

**UNCLE ISAAC: OR, OLD
DAYS IN THE
SOUTH. REMEMBRANCE
OF THE SOUTH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649173037

Uncle Isaac: or, Old days in the South. remembrance of the South by William Dudley Powers

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM DUDLEY POWERS

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OR
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OR
Old Days in the South.

A REMEMBRANCE OF THE SOUTH.

BY WILLIAM DUDLEY POWERS.

"I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night."—Psalms lxxvii, 6, 7.

RICHMOND:
B. F. JOHNSON PUBLISHING CO.
1899.

TO
HOWARD AND DUDLEY,
WITH THE WISH
THAT THEY MAY LOOK BACK ONE GENERATION BEHIND
THEIR FATHER'S
FOR
AN EXAMPLE AND AN INSPIRATION.



PREFACE.

Maturity had not marked the author of this volume for its victim—maturity means responsibility and care and labor—when the revolution in Southern life was bad, and its recent fashions and ways were transferred to legend and song, and its exanimate factors to the philosophy of history. With the civil war the atony of a lost thunder trembled in the air, and a generation of Southern people felt that a Summer was ended. But a disappearing immaturity—of years—located him then in a time of life, when impressions are most securely fixed in memory's safest place. He has not forgotten, and not forgetting, he has fancied that he must remind those who may forget, of the glad and better things of the past, which may still follow life for good, and preserve something of the old inspirations for those who can get them only from one who does not forget.

"But how will the North take your book?" asked a friend, when the manuscript was read to him, and the question gave the publication pause. Reflection, however, brought the consciousness of the fact that the North was not over against the South, unfriendly. The North, the South, the East, and the West are the Union, and what is of value in history or tradition, and a pleasure of remembrance in one section must be of some value and of some charm to the whole country. The author had read with pleasant appreciation the idyls of New England, and it must be true that the New Englander will read with like satis-

faction the pastorals of the South. Then came the recollection of an incident, which as the interpretation of national friendship, that relationship which binds the people of the far separated sections together, convinced him that he need have no alarm about the sympathy of book-readers anywhere in the nation on this score.

Sitting one afternoon upon the porch of a hospitable house in Riverdale, where he had spent several happy days, the writer in reply to a requisition was tendered a match from a gold match case by his friend and host. The beauty of the case attracted him, and in the conversation which ensued, he learned that it had a story, and this is the story:

One morning toward the summer of 1865, a lady sent her card into the private office of a well-to-do New York gentleman. She was admitted. The gentleman, after courteously receiving her, asked to what he owed the honor of the call.

She replied, that she was a Southern lady in some distress, and had called to solicit his assistance.

Through the devastation incident upon the war, just closed, she added, she had been left with a plantation, but without seed or implements or mules, or money to purchase these necessary articles of equipment, and with no other possible source of support. Could she procure five hundred dollars, she was quite sure that she could make the plantation yield an income sufficient for the maintenance of her family, the payment of the interest, and presently for the liquidation of the debt. She then requested of him the loan of the five hundred dollars.

In utter astonishment at her request, he said: "Why, madam, I do not know you at all."

"I know that," she replied.

"Have you any security to offer me?"

"None, sir," she said.

"Then how can you expect me to advance you this money, and why do you apply to me?"

"Because," she answered, "I have heard that you are a generous, sympathetic man, and I believed you would appreciate my situation, and help me if you could. I am a lady, in much embarrassment; I must appeal to some one; I selected you. I will certainly return you the five hundred dollars with interest."

Something in her manner and speech, and the pathos of the situation prepossessed him to grant her most remarkable request, and in spite of the conviction that he was doing a probably very absurd thing, he lent her the money.

Year by year the interest was regularly paid, and after some years had passed, she called again at his office, returned him the principal, and presented him with this gold match case, asking him to keep it as a token of her appreciation of his kindness. She told him that she had taken some of her jewelry to Tiffany's, and out of it the match case had been made. On the top of the case there was engraved the name of "William H. Appleton." The name of a man given to such actions should be remembered with his deeds, and, therefore, in violation of his wish, doubtless, had it been asked, his name has been printed here.

With the remembrance of this instance of Northern generosity to a Southern appeal came the certain belief, that those of the family in the one part of the Union would be glad to know somewhat of the story of the family in the other, and that he who is there, while he might smile at the writer's simple pleasure, would look at his pictures in sympathy, criticising, it may be, the attempted literary work of a man, but not the happy facts of a life. So this book is published. *Dixi et salvavi animam meam.*

W. D. P.

Note.—The phonetics of the negro Dialect have been required to sustain some violence through the orthography used in this