



Harris, at his home in Georgia, ca. 1900

—Joel Chandler Harris—

“Aunt Fountain’s Prisoner”

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IT is curious how the smallest incident, the most unimportant circumstance, will recall old friends and old associations. An old gentleman, who is noted far and near for his prodigious memory of dates and events, once told me that his memory, so astonishing to his friends and acquaintances, consisted not so much in remembering names and dates and facts, as in associating each of these with some special group of facts and events; so that he always had at command a series of associations to which he could refer instantly and confidently. This is an explanation of the system of employing facts, but not of the method by which they are accumulated and stored away.

I was reminded of this some years ago by a paragraph in one of the county newspapers that sometimes come under my observation. It was a very commonplace paragraph; indeed, it was in the nature of an advertisement,—an announcement of the fact that orders for “gilt-edged butter” from the Jersey farm on the Tomlinson Place should be left at the drug-store in Rockville, where the first that came would be the first served. This business-like notice was signed by Ferris Trunion. The name was not only peculiar, but new to me; but this was of no importance at all. The fact that struck me was the bald and bold announcement that the Tomlinson Place was the site and centre of trading and other commercial transactions in butter. I can only

imagine what effect this announcement would have had on my grandmother, who died years ago, and on some other old people I used to know. Certainly they would have been horrified; and no wonder, for when they were in their prime the Tomlinson Place was the seat of all that was high, and mighty, and grand, in the social world in the neighborhood of Rockville. I remember that everybody stood in awe of the Tomlinsons. Just why this was so, I never could make out. They were very rich; the Place embraced several thousand acres; but if the impressions made on me when a child are worth any thing, they were extremely simple in their ways. Though, no doubt, they could be formal and conventional enough when occasion required.

I have no distinct recollection of Judge Addison Tomlinson, except that he was a very tall old gentleman, much older than his wife, who went about the streets of Rockville carrying a tremendous gold-headed cane carved in a curious manner. In those days I knew more of Mrs. Tomlinson than I did of the judge, mainly because I heard a great deal more about her. Some of the women called her Mrs. Judge Tomlinson; but my grandmother never called her any thing else but Harriet Bledsoe, which was her maiden name. It was a name, too, that seemed to suit her, so that when you once heard her called Harriet Bledsoe, you never forgot it afterward. I do not know now, any more than I did when a child, why this particular name

should fit her so exactly; but, as I have often been told, a lack of knowledge does not alter facts.

I think my grandmother used to go to church to see what kind of clothes Harriet Bledsoe wore; for I have often heard her say, after the sermon was over, that Harriet's bonnet, or Harriet's dress, was perfectly charming. Certainly Mrs. Tomlinson was always dressed in the height of fashion, though it was a very simple fashion when compared with the flounces and furbelows of her neighbors. I remember this distinctly, that she seemed to be perfectly cool the hottest Sunday in summer, and comfortably warm the coldest Sunday in winter; and I am convinced that this impression, made on the mind of a child, must bear some definite relation to Mrs. Tomlinson's good taste.



Turnwold Plantation, near Eatonton, Georgia, on which Harris worked during the Civil War, and which he used as the model for the Tomlinson house, n.d.

Certainly my grandmother was never tired of telling me that Harriet Bledsoe was blessed with exceptionally good taste and fine manners; and I remember that she told me often how she wished I was a girl, so that I might one day be in a position to take advantage of the opportunities I had had of profiting by Harriet Bledsoe's example. I think there was some sort of attachment between my grandmother and Mrs. Tomlinson, formed when they were at school together, though my grandmother was much the older of the two. But there was no intimacy. The gulf that money sometimes makes between those who have it and those who lack it lay between them. Though I think my grandmother was more

sensitive about crossing this gulf than Mrs. Tomlinson.

I was never in the Tomlinson house but once when a child. Whether it was because it was two or three miles away from Rockville, or whether it was because I stood in awe of my grandmother's Harriet Bledsoe, I do not know. But I have a very vivid recollection of the only time I went there as a boy. One of my playmates, a rough-and-tumble little fellow, was sent by his mother, a poor sick woman, to ask Mrs. Tomlinson for some preserves. I think this woman and her little boy were in some way related to the Tomlinsons. The richest and most powerful people, I have heard it said, are not so rich and powerful but they are pestered by poor kin, and the Tomlinsons were no exception to the rule.

I went with this little boy I spoke of, and I was afraid afterward that I was in some way responsible for his boldness. He walked right into the presence of Mrs. Tomlinson, and, without waiting to return the lady's salutation, he said in a loud voice,—

“Aunt Harriet, ma says send her some of your nicest preserves.”

“*Aunt Harriet, indeed!*” she exclaimed, and then she gave him a look that was cold enough to freeze him, and hard enough to send him through the floor.

I think she relented a little, for she went to one of the windows, bigger than any door you see nowadays, and looked out over the blooming orchard; and then after a while she came back to us, and was very gracious. She patted me on the head; and I must have shrunk from her touch, for she laughed and said she never bit nice little boys. Then she asked me my name; and when I told her, she said my grandmother was the dearest woman in the world. Moreover, she told my companion that it would spoil preserves to carry them about in a tin bucket; and then she fetched a big basket, and had it filled with preserves, and jelly, and cake. There were some ginger-preserves among the rest, and I remember that I appreciated them very highly; the more so, since my companion had a theory of his own that ginger-preserves and fruit-cake were not good

for sick people.

I remember, too, that Mrs. Tomlinson had a little daughter about my own age. She had long yellow hair and very black eyes. She rode around in the Tomlinson carriage a great deal, and everybody said she was remarkably pretty, with a style and a spirit all her own. The negroes used to say that she was as affectionate as she was wilful, which was saying a good deal. It was characteristic of Harriet Bledsoe, my grandmother said, that her little girl should be named Lady.

Emory Univ.



African American slaves on the Turnwold Plantation, n.d.

I heard a great many of the facts I have stated from old Aunt Fountain, one of the Tomlinson negroes, who, for some reason or other, was permitted to sell ginger-cakes and persimmon-beer under the wide-spreading China-trees in Rockville on public days and during court-week. There was a theory among certain envious people in Rockville, — there are envious people everywhere, — that the Tomlinsons, notwithstanding the extent of their landed estate and the number of their negroes, were sometimes short of ready cash; and it was hinted that they pocketed the proceeds of Aunt Fountain's persimmon-beer and ginger-cakes. Undoubtedly such stories as these were the outcome of pure envy. When my grandmother heard such gossip as this, she sighed, and said that people who would talk about Harriet Bledsoe in that way would talk about anybody under the sun. My own opinion is, that Aunt Fountain got the

money and kept it; otherwise she would not have been so fond of her master and mistress, nor so proud of the family and its position. I spent many an hour near Aunt Fountain's cake and beer stand, for I liked to hear her talk. Besides, she had a very funny name, and I thought there was always a probability that she would explain how she got it. But she never did.

I had forgotten all about the Tomlinsons until the advertisement I have mentioned was accidentally brought to my notice, whereupon memory suddenly became wonderfully active. I am keenly alive to the happier results of the war, and I hope I appreciate at their full value the emancipation of both whites and blacks from the deadly effects of negro slavery, and the wonderful development of our material resources that the war has rendered possible; but I must confess it was with a feeling of regret that I learned that the Tomlinson Place had been turned into a dairy-farm. Moreover, the name of Ferris Trunion had a foreign and an unfamiliar sound. His bluntly worded advertisement appeared to come from the mind of a man who would not hesitate to sweep away both romance and tradition if they happened to stand in the way of a profitable bargain.

I was therefore much gratified, some time after reading Trunion's advertisement, to receive a note from a friend who deals in real estate, telling me that some land near the Tomlinson Place had been placed in his hands for sale, and asking me to go to Rockville to see if the land and the situation were all they were described to be. I lost no time in undertaking this part of the business, for I was anxious to see how the old place looked in the hands of strangers, and unsympathetic strangers at that.

It is not far from Atlanta to Rockville, — a day and a night, — and the journey is not fatiguing; so that a few hours after receiving my friend's request I was sitting in the veranda of the Rockville Hotel, observing, with some degree of wonder, the vast changes that had taken place — the most of them for the better. There were new faces and new enterprises all around me, and there was a bustle about the town

that must have caused queer sensations in the minds of the few old citizens who still gathered at the post-office for the purpose of carrying on ancient political controversies with each other.

Among the few familiar figures that attracted my attention was that of Aunt Fountain. The old China-tree in the shade of which she used to sit had been blasted by lightning or fire; but she still had her stand there, and she was keeping the flies and dust away with the same old turkey-tail fan. I could see no change. If her hair was grayer, it was covered and concealed from view by the snow-white handkerchief tied around her head. From my place I could hear her humming a tune, — the tune I had heard her sing in precisely the same way years ago. I heard her scolding a little boy. The gesture, the voice, the words, were the same she had employed in trying to convince me that my room was much better than my company, especially in the neighborhood of her cake-stand. To see and hear her thus gave me a peculiar feeling of homesickness. I approached and saluted her. She bowed with old-fashioned politeness, but without looking up.

"De biggest uns, dee er ten cent," she said, pointing to her cakes; "en de littlest, dee er fi' cent. I make um all myse'f, suh. En de beer in dat jug — dat beer got body, suh."

"I have eaten many a one of your cakes, Aunt Fountain," said I, "and drank many a glass of your beer; but you have forgotten me."

"My eye weak, suh, but dee ain' weak nuff fer dat." She shaded her eyes with her fan, and looked at me. Then she rose briskly from her chair. "De Lord he'p my soul!" she exclaimed enthusiastically. "W'y, I know you w'en you little boy. W'at make I ain' know you w'en you big man? My eye weak, suh, but dee ain' weak nuff fer dat. Well, suh, you mus' eat some my ginger-cake. De Lord know you has make way wid um w'en you wuz little boy."

The invitation was accepted, but somehow the ginger-cakes had lost their old-time relish; in me the taste and spirit of youth were lacking.

We talked of old times and old friends, and I told Aunt Fountain that I had come to Rockville

for the purpose of visiting in the neighborhood of the Tomlinson Place.

"Den I gwine wid you, suh," she cried, shaking her head vigorously. "I gwine wid you." And go she did.

"I been layin' off ter go see my young mistiss dis long time," said Aunt Fountain, the next day, after we had started. "I glad I gwine deer in style. De niggers won' know me skacely, ridin' in de buggy dis away."

"Your young mistress?" I inquired.

"Yes, suh. You know Miss Lady w'en she little gal. She grown oman now."

"Well, who is this Trunion I have heard of?"

"He monst'ous nice w'ite man, suh. He married my young mistiss. He monst'ous nice w'ite man."

"But who is he? Where did he come from?"

Aunt Fountain chuckled convulsively as I asked these questions.

"We-all des pick 'im up, suh. Yes, suh; we-all des pick 'im up. Ain' you year talk 'bout dat, suh? I dunner whar you bin at ef you ain' never is year talk 'bout dat. He de fus' w'ite man w'at I ever pick up, suh. Yes, suh; de ve'y fus' one."

"I don't understand you," said I; "tell me about it."

At this Aunt Fountain laughed long and loudly. She evidently enjoyed my ignorance keenly.

"De Lord know I oughtn' be laughin' like dis. I ain' laugh so hearty sence I wuz little gal mos', en dat wuz de time w'en Marse Rowan Tomlinson come 'long en ax me my name. I tell 'im, I did, 'I'm name Flew Ellen, suh.' Marse Rowan he deaf ez any dead hoss. He 'low, 'Hey?' I say, 'I'm name Flew Ellen, suh.' Marse Rowan say, 'Fountain! Huh! he quare name.' I holler en laugh, en w'en de folks ax me w'at I hollerin' 'bout, I tell um dat Marse Rowan say I'm name Fountain. Well, suh, fum dat day down ter dis, stedder Flew Ellen, I'm bin name Fountain. I laugh hearty den en my name got change, en I feared ef I laugh now de hoss'll run away en turn de buggy upperside down right spang on top er me."

"But about this Mr. Trunion?" said I.

"Name er de Lord!" exclaimed Aunt Fountain, "ain' you never is bin year 'bout dat? You bin mighty fur ways, suh, kaze we all bin knowin' 'bout it fum de jump."

"No doubt. Now tell me about it."

Aunt Fountain shook her head, and her face assumed a serious expression.

"I dunno 'bout dat, suh. I year tell dat niggers ain' got no business fer go talkin' 'bout fambly doin's. Yit dar wuz yo' gran'mammy. My mistiss sot lots by her, en you been bornded right yer 'long wid um. I don't speck it'll be gwine so mighty fur out'n de fambly ef I tell you 'bout it."

I made no attempt to coax Aunt Fountain to tell me about Trunion, for I knew it would be difficult to bribe her not to talk about him. She waited a while, evidently to tease my curiosity; but as I betrayed none, and even made an effort to talk about something else, she began: —

"Well, suh, you ax me 'bout Marse Fess Trunion. I know you bleeze ter like dat man. He ain' b'long ter we-all folks, no furder dan he my young mistiss ole man, but dee ain' no finer w'ite man dan him. No, suh; dee ain'. I tell you dat p'intedly. De niggers, dee say he mighty close en pinchin', but deze is mighty pinchin' times — you know dat yo'se'f, suh. Ef a man don' fa'rly fling 'way he money, dem Tomlinson niggers, dee'll say he mighty pinchin'. I hatter be pinchin' myse'f, suh, kaze I know time I sell my ginger-cakes dat ef I don't grip onter de money, dee won' be none lef' fer buy flour en 'lasses fer make mo'. It de Lord's trufe, suh, kaze I done had trouble dat way many's de time. I say dis 'bout Marse Fess Trunion, ef he ain' got de blood, he got de breedin'. Ef he ain' good ez de Tomlinsons, he lots better dan some folks w'at I know."

I gathered from all this that Trunion was a foreigner of some kind, but I found out my mistake later.

"I pick dat man up myse'f, en I knows 'im 'most good ez ef he wuz one er we-all."

"What do you mean when you say 'you picked him up'?" I asked, unable to restrain my impatience.

"Well, suh, de fus' time I see Marse Fess

Trunion wuz terreckerly atter de Sherman army come 'long. Dem wuz hot times, suh, col' ez de wedder wuz. Dee wuz in-about er million un um look like ter me, en dee des ravage de face er de yeth. Dee tuck all de hosses, en all de cows, en all de chickens. Yes, suh; dee cert'n'y did. Man come 'long, en 'low, 'Aunty, you free now,' en den he tuck all my ginger-cakes w'at I bin bakin' 'g'inst Chris'mus; en den I say, 'Ef I wuz free ez you is, suh, I'd fling you down en take dem ginger-cakes 'way fum you.' Yes, suh. I tole 'im dat. It make me mad fer see de way dat man walk off wid my ginger-cakes.

"I got so mad, suh, dat I foller 'long atter him little ways; but dat ain' do no good, kaze he come ter whar dee wuz some yuther men, en dee 'vide up dem cakes till dee want no cake lef'. Den I struck 'cross de plan'ation, en walked 'bout in de drizzlin' rain tell I cool off my madness, suh, kaze de flour dat went in dem cakes cos' me mos' a hundred dollars in good Confederick money. Yes, suh; it did dat. En I work for dat money mighty hard.



"Well, suh, I ain' walk fur 'fo' it seem like I year some un talkin'. I stop, I did, en lissen, en still I year um. I ain' see nobody, suh, but still I year um. I walk fus' dis away en den dat away, en den I walk 'roun' en 'roun', en den it pop in my min' 'bout de big gully. It ain' dar now, suh,

but in dem days we call it de big gully, kaze it wuz wide en deep. Well, suh, 'fo' I git dar I see hoss-tracks, en dee led right up ter de brink. I look in, I did, en down dar dee wuz a man en a hoss. Yes, suh; dee wuz bofe down dar. De man wuz layin' out flat on he back, en de hoss he wuz layin' sorter up en down de gully en right on top er one er de man legs, en eve'y time de hoss'd scramble en try fer git up de man 'ud talk at 'im. I know dat hoss mus' des nata'lly a groun' dat man legs in de yeth, suh. Yes, suh. It make my flesh crawl w'en I look at um. Yit de man ain't talk like he mad. No, suh, he ain'; en it make me feel like somebody done gone en hit me on de funny-bone w'en I year 'im talkin' dat away. Eve'y time de hoss scuffle, de man he 'low, 'Hol' up, ole fel, you er mashin' all de shape out'n me.' Dat w'at he say, suh. En den he 'low, 'Ef you know how you hurtin', ole fel, I des know you'd be still.' Yes, suh. Dem he ve'y words.

Georgia Archives & History



Civil War soldiers, probably Union occupation troops, in winter quarters, Georgia, ca. 1864 (detail)

"All dis time de rain wuz a-siftin' down. It fall mighty saft, but 'twuz monst'ous wet, suh. Bimeby I crope up nigher de aidge, en w'en de man see me he holler out, 'Hol' on, aunty; don't you fall down yer!'

"I ax 'im, I say, 'Marster, is you hurted much?' Kaze time I look at 'im I know he ain' de villyun w'at make off wid my ginger-cakes. Den he 'low, 'I speck I hurt purty bad, aunty, en de wuss un it is dat my hoss keep hurtin' me mo'.'

'Den nex' time de hoss move it errortate me so, suh, dat I holler at 'im loud ez I ken, 'Wo dar, you scan'lous villyun! Wo!' Well, suh, I speck dat hoss mus a-bin use'n ter niggers, kaze time I holler at 'im he lay right still, suh. I slid down dat bank, en I kotch holter dat bridle — I don't look like I'm mighty strong, does I, suh?" said Aunt Fountain, pausing suddenly in her narrative to ask the question.

"Well, no," said I, humoring her as much as possible. "You don't seem to be as strong as some people I've seen."

"Dat's it, suh!" she exclaimed. "Dat w'at worry me. I slid down dat bank, en I kotch dat hoss by de bridle. De man say, 'Watch out dar, aunty! don't let he foot hit you. Dee one cripple too much now.' I ain' pay no 'tension, suh. I des grab de bridle, en I slew dat hoss head roun', en I fa'rly lif 'im on he foots. Yes, suh, I des lif 'im on he foots. Den I led 'im down de gully en turnt 'im a-loose, en you ain' never see no hoss supjued like dat hoss wuz, suh. Den I went back whar de man layin', en ax 'im ef he feel better, en he 'low dat he feel like he got a big load lif' offen he min', en den, mos' time he say dat, suh, he faint dead away. Yes, suh. He des faint dead away. I ain' never is see no man like dat, w'at kin be jokin' one minnit en den de nex' be dead, ez you may say. But dat's Marse Fess Trunion, suh. Dat's him up en down.

"Well, suh, I stan' dar, I did, en I ain' know w'at in de name er de Lord I gwine do. I wuz des ez wringin' wet ez if I'd a-bin baptize in de water; en de man he wuz mo' wetter den w'at I wuz, en goodness knows how long he bin layin' dar. I run back ter de big-'ouse, suh, mighty nigh a mile, en I done my level bes' fer fin' some er de niggers en git um fer go wid me back dar en git de man. But I ain' fin' none un um, suh. Dem w'at ain' gone wid de Sherman army, dee done hide out. Den I went in de big-'ouse, suh, en tell Mistiss 'bout de man down dar in de gully, en how he done hurted so bad he ain' kin walk. Den Mistiss — I speck you done fergit Mistiss, suh — Mistiss, she draw herse'f up en ax w'at business dat man er any yuther man got on her plan'ation. I say, 'Yassum, dat so; but he done

dar, en ef he stay dar he gwine die dar.' Yes, suh; dat w'at I say. I des put it at Mistiss right pine-blank.

"Den my young mistiss — dat's Miss Lady, suh — she say dat dough she spize um all dez bad az she kin, dat man mus' be brung away from dar. Kaze, she say, she don't keer how yuther folks go on, de Tomlinsons is bleeze to do like Christun people. Yes, suh; she say dem ve'y words. Den Mistiss, she 'low dat de man kin be brung up, en put in de corn-crib, but Miss Lady she say no, he mus' be brung en put right dar in de big 'ouse in one er de up-sta'rs rooms, kaze maybe some er dem State er Georgy boys mought be hurted up dar in de Norf, en want some place fer stay at. Yes, suh; dat des de way she talk. Den Mistiss, she ain' say nothin', yit she hol' her head mighty high.

"Well, suh, I went back out in de yard, en den I went 'cross ter de nigger-quarter, en I ain' gone fur tell I year my ole man prayin' in dar some'r's. I know 'im by he v'ice, suh, en he wuz prayin' des like it wuz camp-meetin' time. I hunt 'roun' fer 'im, suh, en bimeby I fin' 'im squattin' down behime de do'. I grab 'im, I did, en I shuck 'im, en I 'low, 'Git up fum yer, you nasty, stinkin' ole villyun, you!' Yes, suh; I wuz mad. I say, 'W'at you doin' squattin' down on de flo'? Git up fum dar en come go 'long wid me!' I hatter laugh, suh, kaze w'en I shuck my ole man by de shoulder, en holler at 'im, he put up he two han', suh, en squall out, 'Oh, pray marster! don't kill me dis time, en I ain' never gwine do it no mo'!'

"Atter he 'come pacify, suh, den I tell him 'bout de man down dar in de gully, en yit we ain' know w'at ter do. My ole man done hide out some er de mules en hosses down in de swamp, en he feard ter go atter um, suh, kaze he skeerd de Sherman army would come marchin' back en fine um, en he 'low dat he mos' know dee er comin' back atter dat man down dar. Yes, suh; he de skeerdest nigger w'at I ever see, if I do say it myse'f. Yit, bimeby he put out atter one er de hosses, en he brung 'im back; en we hitch 'im up in de spring-waggin, en atter dat man we went. Yes, suh; we did dat. En w'en we git dar, dat ar

man wuz plum ravin' destracted. He wuz laughin' en talkin' wid hese'f, en gwine on, tell it make yo' blood run col' fer lissen at 'im. Yes, suh.

"Me en my ole man, we pick 'im up des like he wuz baby. I come mighty nigh droppin' 'im, suh, kaze one time, wiles we kyarn 'im up de bank, I year de bones in he leg rasp up 'g'inst one er n'er. Yes, suh. It make me blin' sick, suh. We kyard 'im home en put 'im up st'ars, en dar he stayed fer many's de long day."

"Where was Judge Tomlinson?" I asked. At this Aunt Fountain grew more serious than ever, — a seriousness that was expressed by an increased particularity and emphasis in both speech and manner.

"You axin' 'bout Marster? Well, suh, he wuz dar. He wuz cert'n'y dar wid Mistiss en Miss Lady, suh, but look like he ain' take no intruss in w'at gwine on. *Some* folks 'low, suh, dat he ain' right in he head, but dee ain' know 'im — dee ain' know 'im, suh, like we-all. Endurin' er de war, suh, he wuz stricken wid de polzy, en den w'en he git well, he ain' take no intruss in w'at gwine on. Dey'd be long days, suh, w'en he ain' take no notice er nobody ner nuttin' but Miss Lady. He des had dem spells; en den, ag'in, he'd set out on de peazzer en sing by hese'f, en it make me feel so lonesome dat I bleeze ter cry. Yes, suh; it's de Lord's trufe.

"Well, suh, dat man w'at I fin' out dar in de gully wuz Marse Fess Trunion. Yes, suh, de ve'y same man. Dee ain' no tellin' w'at dat po' creetur gone thoo wid. He had fever, he had pneumonia, en he had dat broke leg. En all 'long wid dat dee want skacely no time w'en he want laughin' en jokin'. Our w'ite folks, dee des spized 'im kase he bin wid Sherman army. Dee say he wuz Yankee; but I tell um, suh, dat ef Yankee look dat away dee wuz cert'n'y mighty like we-all. Mistiss, she ain' never go 'bout 'im wiles he sick; en Miss Lady, she keep mighty shy, en she tu'n up her nose eve'y time she year 'im laugh. Oh, yes, suh; dee cert'n'y spize de Yankees endurin' er dem times. Dee hated um rank, suh. I tell um, I say, 'You-all des wait. Dee ain' no nicer man den w'at he is, en you-all des

wait tell you know 'im.' *Shoo!* I des might ez well talk ter de win', suh, — dee hate de Yankees dat rank.

"By de time dat man git so he kin creep 'bout on crutches, he look mos' good ez he do now. He wuz dat full er life, suh, dat he bleeze ter go downsta'rs, en down he went. Well, suh, he wuz mighty lucky dat day. Kase ef he'd a run up wid Mistiss en Miss Lady by hese'f, dee'd er done sumpn' ner fer ter make 'im feel bad. Dee cert'n'y would, suh. But dee wuz walkin' 'roun' in de yard, en he come out on de peazzer whar Marster wuz sunnin' hese'f and singin'. I wouldn't believe it, suh, ef I ain' see it wid my two eyes; but Marster got up out'n he cheer, en straighten hese'f, en shuck han's wid Mars Fess, en look like he know all 'bout it. Dee sot dar, suh, en talk en laugh, en laugh en talk, tell bimeby I 'gun ter git skeerd on de accounts er bofe un um. Dee talk 'bout de war, en dee talk 'bout de Yankees, en dee talk politics right straight 'long des like Marster done 'fo' he bin stricken wid de polzy. En he talk sense, suh. He cert'n'y did. Bimeby Mistiss en Miss Lady come back fum dee walk, en dee look like dee gwine drap w'en dee see w'at gwine on. Dem two mens wuz so busy talkin', suh, dat dee ain' see de wimmen folks, en dee des keep right on wid dee argafyin'. Mistiss en Miss Lady, dee ain' know w'at ter make er all dis, en dee stan' dar lookin' fus' at Marster en den at one er n'er. Bimeby dee went up de steps en start to go by, but Marster he riz up en stop um. Yes, suh. He riz right up en stop um, en right den en dar, suh, he make um interjuced ter one an'er. He stan' up, en he say, 'Mr. Trunion, dis my wife; Mr. Trunion, dis my daughter.'

"Well, suh, I wuz stannin' back in de big hall, en we'n I see Marster gwine on dat away my knees come mighty nigh failin' me, suh. Dis de fus' time w'at he reckermember anybody name, an de fus' time he do like he useter, sence he bin sick wid de polzy. Mistiss en Miss Lady, dee come 'long in atter w'ile, en dee look like dee skeerd. Well, suh, I des far'ly preach at um. Yes, suh; I did dat. I say, 'You see dat? You see how Marster doin'? Ef de han' er de Lord ain' in

dat, den he han' ain' bin in nuttin' on de top side er dis yeth.' I say, 'You see how you bin cuttin' up 'roun' dat sick w'ite man wid yo' biggity capers, en yit de Lord retch down en make Marster soun' en well time de yuther w'ite man tetch 'im.' Well, suh, dey wuz dat worked up dat dey sot down en cried. Yes, suh; dey did dat. Dey cried. En I ain' tellin' you no lie, suh, I stood dar en cried wid um. Let 'lone dat, I des far'ly boohooed. Yes, suh; dat's me. W'en I git ter cryin' sho' nuff, I bleeze ter boohoo.

"Fum dat on, Marster do like hese'f, en talk like hese'f. It look like he bin sleep long time, suh, en de sleep done 'im good. All he sense come back; en you know, suh, de Tomlinsons, w'en dey at deese'f, got much sense ez dee want en some fer give way. Mistiss and Miss Lady, dee wuz mighty proud 'bout Marster, suh, but dee ain' fergit dat de yuther man wuz Yankee, en dee hol' deese'f monst'ous stiff. He notice dat hese'f, en he want ter go 'way, but Marster, he 'fuse ter lissen at 'im right pine-plank, suh. He say de dead Tomlinsons would in-about turn over in dee graves ef dee know he sont a cripple man 'way from he 'ouse. Den he want ter pay he board, but Marster ain' lissen ter dat, en needer is Mistiss; en dis mighty funny, too, kaze right dat minnit dee want a half er dollar er good money in de whole fambly, ceppin' some silver w'at I work fer, en w'at I hide in er chink er my chimblly. No, suh. Dee want er half er dollar in de whole fambly, suh. En yit dee won't take de greenbacks w'at dat man offer um.

"By dat time, suh, de war wuz done done, en dee wuz tough times. Dee cert'n'y wuz, suh. De railroads wuz all broke up, en eve'y thing look like it gwine helter-skelter right straight ter de Ole Boy. Dey want no law, suh, en dey want no nuttin'; en ef it hadn't er bin fer me en my ole man, I speck de Tomlinsons, proud ez dee wuz, would er bin mighty pincht fer fin' bread en meat. But dee ain' never want fer it yit, suh, kaze w'en me en my ole man git whar we can't move no furder, Marse Fess Trunion, he tuck holt er de place en he fetcht it right side up terreckerly. He say ter me dat he gwine pay he board dat away, suh, but he ain' say it whar de Tomlinsons kin year 'im, kaze den dee'd a-bin a fuss, suh. But he

kotch holt, en me, en him, en my ole man, we des he't eve'y thing hot. Mo' speshually Marse Fess Trunion, suh. You ain' know 'im, suh, but dat ar w'ite man, he got mo' ways ter work, en mo' short cuts ter de ways, suh, dan any w'ite man w'at I ever see, en I done see lots un um. It got so, suh, dat me en my ole man ain' have ter draw no mo' rashuns fum de F'eedman Bureau; but dee wuz one spell, suh, w'en wuss rashuns dan dem wuz on de Tomlinson table.

"Well, suh, dat w'ite man, he work en he scuffle; he hire niggers, and he turn um off; he plan, en he projick; en 'tain' so mighty long, suh, 'fo' he got eve'y thing gwine straight. How he done it, I'll never tell you, suh; but do it he did. He put he own money in dar, suh, kaze dee wuz two times dat I knows un w'en he git money out'n de pos'-office, en I see 'im pay it out ter de niggers, suh. En all dat time he look like he de happies' w'ite man on top er de groun', suh. Yes, suh. En w'en he at de 'ouse Marster stuck right by 'im, en ef he bin he own son he couldn't pay him mo' 'tention. Dee wuz times, suh, w'en it seem like ter me dat Marse Fess Trunion wuz a-cuttin' he eye at Miss Lady, en den I 'low ter myse'f, 'Shoo, man! you mighty nice en all dat, but you Yankee, en you nee'nter be a-drappin' yo' wing 'roun' Miss Lady, kaze she too high-strung fer dat.'

"It look like he see it de same way I do, suh, kaze after he git eve'y thing straight he say he gwine home. Marster look like he feel mighty bad, but Mistiss en Miss Lady, dee ain' say nuttin' 'tall. Den, after w'ile, suh, Marse Fess Trunion fix up, en off he put. Yes, suh. He went off whar he come fum, en I speck he folks wuz mighty glad ter see 'im after so long, kaze ef dee ever wuz a plum nice man it wuz dat man. He want no great big man, suh, en he ain' make much fuss, yit he lef' a mighty big hole at de Tomlinson Place w'en he pulled out fum dar. Yes, suh; he did dat. It look like it lonesome all over de plan'ation. Marster, he' gun ter git droopy, but eve'y time de dinner-bell ring he go ter de foot er de sta'rs en call out, 'Come on, Trunion!' Yes, suh. He holler dat out eve'y day, en den, wiles he be talkin', he'd stop en look roun' en say, 'Whar Trunion?' It ain' make no

diffunce who he talkin' wid, suh, he'd des stop right still en ax, 'Whar Trunion?' Den de niggers, dee got slack, en eve'y thing 'gun ter go een'-ways. One day I run up on Miss Lady settin' down cryin', en I ax her w'at de name er goodness de matter, en she say nuff de matter. Den I say she better go ask her pappy whar Trunion, en den she git red in de face, en 'low I better go 'ten' ter my business; en den I tell her dat ef somebody ain' tell us whar Trunion is, en dat mighty quick, dee won't be no business on dat place fer 'ten' ter. Yes, suh. I tol' her dat right p'intedly, suh.

"Well, suh, one day Marse Fess Trunion come a-drivin' up in a shiny double buggy, en he look like he des step right out'n a ban'-box; en ef ever I wuz glad ter see anybody, I wuz glad ter see dat man. Marster wuz glad; en dis time, suh, Miss Lady wuz glad, en she show it right plain; but Mistiss, she still sniff de a'r en hol' her head high. T'want long, suh, 'fo' we all knowd dat Marse Fess wuz gwine marry Miss Lady. I ain' know how dee fix it, kaze Mistiss never is come right out en say she 'greeable 'bout it, but Miss Lady wuz a Bledsoe too, en a Tomlinson ter boot, en I ain' never see nobody w'at impatient nuff fer ter stan' out 'ginst dat gal. It ain' all happen, suh, quick ez I tell it, but it happen; en but fer dat, I dunno w'at in de name er goodness would er 'come er dis place."



Turnwold Plantation, n.d.

A few hours later, as I sat with Trunion on the veranda of his house, he verified Aunt

Fountain's story, but not until after he was convinced that I was familiar with the history of the family. There was much in that history he could afford to be proud of, modern though he was. A man who believes in the results of blood in cattle is not likely to ignore the possibility of similar results in human beings; and I think he regarded the matter in some such practical light. He was a man, it seemed, who was disposed to look lightly on trouble, once it was over with; and I found he was not so much impressed with his struggle against the positive scorn and contempt of Mrs. Tomlinson,—a struggle that was infinitely more important and protracted than Aunt Fountain had described it to be,—as he was with his conflict with Bermuda grass. He told me laughingly of some of his troubles with his hot-headed neighbors in the early days after the war, but nothing of this sort seemed to be as important as his difficulties with Bermuda grass. Here the practical and progressive man showed himself; for I have a very vivid recollection of the desperate attempts of the farmers of that region to uproot and destroy this particular variety.

As for Trunion, he conquered it by cultivating it for the benefit of himself and his neighbors; and I suspect that this is the way he conquered his other opponents. It was a great victory over the grass, at any rate. I walked with him over the place, and the picture of it all is still framed in my mind,—the wonderful hedges of Cherokee roses, and the fragrant and fertile stretches of green Bermuda through which beautiful fawn-colored cattle were leisurely making their way. He had a theory that this was the only grass in the world fit for the dainty Jersey cow to eat.

There were comforts and conveniences on the Tomlinson Place not dreamed of in the old days, and I think there was substantial happiness there too. Trunion himself was a wholesome man, a man full of honest affection, hearty laughter, and hard work,—a breezy,

companionable, energetic man. There was something boyish, unaffected, and winsome in his manners; and I can easily understand why Judge Addison Tomlinson, in his old age, insisted on astonishing his family and his guests by exclaiming, "Where's Trunion?" Certainly he was a man to think about and inquire after.

I have rarely seen a lovelier woman than his wife, and I think her happiness helped to make her so. She had inherited a certain degree of cold stateliness from her ancestors; but her experience after the war, and Trunion's unaffected ways, had acted as powerful correctives, and there was nothing in the shape of indifference or haughtiness to mar her singular beauty.

As for Mrs. Tomlinson,—the habit is still strong in me to call her Harriet Bledsoe,—I think that in her secret soul she had an ineradicable contempt for Trunion's extraordinary business energy. I think his "push and vim," as the phrase goes, shocked her sense of propriety to a far greater extent than she would have been willing to admit. But she had little time to think of these matters; for she had taken possession of her grandson, Master Addison Tomlinson Trunion, and was absorbed in his wild and boisterous ways, as grandmothers will be. This boy, a brave and manly little fellow, had Trunion's temper, but he had inherited the Tomlinson air. It became him well, too, and I think Trunion was proud of it.

"I am glad," said I, in parting, "that I have seen Aunt Fountain's Prisoner."

"Ah!" said he, looking at his wife, who smiled and blushed, "that was during the war. Since then I have been a Prisoner of Peace."

I do not know what industrial theories Trunion has impressed on his neighborhood by this time; but he gave me a practical illustration of the fact that one may be a Yankee and a Southerner too, simply by being a large-hearted, whole-souled American.