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## TALES OF SLAVERY DAYS

Col. Olds Recalls Interesting Side  
Lights and Olden Superstitions



EARLY in the last century it was seen that the bringing of slaves to this country would have to be stopped, or at least checked. This trade had been inaugurated by the English when Sir John Yeamans was Governor of North Carolina, the seat of government being then at what is now known as Old Brunswick, below Wilmington, and directly across the river from the famous Fort Fisher. Sir John brought a curse, which yet remains, like a black blight, upon the land. Now the people would give millions of money to undo what he did, but it seems it can never be undone. ¶ As far back as the Revolutionary War it was felt by some leaders, and even Washington himself, that slavery would have to have an end some time, and as far back as that day there were manumissions of slaves by some of the great families. As time passed thousands of cargoes were brought in, landing all along the Gulf of Mexico and up to the lower South Atlantic coast, between Norfolk and Florida.

For a good many years before the Civil War the plan of stopping importations of slaves was more and more discussed. The United States had long been active against the slave trade, and various States took up the matter, and their action was very decided in forbidding the landing of slaves in their territory. Yet, in spite of this drastic legislation, there were numbers of slaves who were brought in in all sorts of secret ways. The slavers no longer dared to bring the black people into the larger ports, but shipped them in here and there, sometimes at neglected places where no watch was kept. All the world was finally in search of slave trading vessels, and only the most daring men would take the risk of this business, as capture meant perhaps death or imprisonment, since the ships of the various countries which pursued the slavers would fire upon them if they declined to stop. The English, who had been the first to bring the slaves into this country, were the first to take action in abolishing the slave trade. It must be stated that New Englanders were very active in this business, and that they made fortunes out of it.

It is said that in this section it was the New Englanders who really brought in the bulk of the slaves and who devised the slyest plans for eluding the vigilant cruisers which haunted the African coast in an endeavor to catch the vessels which were coming to these shores or to South and Central America. It is also maintained by many authorities that, while here had been slaves all over New England they had been largely disposed of because it was not found profitable to have them in that cold climate, where they did not thrive. ¶ It must not be thought that in the early days negroes alone were slaves, for the Caribs, natives of the islands in the South Atlantic, and also the Indians

on the mainland, were taken into slavery in great numbers; in fact, this absolutely destroyed the natives of the islands, none now remaining, while the Indians on the mainland, all along the coastal plain, very largely met this same fate, only excepting the Seminoles in Florida, who hid in their vast swamps, where yet they remain, in numbers almost unknown.

The negroes were, of course, objects of very high value, and as the country developed and the number of slaves brought in decreased, these values rose very rapidly. Whereas in 1820 a negro man of the right age, say, under thirty, was valued at \$600, his value had doubled by the time the Civil War began. ¶ There were in the South representatives of every African tribe of reasonable stature on whom the slave traders (almost entirely Arabs) could get their hands, and it was said that in South Carolina there were representatives of two score tribes at least. Some of these men were of very large stature and of graceful figure, with noses of the Roman type, finely arched feet and well-formed limbs, while others were of a very low type. ¶ These characteristics yet show themselves in various ways. There was very considerable miscegenation between white and negroes, of course unlawful, since in all North Carolina, for example, only one marriage of whites and blacks has ever been legalized, this having been done by a special act of the "Carpet-Bag" legislature of 1868.

There was never any slavery worth speaking of in the mountain regions, and but little in the mountain foot-hills. The greatest numbers of slaves were always near the coast where the farms were larger and the conditions of life demanded what may be termed the wholesale employment of labor, as in the rice fields, for example, where it was found that the negroes thrived all the year around, the conditions being very like those in their own country. ¶ There are some curious side-lights on the slave question in this State, and one of these developed at a meeting held very early in 1861 by a number of planters in the Roanoke River section. Representatives of seven counties then met at Scotland Neck to consider secretly the question of offering North Carolina, or a part of it, to the Emperor of the French, Louis Napoleon, this territory, to be held, as Mexico later was, under a sort of protectorate. This matter was gravely considered, your correspondent was informed by the late Dr. Wood, a cousin of the late distinguished United States Senator Matt W. Ransom, who was present at this conference, which resulted in nothing.

It was stated by one gentleman present that the Emperor of the French would not assent to the continued existence of slavery, to which another stated that this would be an insuperable impediment to such an alliance as the one proposed, as the planters could not do without slave labor, and believed that they could not control free labor. This is the only instance known in which such a matter was very seriously mooted by anyone, for it