

**[Mrs. C. G. Richardson]**

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From the time she watched her brothers ride away to war, Mrs. Richardson says her memory seems to be a blank until the news came that Sherman's army was on the way. She recalls the great excitement on the plantation then as slaves and members of the family scurried about picking valuables and food preparatory to leaving home for the upcountry. The Brunsons had planned to travel with their neighbors in a sort of caravan to escape the path of Sherman's march and the five Brunson children were thrilled at the prospect of traveling. The day came on which they were to start and she remembers the disappointment they all felt when her mother, sitting at the breakfast table, announced that she had decided not to leave, but remain and take her chances with the Yankees right in her own home. Their nearest neighbors, the Richardson family, whose plantation adjoined their own and whose son, Dr. C. G. Richardson, the little Hattie Brunson later grew up to marry, decided to remain at home, also.

The change of plans necessitated a lot of work to hide food and valuables. Food and articles of values were secreted in the walls of the house and buried in the lot where they were covered with dirt and manure. Mr. Brunson, who was beyond the age limit and did not get into the army until toward the last, divided all the meat and provisions which he was unable to hide between his slaves, as he did not believe the Yankees would take food from them. At last they saw Sherman's army marching up the road. Five men approached first and searched Mr. Brunson, but found nothing. He had taken the precaution of giving his oldest daughter, a girl of about fourteen, his much prized watch several days before and Mrs. Richardson accompanied her sister into the woods where they hid it beneath the gnarled root of a large tree.

The soldiers entered the house and plundered it from cellar to attic. They ripped open mattresses and pillows, scattering feathers and cotton everywhere, and took whatever they fancied. Mrs. Richardson tells how they took the children's rag dolls and tore them to pieces before their eyes. However, they saved their best-beloved china dolls by hiding them on their persons. Having wrought havoc to their satisfaction in the house, the soldiers then proceeded to destroy what they could on the outside. The gin house, full of cotton, was just across the road from the house and this they set on fire. They killed all the chickens, hogs and cattle for their own uses, and what they could not use of the flour, rice and grits, they emptied together on the ground. They carried off all the horses and mules and left the plantation bare of all food. Fortunately, they did not burn the house,

and also missed a lot of cotton which Mr. Brunson had stored in an empty house on the place.

The oldest Brunson girl was very pretty and several of the young Northern soldiers were smitten with her charms and tried to present her with gifts which they had pilfered from her father's house. Mrs. Richardson relates an incident which was far from funny to her then, but which, at this distance, often causes her to smile. She was sitting on the front porch with her sister when one of the soldiers offered her two hams from her father's smokehouse. The older sister refused the hams and the smaller child was astonished at such behavior for, in her opinion, hams were not to be spurned at that time when food was at a premium. The soldier put the hams on the edge of the porch and told her sister: "Well, I'll just leave them here for you in case you change your mind." She could scarcely keep from jumping up and grabbing the hams herself, but her sister rose contemptuously and kicked them to the ground.

Terrible as the situation was, the Brunson family got at least one good laugh at the expense of the Yankees. Mr. Brunson kept bees and one of the soldiers decided he would like to have some honey. It was obvious that he knew nothing of the habits of bees, for he marched boldly up to one of the hives and, stopping, smashed it open. When he raised his head it was literally black with bees. With a wild yell, he tore off frantically down the road to the accompaniment of the delighted laughter of the Brunsons.

Sherman's army was three days in passing the plantation and pitched camp on the Richardson place a mile away. From there, foraging parties would descend upon the Brunson home all during the day and night. If they found any of the children eating, they would snatch the food out of their hands and throw it away. The only food they had while the soldiers were in the vicinity were potatoes which their mother baked in the fireplace and they learned to slip the potatoes in their clothes when they heard soldiers coming. Once five officers visited their home and looking about at the disorder, inquired of Mrs. Brunson whether their soldiers were responsible. Mrs. Brunson, a quiet, retiring woman, spoke up with withering sarcasm: "You don't think I did it, do you?" They told her that she could have had a guard around her home if she had asked for it and she retorted that she had asked and had been refused. Spying the piano, one of the officers sat down and played a merry tune while another danced about the room. Mrs. Richardson says she never heard that tune before or since until recently when she heard it over the radio. It brought back to her vividly that scene of 73 years ago.