

Confederate Veteran

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THE OLD BLACK MAMMY.

The most unique character connected with the days of slavery was the old black mammy, who held a position of trust and confidence in nearly every white family of importance in the South. Acting as nurse for the children of several generations, she was also their mentor, holding them to strict account of what was expected of them as being "to the manner born." Thus she was an important member of the household, and for her faithfulness and devotion she has been immortalized in the literature of the South; so the memory of her will never pass, but live on in the tales that are told of those "dear dead days beyond recall." But it seems that there are some who feel that mammy has had her day in song and story as well as in the flesh and should be laid away for all time. On this line Mrs. L. H. Hammond, in writing of the efforts made by Southern white women through personal and club work to improve the condition of the negroes in their communities, says: "One of the first steps necessary is to bury the old black mammy. * * * Her removal will clear the atmosphere and enable us to see the old soul's granddaughters, to whom we must in justice pay something of the debt we so freely acknowledge to her." The New York *Sun* agrees with Mrs. Hammond in saying: "The old black mammy has served her purpose. She should be laid away decently."

Commenting on this, the Hon. Bridges Smith, in the *Macon Telegraph*, says:

"Bless your ignorant souls, honey, the old black mammy has been dead and buried these many moons. And if flowers were laid upon her grave and tears were dropped on the mound, it was right and proper. She deserved every flower and was due every tear. We shall never look upon her like again.

"The old black mammy does not now exist in the flesh and only in the memory of those who knew her as she was, not as she is written about and pictured by Northern writers. She is dead and long since buried, and she should rest in peace. She has no place, nor should she have, in these modern plans and schemes to better the condition of her granddaughters and great-granddaughters, some of whom might have undertaken to imitate her ways.

"It is only the imitations, the caricatures, of the devoted, the loyal, the ever-faithful old black mammy that the present generation knows. And this is why the *Sun*, in its ignorance of the original, says she is trotted out on so many occasions that she has become a racial type, a political institution, and a good deal of a bore. That the imitation should be got out of the way, and the sooner the better, may be all well and good; but as for the old black mammy as we knew and loved her, she is dead beyond resurrection."

JAMES CALLAWAY, IN MACON TELEGRAPH.

What Bridges Smith had to say about the old black mammy recalls to mind that Washington Irving in his "Bracebridge Hall" devoted a chapter to family servants. Irving loved the old family servants, who, he said, "are linked with the home of our heart, who have been the confidants of our boyish cares and schemes and enterprises, who have hailed us as we came home at vacation and been the promoters of all our holiday sports, who when we in wandering manhood leave the paternal roof and only return thither at intervals will welcome us with a joy inferior only to that of our parents."

This is a true picture of the old-time black mammy of days

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past and gone. And with those days passed the old mammy. Yet a few are still living, allowed to live on by a kind Providence that the new generation may know what a sure-enough, genuine old black mammy was to the old Southern home.

The old black mammy was certainly a character in the Southern home. When Gen. John B. Gordon was Governor of Georgia, he tendered a reception to President Grover Cleveland. The guests had gathered. "Mr. President," said Governor Gordon, "would you like to see a sure-enough, old-time Southern black mammy?" "I certainly would," replied Mr. Cleveland.

Governor Gordon called Bob, the butler, and told him to take the carriage out to Edgewood and bring his old mammy in to meet the President. Bob returned, but no mammy. The Governor espied Bob peering in at the door in a broad grin.

"Walk right in," said Governor Gordon, "and tell the President what mammy said. Bob hesitated to tell. "Speak out," said the Governor, "and tell the President exactly what message mammy sent me."

"Mammy say: 'You tell Marse John it too late for me to fix up, an', more'n dat, seeing quality is nothin' to me. Ise been used to quality all my born days. The President's folks warn't no such quality as my folks, nohow.'"

President Cleveland enjoyed the message, and he and Governor Gordon and the guests laughed heartily over it and the independence of old mammy.

"Aunt Tenny," as she is called, was a family servant of the Gatewoods of Putnam County, Ga. She nursed the late Any D. Gatewood when he was a baby; and when he became a man and was settled in Sumter County, Aunt Tenny was still his nurse, his family servant, who never left his home, but still resides there, cared for by his two sons, Furlow and Dudley Gatewood.

While in Americus Dudley Gatewood took Mrs. Frank Jones and me in his automobile out to his farm to see Aunt Tenny, who, now ninety-one years of age, lives in a comfortable house in the yard. The afternoon was chilly, but she had a bright fire, giving her home a cheerful aspect. Aunt Tenny is quite spry and moves about with ease. She gave us a cordial welcome, and her very manner and countenance expressed her joy, for she considered her visitors a part of the family. She had photographs of all the Gatewood and Furlow kin, the little ones and the grown ones, which she showed with much pride and affection, and she knew every one by them. Aunt Tenny still keeps up her custom of making ginger cakes and persimmon beer, the latter not under the ban as yet, and the grandchildren delight to go out and see her.

Aunt Tenny has a distinct individuality and loves to talk of Any Gatewood and "Miss Hallie," his wife. Said she: "There never was a better woman than Miss Hallie. She was so good to me, but her sons are just like her; they supply me with everything I want and make my life pleasant and comfortable."

The Gatewood home was the rallying place of the young people of Americus, and there never was a more charming hostess than Mrs. Hallie Furlow Gatewood. In all this Aunt Tenny took joyful part. No hour was too late and none too early for her to do a kindness.

At the negro fair in Macon some years ago it was arranged to set apart an afternoon for the old ex-slaves. Quite a number gathered, and Gov. Nat Harris and Dr. W. L. Pickard addressed them. Their tributes were tender and touched a responsive chord. One could see that the old negroes enjoyed the recollections of former days and gave evidences of appreciation. Numbers of old black mummies were in the audience, and tears filled their eyes as the speakers told of their loyalty and faithfulness and that the sons of the old masters held the old mummies in affectionate remembrance.

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These old ties had never been broken had not Reconstruction played its part. Emancipation did not do it; it was Reconstruction and the Freedmen's Bureaus. These did all that ingenuity could devise to detach the negroes from their old white folks. Reconstruction was a great curse to both races.

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