

**THE OLD PLANTATION:
HOW WE LIVED IN
GREAT HOUSE AND
CABIN BEFORE THE WAR**

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The old plantation: how we lived in great house and cabin before the war by James Battle
Avirett

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JAMES BATTLE AVIRETT

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HOW WE LIVED IN GREAT HOUSE
AND CABIN BEFORE THE WAR

BY

JAMES BATTLE AVIRETT

Author of "Ashby and His Compeers," "Who Was
the Traitor?" etc.



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JAMES BATTLE AVIRETT.

THIS VOLUME IS GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF THE OLD PLANTER AND HIS WIFE—

THE ONLY REAL SLAVES ON THE OLD PLANTATION

OF MANY OVERGROWN CHILDREN, SERVANTS

ON THE ESTATE, FROM 1817 TO 1865—

THE FATHER AND MOTHER OF

THE AUTHOR.



INTRODUCTION.

ACTION and reaction—ebb and flow—seem to be the rule of life in its varied manifestations. Winter and Summer—Seedtime and Harvest, with their death into life—are in striking illustration of this rule. To the benumbing influences of that form of imperialism which swept over Europe, holding down as in a vise all effort at asserted individuality in citizenship, the student of history and its philosophies will recollect, came slow but sure reaction. Coming in form of the French Revolution, it was far, very far, from being an unmixed blessing. It liberated the individual from everybody and everything but himself. This it was powerless to do, because in its chaos it refused to recognize the condition precedent of all healthful life. It turned a deaf ear to the great truth, in its blind worship of Reason, that Order is Heaven's first Law. A power so strong as this social cyclone, working in the orbit of human weakness, could not be confined to France. It overleaped the channel and, though strongly resisted by the conservative forces of Anglo-Saxon England, it has left its influence upon that virile polity which had successfully withstood the mutations of centuries. Intrenching itself in Exeter Hall, London, it threw its

forces across the Atlantic and fortified them in Faneuil Hall, Boston. And thus it came about that it was the benumbing shadows of the French Revolution, in its contempt for law, order and precedent, which left such giants in the state as Mr. Webster, and Bishop Hopkins of Vermont in the Church without a counteracting following. Thus it was that the John Brown Raid, called into being by that bold, bad, strong book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," proved to be the *avant-coureur* of the Civil War.

This fearful struggle between the two sections, North and South, closed in one of its forms many long years ago. Pending this long, dark period of suffering, involving a proud people in some forms of sorrow, keener far than that known to either Poland or Hungary, in the manumission and enfranchisement of a race inferior both from heredity and servility, the South, possessing her soul in patience, has waited. Yes! wretchedly misunderstood, we have waited for the pendulum of public opinion to swing around to our side of the arc. God only knows in what bitterness of heart we have waited. We have waited in full loyalty to the Government, both State and Federal, and though in waiting we may not have grown strong, yet we have waited long enough, under the inspiring example and memory of the Christian Lee at Lexington, Virginia, to be full of hope that the tide is now setting in from the high seas of error, and that the day of our vindication in the world's judgment is nigh at hand.

Men, very thoughtful men, lacking in no element of manly loyalty to the powers that be, are free to assert that in the reaction which has set in, erroneous views as to the causes which led up to the war, as well as the facts in its conduct, are giving place to the truth. The Supreme Court of the country, in its appellate jurisdiction of last

resort, is affirming and reaffirming the constitutional doctrine of Statehood in its distinct autonomy. Public opinion from the lakes to the gulf, is voicing American utterance as to the superiority of the Caucasian race. From ocean to ocean there is a growing recognition that the tide has turned, in the steadily increasing thrift of the South. And thus it would seem to be that all things come to him who waits.

The writer of this book, the chaplain on the staff of that matchless Cavalier, Gen. Turner Ashby, Chief of Cavalry under Stonewall Jackson, has patiently waited for nearly forty years to tell his own story. While envy, hatred and malice ruled the hour, he well knew that it would be worse than "Love's Labor Lost," to do anything but wait—bide his time. He has waited until he hears falling from the lips of the distinguished Senator Hoar of Massachusetts largely the same arguments in his opposition to the imperialism at Manila as were employed by Southern senators in the United States Senate in the spring of 1861. He has waited until Colonel Henderson of the British Army, in his "Life of Stonewall Jackson," has placed Lee's lieutenant in the forefront of the world's great captains; and in doing so he has shown in a very striking manner that the appeal, which the silence of the South has slowly brought about, is largely vindicatory of her men and measures. He has waited, until the social conditions at the South before the war are necessarily assuming the misty forms of traditions, and will presently, unless rescued, become to the oncoming generations of the South as mythical as much of the Roman and Grecian stories. He has waited until to wait longer would be treasonable to duty. Having waited long, he now writes in loyalty to past generations of the South—such men