

LOUISA DAVIS

EX-SLAVE 106 YEARS OLD.

"Well, well, well! You knows my white folks on Jackson Creek, up in Fairfield! I's mighty glad of dat, and glad to see you. My white folks comes to see me pretty often, though they lives way up dere. You wants to write me up? Well, I'll tell you all I recollect, and what I don't tell you, my daughter and de white folks can put in de other 'gredients. Take dis armchair and git dat smokin' ash tray; lay it on de window sill by you and make yourself comfortable and go ahead."

"I was born in de Catawba River section. My grandpappy was a full blood Indian; my pappy a half Indian; my mother, coal black woman. Just who I b'long to when a baby? I'll leave dat for de white folks to tell, but old Marster Jim Lemon buy us all; pappy, mammy, and three chillun: Jake, Sophie, and me. De white folks I fust b'long to refuse to sell 'less Marse Jim buy de whole family; dat was clever, wasn't it? Dis old Louisa must of come from good stock, all de way 'long from de beginnin', and I is sho' proud of dat."

"When he buy us, Marse Jim take us to his place on Little River nigh clean cross de county. In de course of time us fell to Marse Jim's son, John, and his wife, Miss Mary. I was a grown woman then and nursed their fust baby, Marse Robert. I see dat baby grow to be a man and 'lected to legislature, and stand up in dat Capitol over yonder cross de river and tell them de Law and how they should act, I did. They say I was a pretty gal, then, face shiny lak a ginger cake, and hair straight and black as a crow, and I ain't so bad to look at now, Marse Willie says."

"My pappy rise to be foreman on de place and was much trusted, but

he plowed and worked just de same, mammy say maybe harder."

"Then one springtime de flowers git be blooming, de hens to cackling, and de guineas to patarecking. Sam come along when I was out in de yard wid de baby. He fust talk to de baby, and I asked him if de baby wasn't pretty. He say, 'Yes, but not as pretty as you is, Louisa.' I looks at Sam, and dat kind of foalishness wind up in a weddin'. De white folks allowed us to be married on de back piazza, and Reverend Boggs performed de ceremony."

"My husband was a slave of de Sloans and didn't get to see me often as he wanted to; and of course, as de housemaid then, dere was times I couldn't meet him, clandestine like he want me. Us had some grief over dat, but he got a pass twice a week from his marster, Marse Tommie Sloan, to come to see me. Bold as Sam git to be, in after years ridin' wid a red shirt long side of General Bretton in '76, dat nigger was timid as a rabbit wid me when us fust git married. Shucks, let's talk 'bout somthing else. Sam was a field hand and drive de wagon way to Charleston once a year wid cotton, and always bring back something pretty for me."

"When de war come on, Sam went wid young Marster Tom Sloan as bodyguard, and attended to him, and learned to steal chickens, geese, and turkeys for his young marster, just to tell 'bout it. He dead now; and what I blames de white folks for, they never would give him a pension, though he spend so much of his time and labor in their service. I ain't bearin' down on my kind of white folks, for I'd jump wid joy if I could just git back into slavery and have de same white folks to serve and be wid them, day in and day out."

"Once a week I see de farm hands git rations at de smoke house, but dat didn't concern me. I was a housemaid and my mammy run de kitchen, and us got de same meals as my marster's folks did."

"Yas sir; I got 'possum. Know how to cook him now. Put him in a pot and parboil him, then put him in a oven wid lots of lard or fat-back, and then bake him wid yaller yam potatoes, flanked round and round, and then wash him down wid locust and persimmon beer followed by a piece of pumpkin pie. Dat make de bestest meal I 'members in slavery days."

"Us got fish out of Little River nigh every Saturday, and they went good Sunday morning. Us had Saturday evenin's, dat is, de farm hands did, and then I got to go to see Sam some Sundays. His folks, de Sloans, give us a weddin' dinner on Sunday after us was married, and they sho' did tease Sam dat day."

"Like all rich buckra, de Lemons had hogs a plenty, big flock of sheep, cotton gin, slaves to card, slaves to spin, and slaves to weave. Us was well clothed and fed and 'tended to when sick. They was concerned 'bout our soul's salvation. Us went to church, learn de catechism; they was Presbyterians, and read de Bible to us. But I went wid Sam after freedom. He took de name of Davis, and I jined de Methodist Church and was baptized Louisa Davis."

"Patroller, you ask me? 'Spect I do member them. Wasn't I a goodlookin' woman? Didn't Sam want to see me more than twice a week? Wouldn't he risk it widout de pass some time? Sure he did. De patrollers got after and run Sam many a time."

"After de war my pappy went to Florida. He look just like a Indian, hair and all, bushy head, straight and young lookin' wid no beard. We never heard from him since."

"De slaves wash de family clothes on Saturday and then rested after doin' dat. Us had a good time Christmas; every slave ketch white folks wid a holler, 'Christmas gift, Marster' and they holler it to each other. Us all