolina and belonged to one of the best families. William knew her father he said.

One of the negroes arrested on the night of the 13th near the Litefoot home belonged to the father of Mrs. Sniffles and William had sent him home by Bill Sniffles and Bill had stolen the girl and brought his stolen goods to the church and they were married. He had met her before, of course, and was wearing brass buttons. The rebel uniform and brass buttons caught the girls in the sixties and they do yet. From time immemorial the uniform has been attractive to the ladies; it has been and is now. Aunt Julie said after the marriage that she had married him for his buttons, and in a way it was so then and was during the world war.

There were many war brides in the sixties but most of them stood and lived together for life. Bill and his wife did; but now it is different for a great number of world war brides are trying to marry something else besides buttons and a uniform. Divorce then was seldom, but common as fleas now.

(To Be Continued)

Ralph Barnes: Don't rescue me, I want to die!
John Twitty, (who is a Boy Scout) Well, you'll have to postpone that, I want a life-saving medal.



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