Mrs. Emily Miller Danton
1600 Gondon Avenue
Charlottesville, Virginia

RECOLLECTIONS OF LETITIA DABNEY MILLER

Chicago, begun in August 1926

I was born January 8, 1852, in Raymond, Miss., the youngest child of middle-aged parents, the tenth child of my mother. She was 42, my father 52.[1] We had an old rambling home, accretions built on the original log structure, and four acres of ground. My earliest memories are of the front yard, all grass, china trees, hardy flowers and shrubs, with a line of young cedars skirting the fence. It seems to me to have been perpetual spring there. I played with flowers for dolls, and with Tishy, a mulatto girl four years my senior, whose job it was to look after me. She was kept separate from the other Negro children, even sleeping in the room with me, on a pallet, I in a trundle bed. She is still living--a big fat old woman. She was one of the best characters I have ever known, honest, truthful, and reliable. In all the years when she was my daily playmate she never said one word to me she would not have said in my mother's hearing. I was very much afraid of my father, why, I never knew. No one else was afraid of him. My mother used vainly to try to bribe me to speak to him voluntarily. I never did until after I was twelve. Nowadays a psychoanalyst would know that it was something that occurred before I could consciously remember that produced this deep impression.

Of slavery I have nothing good to recall. My own parents were considered exceptionally humane; they would not have considered such treatment humane if applied to themselves. All children hated the institution, before self-interest got in its plea. I loved the slaves, and listened with tears to the stories of cruelty they whispered to me. Some of my father's slaves had been seized and sold for his debts, and they were the near relatives of those left behind. We hated my Mother's brother, for whom this debt had been contracted. The slaves' new owners were very harsh.

My father was visionary; poor, not practical. As a horticulturist he would have been a great success, and he made an excellent probate judge for many years. His brother was a successful, wealthy cotton planter. In his house we saw all we knew of luxury, but no one would now call it comfort. Water from a pump in the yard, smoky wood fires, one staircase, down the center of the big hall, which was the family sitting room. Except in very cold weather, all slops, ashes, etc., must come down those stairs, and all wood and water go up. The floors and walls of this house were beautiful, the furniture, linen, etc. handsome. There were fine horses, a carriage, numerous servants, and a lavish table. These atoned for the lack of what we now consider comfort. We had plenty of servants in our own home, too, and always, until the Civil War, a plentiful table, but the children all went barefoot; our clothes were made, patched and darned by my mother, assisted by Maria, the housemaid. We wore them as long as they held together. We had no carpets, poor cheap furniture, curtains made of white cotton goods by my mother. No blinds, or

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Mrs. Miller jotted down these random recollections over a period of years, beginning when she was 74. They were done for her children, at the request of one of them, and were not read until after her death. They have been reproduced for the family exactly as she wrote them, in spite of some repetition.

shades. My mother knitted our stockings and my father's socks, made his shirts--all by hand, no sewing machine. I never saw her idle, day or night, except on Sunday. She loved reading but read only on Sunday, considering it a sinful waste of time in the week. When I was the mother of several children and she lived with me, she often reproached me for reading.

My father was trustee for some property in Mississippi, through the will of an old friend in Virginia, named Morris, who died leaving an only daughter. This lady came to our house in December, 1860, and remained for several days. She was, then, as I remember her, a very handsome young widow, aged twenty-five. Only a year earlier her husband and little girl, Janey, had died of a malignant fever on her cotton plantation. She now had only a baby boy of two. On seeing me, she declared that I was the image of her lost Janey, and began to beg my parents to give me to her, or at least to let her have me to educate until I was 18, when I could choose my own home. She said, very truly, that she was rich and could give me every advantage, take me to Europe, etc., while in Raymond there was not even a public school. My mother, I think, would not have consented, but I was the pet of my four grown sisters; they had all decided that I was a wonder and deserved more advantages than had fallen to their meager lot. So, in January 1861, just as I passed my ninth birthday, this lady came and took me to her home in Charleston, S.C. We stopped first in Jackson, Miss. Where we went to a hotel. It was all an astonishing experience for me. Never had I seen a railroad. The gas jet in the hotel and the coal fire in our room amazed me.

In Mrs. Davis's home in Charleston I tasted real luxury, but I was very homesick, missed my mother and my two brothers, who were three and five years my elders, and used to cry myself to sleep at night. Mrs. Davis dressed me like a doll, in silk and velvet dresses and hats, replaced as Spring came on with exquisite tissues and elaborate white fabrics. My feet were forced into black satin boots, laced on the inside. I remember it took two maids and a shoehorn to get them on. And, oh, how I suffered in church from those shoes! I actually bit, or gnawed, a piece out of the back of the pew in front, as I stood up for the Psalms and hymns. We went to St. Paul's, but I was taken occasionally to St. Michael's. Mrs. Davis was very puritanical. I remember being rebuked for asking to be allowed to gather some violets on Sunday. There was a beautiful flower garden, the borders of the beds edged with sweet violets, blue with bloom in February and March.

I was treated with great kindness in Charleston. Mrs. Davis always sat by me during my music lesson, and also daily while I practiced. I was sent to a French school, very fashionable, and was the only small child there. The others were fourteen at the very least. There was no class for me. I was made to read French, with no attempt even to teach me the meaning of the words. I cannot remember when I could not read English. I had been taught entirely at home, and while I had read everything suitable--and much unsuitable--for a child in our home, I had very little formal knowledge. I had no talent for music and could not learn. After a few months Mrs. Davis took me from the French school and sent me to one with her niece, Lena Rees. This school was taught by some ladies named Sass, and there I began to learn. I loved the baby, Morley Davis,[2] very dearly. He has since been governor of Virginia. Every afternoon I was dressed elaborately and taken to drive in an elegant carriage on the Battery. We then stopped at a confectioner's and had icecream. I had never tasted it until now. I asked the first time

for chocolate, and though I longed to know how some of the other ices tasted, I never dared to change for fear that they would not be equal to the chocolate. The table at our house was most luxurious: two cooks, man and wife, presided in the kitchen, slaves, of course. Mrs. Davis did not know how to win my confidence; I was never at ease with her. Her sister, Mrs. Rees, was full of tact and kindness and would have won my heart completely, had it been permitted. But Mrs. Davis, "Aunt Annie," as I called her, was jealous, and determined that Mrs. Rees should have no part in me. So I was forbidden to call her cousin, as requested, or to seek her room. What was hard to bear was that Aunt Annie forbade me to tell her sister that I was acting under orders, so I was blamed for coldness and indifference.

I was entirely obedient. Twice she switched me, both times I think unjustly. Once was because I had borrowed a book from a playmate and, being afraid of her, I hid it. The book was a Sunday School story. I thought at the time that it was a great sin to have hidden this book and that my whipping was just. Now I know it was not. The other occasion was one when I had been persistently slow in dressing myself for breakfast--and she made me go without breakfast. As I had been given coffee every morning, the deprivation gave me a violent headache and nausea. On seeing me so sick, she said, "You won't be late again, will you?" I hesitated, trying to be truthful. I do not think I had up to that time uttered a lie, so I slowly replied, "I don't know, Ma'am." She fell upon me and beat me violently, for impertinence, she said. I never loved her again for I felt the cruel injustice.

My father and uncle were what is called Old Line Whigs, and as such were violently opposed to Secession and all the Democratic Party stood for. I had heard Jeff Davis and Secession denounced in my home, and like a little parrot I repeated these sentiments in school. One of the teachers took me aside and told me not to utter such sentiments; they would make me very unpopular and I might have to leave school. I was frightened and held my tongue. There were no men in our home so I can't remember hearing politics discussed there. In April we were hurriedly taken to the Battery one day to see the shelling of Fort Sumter. We went to the house of a friend. The roof was flat, surrounded by a parapet. On this a small telescope had been mounted. The grown-ups used it constantly, but each child was permitted to look now and then. I saw smoke and flame pouring up from the fort, and men walking on the walls for air. As is well-known, there were no casualties.

Mrs. Davis had expected to go north for the summer, but the War prevented. We went instead to the mountains of North Carolina. But in early Spring we all went for a few days to a hotel in Summerville, S.C. I can never forget the wild flowers in the woods there. One day we went to Middleton Place, then in all its glory, before fire and poverty had wrecked it. The house seemed to me like the chateaux and castles of the Old World, of which I had read (even then I was an omnivorous reader). The terraces--some of them contained a double line of tall camellia trees, between which we walked; the trees, looking like fairyland, and the ground carpeted with fallen blossoms; the hills sloping down to the lake; the boat house, the weeping willows, flower beds--all made a deep impression on me.

Quantities of clothes were made for me to wear at summer hotels; among other items I recall fourteen pairs of shoes and slippers, all too tight. I never complained. But once, on the veranda of the hotel at Flat Rock I heard two young men talking, and one said, "I never see that poor child but she is limping. Her shoes all hurt her." I had large feet and grew rapidly. I had golden hair that curled naturally, very fair skin, and a dimple in each cheek. When in Charleston the idea first came to me, "Was I pretty?" I don't know why. I went to a mirror and for the first time in my life looked carefully at my own reflection. I decided that I was not pretty. When I was about 17, old Mrs. McGinty of Raymond said to me, "I am very much disappointed in you. When you were a child you promised to be pretty."[3]

We traveled up to North Carolina as far as Greenville. I think, by rail. Then we were two days and a night in an old-fashioned stagecoach with four horses. Long after dark we stopped at what seemed to me a farmhouse. There we slept on feather beds, and had the most delicious supper and breakfast, exactly alike--huge platters of fried chicken, hot biscuits, delicious milk and preserves. Breakfast by candlelight, and then off in the stage again. Our summer was divided between Flat Rock and Dunn's Rock, the latter in a wilder country and more secluded. Never had I seen clear rushing mountain streams before. The rocky beds and gleaming pebbles fascinated me. In Mississippi all the creeks were sluggish and muddy; a few spring branches were little rivulets of clear water, but there was nothing to compare with those rushing, singing mountain streams. Then the ferns and wild flowers were an endless delight.

I had to practice daily, with Aunt Annie sitting faithfully beside me. I never learned even to read music. I hated it. I read everything I could lay my hands on; there were no restrictions. I imagine that in that puritanical household no objectionable book could possibly have found its way. At home I had soon exhausted the Rollo books, the Arabian Nights, and Robinson Crusoe. We had no other books for children. So I read a great deal of old-fashioned poetry, became thoroughly familiar with every line of Pope, and learned from his translations all I knew of Homer. My father also had a big brown volume called The British Drama. It contained, in addition to "The Rivals" and "The Critic," "The School for Scandal" and "The Beggars' Opera", many choice specimens of the Restoration period. But it is true that virgins can walk over red rot plowshares. I got no harm from these, did not understand the double entendres. But I learned all about the real Simon Pure and the New Way to Pay Old Debts. In Charleston I found no such risqué literature.

Slavery as I saw it there was much harsher than any that came to my personal observation in Mississippi. I heard much talk about the gallant young men who joined the Southern Army. I remember the laughter of the ladies in the house over a fond mother whose son was a private in a crack South Carolina regiment. She sent to camp with him, a two-mule wagon containing every comfort she could put in it, including a cook and pots and pans. His valet had gone with him on horseback. No doubt, if he survived the War, that boy was living on parched corn, his feet torn and bleeding, before the end.

Now Charleston was besieged; my kind ladies were badly scared. They resolved to pack their treasures and fly to Richmond, which they considered impregnable. Many

families were in mourning; all felt the pinch of the blockade. It was resolved to return me to my family; indeed my Mother had taken to her bed and refused to get up until my return. This was her usual method of getting her own way. Late in December, my shabby little Mississippi trunk was packed with all the finery it would hold. I was given a pair of gold bracelets and a large French doll, which I hated, and sent home, under the care of a Memphis merchant. He petted me and took care of me. In his very beautiful home outside of Memphis his wife and young daughter continued the petting until my father came and took me to my own home.

Great was the rejoicing all round. I loved the greater freedom of my humble village home. In Charleston I had never been allowed to go out alone; a manservant carried my books to school and came for me in the afternoon. Daddy Ben, we called him. Mom Di was the nurse for the dear little boy, and it was her whispered tales of life on the rice plantations that made me first know that I hated slavery. This woman had children, very small ones, and a baby. Her home was certainly not near the house. Yet she was there very early in the morning, and did not return to her children until after she had bathed me and put me to bed at night, about nine, I think. Of course some one took care of them; they were valuable, but she grieved over this.

I reached home just before Christmas, having been gone a little more than eleven months. My fine clothes were of little use to me, I grew so rapidly, but oh, the hats and bonnets and dress trimmings they furnished for my four grown sisters and their friends all through the pinching Civil War period! That Christmas was memorable to me as the first one on which I ever received a present. We always hung up our stockings in the greatest excitement, and were up long before light to examine them. The foot was always full, the leg empty. First came an orange, then a handful of mixed nuts and raisins, and in the toe a little hard candy. Each of the three boys had in addition one package of very small firecrackers. These were opened and festooned over the grey wool sock. All the treasures of Golconda could not have given us more pleasure. The boys tried to save their crackers for night, but could not wait. We were told that the two Johnston boys, Frank and Wirt, had a dozen packs each, but I don't think we believed it. It sounded fabulous. When my boys came on, I used to buy an unopened box of the things, besides Roman candles, sky rockets, etc., but I do not think they enjoyed them more. With the Civil War came the cessation of all fireworks. That Christmas I had a little box labeled "Not to be opened until Christmas" put into my hands. It contained the gold bracelets, which I soon outgrew. Then Mrs. Pat Tompkins gave me a little chest of drawers, which I loved. As nearly as I can remember, Tishy's stocking was filled exactly as mine was. There never was an atom left by breakfast time.

When I was very small I wondered if ever I could hope to live in a house with a staircase and shutters at the windows. Most of the dwellings in Raymond then were like ours. In Charleston the house had three stories and a basement. I was forbidden to go in the basement, and never did. The kitchen was there, and the servants' rooms. My father must have bought a cooking stove while I was in South Carolina. I can't remember any cooking in the great cavernous fireplace after my return. It had cranes hanging from an iron bar across the chimney; from these hung pots, etc. A spider was a long-handled frying pan. How well I can remember old Aunt Daphne standing by the kitchen door at night, "chipping" the crust on the big loaf of hot bread she was just about to send in for

supper. Only on Sunday night was this omitted. This old kitchen building, with its servants' rooms, was torn down when I returned, and a flower garden made on the spot. Tishy and I were not allowed in the back yard where the Negro children played. We stayed in the front yard--gardens--orchard. Occasionally we went in the Big Lot, with about nine huge oak and hickory trees. Here were stable, corn crib, (the word barn was not used then in the South), and Uncle Billy's house. This was a very old slave, with white hair and beard, old when my father brought him out from Virginia in 1837. I am told he used to do a little work in the garden, but never in my time. My Mother always put his meals on a plate, after she ate her own, and sent them to him from our own table. I can see her now, putting sugar and milk in his big tin cup of coffee. He had his own hen house with fowls, and there was always some mess cooking on his hearth. He went in the garden and got what vegetables he wanted. Tobacco was supplied him. He sat much at his door, smoking. He died in '63. My sister Martha read some service over his grave, then a Negro we owned uttered a rambling discourse and the Negroes sang a hymn. It was my first funeral.

My father did a great deal of work in his garden and orchard. We had abundance from these sources. I have not seen such delicious fruit since. The varieties were not suited for shipping and marketing--no keeping qualities--but much better than those in use. Quantities of peaches and apples were dried, preserves and jams made, also peach pickle. The raw peaches were dropped into vinegar, spiced and sweetened. This always fermented and spoiled, when I tried to make it years later, but my Mother's never spoiled. She began by scalding her peaches in boiling water, just a moment, and then rubbing off the skins. When I had said goodbye to this old home, at the age of nineteen, I never tasted such fruit again. We had fourteen large fig trees, for one item--three varieties. Neighbors sent and got them by the water bucketful. My Father would have been insulted had anyone offered to pay. Henty, the Negro boy, was put on a mule with a sack of corn every Saturday and sent two miles in the country, to a mill to have it ground into meal. These mills were run by mules hitched to long poles. No cornbread was ever equal to that made from this fresh meal. We had famous appetites. My Father used to groan because a barrel of flour lasted only one month. Yet we never had wheat bread for dinner. Every fall a barrel of brown sugar, a barrel of molasses, and a keg of Potomac roe herring were bought. We had two sugar bowls always on the "tea tray" at the head of the table. The lump sugar was used only for tea. My Uncle sent us all the corn we needed from his plantation. He never sold corn; he said that planters who sold corn had hungry slaves and animals. When he killed a beef or mutton, a man would be sent up on a mule, ten miles, with a piece "for my brother." Also, in winter, when he killed his hogs, several were sent up, all cleaned, and hung up in our back yard. This meant a festival for all the servants--hard work, too, with so much lard and sausage to be made, but a continual feast of spareribs, brains, chitterlings, etc. Then the smoke would begin to ooze out of the cracks of the smokehouse where the meat hung. In the center, on the earth floor, was a smoldering pile of trash and leaves, never allowed to blaze. It must be carefully tended. I can remember the soldiers from Grant's army emptying this old smokehouse. After '63 we had no salt with which to cure meat. This was a great hardship.

We had always an abundance of food--so did our slaves--but luxuries were few. Southern apples did not keep. A barrel of apples was bought every winter, quite an

event. Except at Christmas, none of us ever had a whole orange. I had never seen a sewing machine, but heard of one in the village. Canned goods were not introduced until after the Civil War. Sardines were a great dainty; only one box was ever opened at one time. One of my earliest memories is of weeping secretly when the sardines were exhausted before I was reached. Once, I recollect, my cousin Lelia had a birthday, and sent me a box of little cakes from it. As usual, there was a roomful of guests. One of my sisters told me to put the cakes on a plate and pass them around. I did so, and never got a crumb! But I must have been older then, for I did not weep. Nor did I ever complain of these or similar matters. Strange how secretive children are. The most serious troubles of my childhood could have been relieved had I complained to anyone. I never complained about those tight shoes, for instance.

I loved to go to my Uncle's plantation, ten miles in the country. My Mother would drive down in the buggy, with old Whitey, I sitting on the floor, two persons on the seat. A tiny trunk was attached behind. We usually stayed two or three days. I longed to get out at all the bridges to watch the water--but never asked! I can remember my aunt, coming up the long walk to the gate to meet us. Once she was weeping. Later I was told this was because she had had a slight stroke and knew it presaged her death. She and my Mother always called each other "Sister Elizabeth" and "Sister Sophia," at full length. My Father and Uncle simply called each other "Brother." Here I had supper every night in the nursery, at a small table with my cousins, presided over by Mammy 'Ria. She was a great tyrant. If we took clabber we could not have water, because Mammy 'Ria did not want a big wash up. We had bread, butter, syrup, and clabber with brown sugar. To this day it does not taste right to me with white sugar. Breakfast and dinner we ate with the grown folks, early breakfast, and a big dinner at three. This necessitated handing a tray to the ladies at noon. The children as I remember got only cornbread and buttermilk, except in peach season, when a big pone of peach bread was baked and eaten hot. It was excellent, made of very soft peaches and cornmeal, with a crisp brown crust. I doubt if anyone knows how to make it now. Mine does not taste the same.

My Aunt must have died, for on my return I found little cousin Lelia[4] had been brought up to live with us and try to comfort my Mother for my absence. She was going to a little school taught by my sister Lizzie.[5] I now had a companion just my own age, the gentlest, best, most unselfish little girl who ever lived. I am much afraid that I tyrannized over her. We two were the youngest of the two large families. In the fall of 1862 my sister Lizzie went to Burleigh, my Uncle's home, to live as governess, taking me with her. A boy named George Smedes was living there also. His brother had married my Cousin Sue[6] and died in three months. She was a beautiful young widow of twenty. I loved living on the plantation. We went home every Saturday.

My Cousin Ida,[7] four years older, disliked me very much and established a secret tyranny over me that was very galling. One word of complaint would have ended it, but that word was never spoken. My Mother told me that, when I was three and Ida seven, she told her that she hated me so much that she would not walk on the same side of the street with me. All this passed away later in life and we became very friendly. As I look back I really believe this dislike was originally founded on my having naturally curly hair, which she heard commented on. I think this because she was always sneering at it,

and saying how much prettier were her own shining smooth plaits. She had beautiful hair, very heavy. She used to make me wash in the morning in the water she had already used, then measured out a scanty half glass of water for me to brush my teeth, saying her father's servants were not to bring water up for me. I had to wash her feet for her--and many other things. Above all she teased me and made me suffer agonies of shame about trifles that were of no consequence. She was then in her fifteenth year, I nearly eleven. I do not think Lelia was ever punished in her life, certainly she never deserved it!

My sister had very little regular education herself, but she was sensible, a good teacher, with a natural turn for mathematics. She taught us a little Latin grammar. My cousin Sue taught us French every day. This consisted solely in making us learn French verbs, one in each conjugation, the auxiliary and irregular verbs. These were learned in every possible mood and tense--affirmative, negative, interrogative, negative-interrogative, backward, forward, and skipping, till, if poked up in the night any one of us could have rattled them off without opening our eyes. But no use was ever made of these verbs, no attempt to read, or to speak French. I quickly forgot most of it.

Now the War began to press in on us. A squad of Federal soldiers came and searched the house for arms, but were polite and offered no rudeness. They found one or two fowling pieces. We children hid under a bed with a valence all round. One officer, seeing feet, stooped down and pulled me out. He kissed me, saying I looked like his own little girl. Ida nearly ran me crazy about this. I was polluted, etc., etc. Before that, a Confederate general (Breckenridge) stopped with his staff at the house. He had drawn me to him and put me on his knee. Ida made me miserable over this, saying it was immodest, indelicate, and he would never have dreamed of treating <u>her</u> so. Of course not, she was too big. I suppose he took me to be a daughter of the house, and not the object of charity Ida was fond of calling me. My sister's remuneration was that my Uncle paid all the expenses that year of my brother Marye[8] at the V.M.I. His son Ben[9] was there also and they were of the same age, 16. My sister also had my board, in addition to her own. All this was very liberal. My sister gave me music lessons and made me practice. Music was the black cloud over my childhood; when I woke feeling joyous, the memory of the piano made my heart sink. In Raymond, for a few weeks, I took lessons from a German named Tannenbaum. He quit in despair. "Dot child, she do nothing but cry, cry, cry. Her tears drip on the keys." Why all this was kept up when I learned nothing, I can't understand.

Toward June of '63, Grant's Army landed at Grand Gulf and began to pour up toward Vicksburg. My Uncle left his home in charge of his overseer, Scarbrough, and went to Georgia to arrange a place to take his Negroes, hoping to save that much of his property. No one then doubted the success of the South. One morning while he was gone, two stragglers from Grant's Army appeared, on horseback, having a mulatto youth with them. They were very rude and insulting, summoned all the Negroes to the house and harangued them from the steps. I can still see their black faces, rolling eyes, and excited gestures. One tall man was very outspoken and loud, the rest still afraid to believe in freedom. Then these men put Mr. Scarbrough with his back to a tree on the lawn, and said they would shoot him as a spy, gave him five minutes to live. My cousins wept, begged, in vain. Cousin Sue then whispered to Lelia and me, "<u>You</u> try, don't let them kill Mr. Scarbrough!" We ran to the poor man. I fastened myself to one leg, Lelia

to the other, and we set up such a screaming as those two Yankees had seldom heard. They let him go. The poor man, who had borne this test with perfect fortitude, now ran to the horse rack, jumped on his horse, and was soon lost to sight, on his way to his own home, a few miles distant, leaving us at the mercy of these wretches. The only young son, Tom, was but thirteen, the others in the Army. There were five sisters, the eldest twenty-two, as pretty a group of sisters as could have been found in the South. In addition there was a Mrs. Allen, an attractive young married woman with an infant. She had been taken in as a refugee from Vicksburg. Luckily for us, these men found a store of old Madeira wine, bottled by my Uncle and hidden under the flooring of the attic. They drank with the Negro, knocking the heads off the bottles together, until they got so drunk (not the Negro; he stayed sober) that the Negro was scared lest some Confederate scouts should surprise and kill them all. With difficulty he got the men on their horses and, riding between them, with an arm round each to steady them, they disappeared over the hill in the sunset. They took some good rugs, cuff links, etc. All the silver and really handsome jewelry was buried.

My Uncle arrived the next day and hurried his family to Georgia, with most of his Negroes. A few weeks later one of his daughters came back, alone, and held an auction, selling off everything movable--books, furniture, carpets, curtains, china, stock--all for Confederate money, of which my Uncle had a trunkful at the close of the War. My sister Lizzie was not with us on this day; she had gone up to Raymond for some purpose. She returned with my brother John,[10] found me alone with Mrs. Allen and some servants, and took me home.

My father had brought some English classics from Virginia with him. These we read and reread. He had not the means to buy new books. But at my Uncle's I found a fine, well-selected library. Unfortunately, my sister forbade me altogether to read fiction. Had she allowed me Scott, Miss Edgworth, and Dickens, I might have stopped there, for I was naturally obedient, but all was forbidden. This was impossible to me. I began, and read everything, including all of Fielding, Smollett, and the works of Lawrence Sterne! I was not a good student; children who are passionately fond of reading seldom are. They won't give the time to tasks. The other children abused me in vain for taking a book with me down into the woods, when we went to build wigwams and dig coves in the gullies, and play house--but read I would.

We used to love to go to the gin and see the white cotton piled in mounds, and Saturday afternoons we delighted in riding behind the mules, perched on a beam, as they ground the week's supply of meal for the plantation. We were all out of the nursery now. Mammy 'Ria's reign was over, and we ate a hot supper in the dining room every night. There were several lovely clear springs on the plantation. These I loved, also the large pond. On its banks was the cabin of the tanner who tanned all skins for use on the place. The deep tank, the piles of tanbark, the running spring in his yard, were all fascinating. The plantation was well wooded and abounded in wild flowers--yellow jasmine, violets, harebells. Down in the creek bottoms grew huge magnolias. I remember measuring one with a cord. It was sixteen feet in circumference.

That last day on the plantation we heard the booming of cannon a great part of the morning. The advance guard of Grant's Army was fighting Gregg's Brigade in the old

town cemetery. My sisters were all there behind the lines, receiving the wounded and helping to care for them. The Texas brigade was driven back, and we got to Raymond to find Grant's whole army marching down the village street in front of my Father's house. They camped around us, burned all the fences for their cooking pots, emptied the hen house and smokehouse. I saw them drive off the cow and calf, my Mother following with tears and useless entreaties, for my sister Martha[11] lay very ill with typhoid fever, and the milk was all we had to give her. I can remember my Father bringing a Yankee surgeon in to see her. He gave some advice, and also some white sugar, tea, and army biscuit, to nourish her, for we had long been without flour or sugar. For tea, we dried blackberry leaves. Coffee we made of parched corn, and we cut sweet potatoes into little squares, dried these, then roasted them. The drink, if flavored with just three grains of real coffee, was good enough. Raymond was now in the Federal lines, the big Courthouse turned into a Confederate hospital. All the churches were filled with Union wounded. Antiseptic surgery had not been dreamed of, but [omission] was used on all wounds. Flies abounded, nay, literally swarmed. And they died, how those men died--pitiful boys of sixteen and seventeen. Just a little wound in hand or foot, gangrene, death. There was no ice, little medicine. (Perhaps this was a blessing.) All my sisters (except Martha) nursed all day long. So did the other Southern women. All food that had any claims to nicety was carried to the hospital. Nearly all our china found its way there, never to return. Every book they could read went the same way. I went barefoot because I had no shoes, and ran among the beds with a white puppy at my heels.

At one time we had two Confederate soldiers hidden in the house, waiting for a chance to slip through the lines. The Negroes in the house must have known, for they saw meals being carried into the attic and storeroom, but they never told. The inherited habit of submission was too strong. We were almost starving. My sister Mary got a pass, went to Vicksburg, now held by Grant, and there she persuaded a Federal general to give her an army wagon, two mules, and a barrel of flour and a kit of mackerel. We now rented our house to the Lyndsay family, refugeeing from Vicksburg, and moved down to my Uncle's abandoned plantation, taking our scanty furniture with us. Here was plenty of corn, a few hogs, a cow or two, and sweet potatoes and cornfield peas. Here we lived for more than a year. Then my Uncle's family returned, and we moved to a place called Locksley, lent us by Dr. Moncure. He had just bought it, with Confederate money, from the fleeing family who owned it. It was a comfortable house and there was some stock. We carried our few Negroes wherever we went, and made small crops of corn, potatoes, and peas. None of us liked fresh pork. For lack of salt the cured meat became tainted. I often suffered from hunger. The food was there, but so coarse. Very little milk or butter. My brother John killed some game, partridges, and squirrels. My Father was never a hunter. He always made a fine vegetable garden everywhere, and that helped. We lived at Locksley all through '64. My sisters taught me. We nearly always had company; Confederate soldiers, and paroled prisoners furnished plenty of beaus for the grownups. My sister Mary's fiancé[12] was badly wounded that summer. She was taken to north Mississippi by my Father, where she married and then nursed the young man back to life. He lay for six months on his back. He was very generous and helped the family, sent me to school one year. I was boarded with a connection on another cotton plantation, Mrs. Smart. She had my cousin Emmeline Dabney as governess for her two daughters and me. My brother-in-law (as he was now) paid $40 a month in gold for my board and tuition, an unheard-of sum at that time in the South. Cousin Emmy had left school

herself at sixteen, had no taste for books, and understood little of the art of teaching. But she was extremely kind and considerate to me, in a very uncongenial atmosphere, where I should have been unhappy enough without her. I became much attached to her then.

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This year, from thirteen to fourteen, ends my childhood, but as I recollect little things I will set them down. Cousin Emmy was paid $500 in gold for that year's teaching, all of which she gave toward building an Episcopal Church at Dry Grove. Church people in the North gave the rest. It was a tiny wooden structure. For a time a minister lived there and eked out a living by taking boarding pupils. There was no congregation and he was starved out. An ill-advised enterprise, that church. I believe it rotted away. The scanty population on the farms were all Baptists and Methodists. My Uncle's family had associated only with the four Virginia families settled in the county. This had not endeared them to their humbler neighbors, who declined to be converted to Episcopacy, especially of the High Church variety.

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I was too young in Charleston to appreciate the unselfishness with which Mrs. Davis cared for me, and the money she lavished on me. I had never given a thought to clothes in my life, and was perfectly indifferent to my finery. Every afternoon I had to ask what to put on. I then told Mom Di, who dressed me. One day when I asked, she said, "You need not change, go just as you are." I turned away, perfectly contented, and she cried in an injured tone, "I declare, Sister, she does not care at all. She seems to take no pleasure in her clothes." She then told me what dress to put on. I went off, wondering what difference it made, and why she expected me to care. She loved pretty things, was young and pretty herself, yet wore only the deepest and plainest mourning, with a large widow's cap covering her whole head. She loved to dress me like a doll. I never saw her again, but I heard she never modified her mourning, and wore caps always. The War swept away all her property, and she supported herself for many years by working in a Government department in Washington. She managed to rear and educate her son well, and he became a successful and distinguished man.

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In all my youth all wives called their husbands Mister. My mother-in-law disliked my calling my husband by his Christian name. She said she hoped, when her other son married, his wife would call him Mr. Miller. (She didn't.) My sister-in-law, Fanny, called her husband Tom, privately, but was careful not to let her family hear her. One day her father, old Dr. Bowmar, overheard her, and when they were next alone he said, "Fanny, I never thought to hear a daughter of mine call her husband by his first name." My husband's uncle by marriage, Tom Marshall, told me he had never kissed his wife, or called her by her name, until after they were married. He caught one of his daughters kissing her fiancé goodnight at the door, and was horrified.

I wonder now how any of us grew up, the drinking water of that, and all villages, was so contaminated. Open wells, with windlass and bucket. A fence ran close to ours and just over the fence stood the watering trough, for convenience in pouring the water. Here the cows, calves, and horse stood, and the cows were milked. The laundress did all the washing by the well and poured out her suds on the ground. All the family, white and black, were subject to violent attacks of stomach and intestinal trouble. These were called cramp colic, cholera morbus flux, etc., and no one ever dreamed of connecting them with the drinking supply. It was "constitutional", or, something we ate. Typhoid was common, not thought contagious; flies swarmed, screens of course had not been invented. There was always a little darky to keep the flies off the table. My father had a medicine chest filled with paregoric, Jamaica ginger, cholera mixture, which he dispersed freely. I had a similar chest long after I was married. Not until we began to use filtered water did the family stop having these boulversements, and almost without my noticing it the medicine chest fell into disuse. We were all so bitterly poor for so long. Spinning and weaving went on all during the War. The homemade cloth wore like leather. We bought unbleached muslin for all domestic purposes, underwear, shirts, etc., because of its wearing qualities. I wore linsey dresses, the goods woven for Negro wear. We were all living at Locksley when the news of Lee's surrender came. We had hoped, up to then. I can remember the tears and lamentations in our family circle. Then the poor, ragged, emaciated soldiers began straggling in, my three oldest brothers among them.

After the War we began to see canned goods, at first in glass. I must say we only saw the outsides of them. Then came canned tomatoes. For a long time the empty cans were carefully saved, the tops melted off, and then used for cooking and other purposes. We seldom bought a can. I thought canned salmon the best thing I ever tasted. In the autumn, when it began to grow cool, my Father would bring home a pound of fresh cheese. There was no refrigeration then; no merchant tried to keep cheese during the summer. We seldom had it, even in winter. The one barroom in Raymond kept ice. When my Father brought home two pounds it meant there was very serious illness in the house. It was wrapped in double blankets, and a little carefully chipped off for the patient. It cost 25 cents a pound, in silver. If we had a very bitter spell in winter, my Mother would make a pan of boiled custard and put it on the roof of the porch where it froze solid. Next morning it was sliced like a pie and each child got a piece. The house was so cold at such times that eating it must have been a doubtful joy.

I was astonished on my return from Charleston, to find a complete change of opinion in my family towards Secession and the War. My grown brothers were in the Army, and the whole family hot for the War. There I had been, obstinately cherishing my Union sentiments for a whole year, afraid to speak out, but secretly staunch, and now it was like finding a precious egg, addled by time. I, too, had to make a complete volte face. I did. At ten, one does not demand consistency from those one loves; to follow blindly is an instinct.

In Charleston Sunday was dreadful. First Sunday School, then to be marched at once into church for the long morning service. Then the Litany and the Ten Commandments were never omitted, nor one single prayer of the service. That dreadful Benedicite was sung as often as the Te Deum. No change was made for Communion

Sunday, nor were children allowed to leave until the end of that function. After dinner it was not long before we were marched back for afternoon service--the full service, and a sermon as long as the one in the morning. After this we went home to learn hymns and the lesson for next Sunday, until tea time. This meal was cold, except for tea, in mercy to the servants. All toys and weekday reading were forbidden. At home I had seldom been taken to church, and then I laid my head in my Mother's lap for the sermon. And never twice a day. The gardens and orchards and all reading were free to me--not toys, they were forbidden--and in the afternoon my Mother had a Sunday School with alternate reading of verses from the Bible, the singing of lugubrious hymns, and a long extempore prayer from herself, in which we were all called by name, our sins of the past week mentioned, and forgiveness and repentance implored. We were hardened to this and did not care one jot.

I can remember--I must have been about seven--my father's asking me one day why I was crying and fretting. My mother said she had been to see Mrs. Shelton the day before and asked her how she kept her little Annie's complexion so dazzlingly fair. Mrs. Shelton replied that she never allowed Annie to go out of the house until after sunset. My mother then and there resolved to try the same plan with me, and my tears were the result. "Pooh, pooh," said my father, "put on your sunbonnet and go outdoors." That was the last I heard of that. (Annie died the following year.)

That old shed over the well, if insanitary, was picturesque. It was covered with a huge Multiflore rose vine, the grandmother of all our modern rambler roses, and a coral honeysuckle. When both bloomed together in the Spring they were gorgeous. The end of the house nearest the well was shaded by a wisteria vine, and the flower garden ran alongside. Of course it could not have been in perpetual bloom, but it now seems to me that it was. Narcissi, hyacinths, jonquils, were succeeded by red roses, spice pinks, and hollyhocks. Then, old-fashioned small chrysanthemums and bachelor' buttons, etc. My mother would always have flowers; she literally had no other touch of beauty in her surroundings, but flowers she always had. The china trees in the front yard were masses of lilac bloom, and the Cherokee roses that climbed them hung down their long banners and wreaths of white and gold. Then there were altheas, privet, monthly roses, etc.

When I look back I can recall with amazement the confidence placed in our Negroes--and they never abused it. In '64 two young ladies asked Dr. Moncure to lend them his handsome carriage and horses, to take them to Jackson, a matter of 28 miles. He consented, but said he was afraid to have the carriage come home empty, as the country was overrun by alternate raids of Federal and Southern troops, and is horses would be confiscated. Otway, the Negro driver, could not protect them. So I was sent along, to protect those horses coming home! I was not consulted. The roads were so dreadful; it took us all day. The girls made me ride backwards, so I was very seasick. It was dark when we got to Jackson. I spent the night in Mrs. Martin's house, where my sister Mary was nursing her badly wounded husband. He had been brought there, Mrs. Martin being his cousin. Early next morning I was started back on another tedious, all-day trip. No one molested us and I don't believe Uncle Otway ever spoke to me.

Later, when I was fourteen, I would be sent up to my sister's home in Jackson, from Raymond, in a spring wagon driven by our Negro boy, Henry. He was free then,

about 21. It was eighteen miles. I remember Henry getting down to kill a snake, a spreading adder. I was safe as though guarded by a regiment. A few years later and no one in the South would dream of taking such a risk. That was after the New England schoolmarms with their inflammatory teaching had broken up the old relations. I don't mean they taught crime. But they inflamed the minds of the Negroes by telling them how unjustly they had been held down. Negro suffrage and carpetbag government helped; by 1870 a farmer going for the mail had to take his young wife with him, not daring to leaver her unprotected. A Southern woman would starve before she would teach Negroes, in the South, though she was quite capable of going as a missionary to Africa. So the Negroes (all ages wanted to learn) were turned over to the rather fanatical Yankee schoolmarms, who broke down all the old barriers, old restraints, and knew not how to erect new ones. Then began outrages and lynchings, followed by reprisals on both sides, the Negroes always getting the worst of it. Our old servants stayed with us until the end of the War, some longer. But we had so little money for wages, or even food, and only knew how to sew and mix cakes, ourselves. The North thought emancipation would solve the Negro problem, and all would go well, not seeing that the real problem was the presence of the Negro in the United States. I suppose people would never do anything if they could look far enough ahead!

Except for Nature herself, no lives could have been barer or beauty than ours. We had no pretty furniture, clothes, or pictures, and our crockery was common. We had the barest of necessities--and a few dingy old books. My mother was very religious, afraid of speculative conversation. Astronomy she dreaded, knowing as she said that the stars were made to give light to the earth. It made her miserable to have a rational explanation of the rainbow. Her opinions were formed in childhood and unchangeable through life. My father was really a free thinker, an immediate convert to the Darwinian theory, and an earnest reader of such books of Spencer's as came his way. In 1875 I went North for the first time, and brought him a present of the first of Spencer's works he had ever seen--a study of sociology. He was carried away by it.

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Later.

Reading "Heaven Trees" by Stark Young. Well written, and on the whole a faithful picture of life on a Mississippi plantation in the '50s. But he falls into some of the most obvious errors. He has the ladies go to Sardis, Miss., shopping. They buy a handsome dress, ready made, and one of them wears it home. Ready-made clothing for women was absolutely unknown at that time in the South, possibly a very few articles might have been had in New Orleans, but I doubt it. Cloaks, mantles, shawls, but no more. Embroidered collars could be had, but not a shop in Mississippi offered a ready-made dress until well into the '80s, possibly the '90s, and no underclothing, except woven net, or knit things. Sewing machines were just being invented in the '50s; I knew of one in Raymond in 1860, and it was very imperfect. No one can have any idea now what slaves women everywhere were to the needle in those days. My mother sewed steadily, about twelve hours a day. She had a slave seamstress to help her and as the girls grew up they were taught, but to make their own clothes occupied their entire time. My father and his four sons had all their shirts made at home, as well as all their underclothes, nightshirts, etc. All our sheets were made of two widths whipped together. Quilts and comforts were made at home. Blankets were dear and our winters often

severe. The house was open and cold; much covering was needed. Feathers were saved and cured, pillows and feather beds made. We kept geese.

All English schools taught sewing as part of the regular curriculum. It was a vital necessity. Miss Martineau complains that even after she was a successful writer her mother exacted six hours a day of sewing from her. Miss Brontë complains of the quantities of plain sewing governesses were expected to do daily. In every little village were several dressmakers who also did plain sewing. Rich women gave them much work. I cannot remember one dollar's being spent for sewing for our family, until my own trousseau was made, in 1872. Then I had three dresses "made out," as we called it. I made my own underclothes; my sister Lizzie made my wedding dress. I made and baked my own wedding cake; it contained the whites of thirty-six eggs. I then sent it to a confectioner to be iced and ornamented. As a girl I learned to make soap, sausage, lard. During the Civil War I learned to spin and to knit. A great deal of spinning and weaving went on on my uncle's plantation. All the goods of which the slaves' outer clothing was made was woven on the place. It was a mixture of wool and cotton, dyed with native dyes, collected in the woods. This was the strongest cloth I have ever seen. Quantities of unbleached cotton goods were bought for the slaves' underclothes. All these garments were made by colored sewing women. The mistress usually did all the cutting and supervised the sewing. A girl of seventeen was often called on to assume these duties. But there was always some wise, experienced old Mammy near to instruct her. Mammy 'Ria, on the Burleigh place, was the official cutter. Mammy Harriet attended to the dairy. She did not milk, but she strained and put the milk away, skimmed the cream, watched the churning. It was said that she was so careful of cream, she took up the smallest fleck with a feather. My uncle bred for beef, not milk. His beef and Southdown mutton were famous. Cream, milk, and fresh butter I never saw lavishly used until after the Civil War, when Jersey cows were introduced. Frozen custard was our icecream. Whipped cream I had heard of as something ambrosial, but never saw. Eggs, poultry and game were abundant. We used to eat partridge eggs. "Store butter," "Goshen butter," was very strong in summer. I have seen it served in hot weather with a spoon. A pound cake, with pound to pound of butter, was seldom made. I remember, when I was a little girl, being taken with a cousin to a mantua-maker, as we called the dressmaker. She was a little, bent old woman. My cousin complained of rats on her plantation, and the seamstress told her--with her mouth full of pins--that if she would write quantities of little notes to the rats and strew them round in their haunts, begging them to leave and suggesting a better place, they would all leave at once. She had known this done successfully. This made a deep impression on my mind and I half believed it, for I had never doubted the word of a grown person.

Before the Civil War, when my father was Probate Judge, this curious thing occurred: One bitter cold winter day a plantation wagon, much bemired, stopped at the gate. In it were four persons, wrapped in quilts--a middle-aged couple, a young girl, and a very old man. They got out and came in. The father of the girl told my father that they had come to him, as a magistrate, to perform the marriage ceremony between the girl and the old man. The whole business seemed so odd that my father began to ask questions, and he elicited the fact that the old man was the girl's grandfather! The mother said that as they took care of the old man they thought it only fair that they should inherit the farm. They had already made him sign a will, leaving the farm to the girl. But they feared that

after his death other heirs would contest the will, and thought a marriage would clinch it. My father told them that if they persisted in this scheme they would find themselves in the penitentiary. So they took up their beds and departed, and were never heard of more. I often heard this story told; it happened perhaps before I was born. These people came many miles, from that benighted region then known as the lower part of Hinds County. Railroads, good roads, and schools have changed all that. There were no public schools in those days. Usually a planter employed a tutor or governess. The neighbor's children came to be instructed and helped defray the expense. The board of the teacher was considered of no moment, for those were the days of rude plenty, as far as food went. Children went barefoot, or wore plantation-made shoes. Their clothes were homemade, worn and mended and handed down, but there was never any lack of food and fuel.

Among all the people I met in village or country, I never knew a white person absolutely illiterate, who could not read and write after a fashion. I knew but one Negro who could read and write, and he was a free mulatto named Joe Nelson. He was very stupid; in spite of the efforts of all the boys in both families to teach him, he never advanced beyond the rudiments. I will give his history. His mother was a slave, who died at his birth. His father was a white man, my father's cousin. He was given to Mammy Harriet to raise (she was the head nurse of my aunt). When my uncle moved from Virginia to Mississippi of course he brought Mammy Harriet along, and with her this two-year old boy. His father had formally freed him at birth, so he was never a slave. He made my uncle promise to have him taught a trade and look after him until he was of age. He was taught the trade of carpenter. He married my nurse, Maria, and spent his time between the two homes, going off for odd jobs now and then. His mother must have been a mulatto, for he could almost pass for a white man. He was very stupid. When he performed the marriage ceremony for the Negroes, which he often did, he always borrowed a prayerbook and read the service, rubric and all. When my eldest brother joined the Army in Virginia, Joe went along as his body servant! This folly did not last long; Joe soon came home. His letters to his wife, which we had to read to her, were very amusing. I remember one in which he said, "My sperrit grow every day, I am inturning for to kill some Yankees before I come home."

When my cousin Ben was a boy he went out hunting with Joe, who accidentally shot him in the face with squirrel shot, and put out one of his eyes. After the War Joe became a fiery politician and ceased to work. Maria and her children had a hard life. He was so dull that even the carpetbaggers and scalawags would not make use of him, and he spent his time in a vain pursuit of office. He took his family away immediately after the surrender. I saw Maria once more. While driving through the country with my first three children, I stopped at her house with some sugar, coffee, etc., I had bought for her. She told me they were living on the green corn out of the field, had nothing else. I gave her what little money I had. (In those days women were not supposed to need money in their purses. My mother never had a cent.) Maria was one of the best of women and she never had any happiness.

My mother brought from Virginia, as her dowry, Uncle Anderson, Aunt Daphne, and their progeny, about seven children. Maria, one of these, was a mulatto, her mother was very black. Perhaps Maria was related to my mother, but that of course I never knew. She had a quick temper and my mother disliked her, but we were devoted to her.

My parents were very uncongenial, but such marriages were common, and still are. I believe her opinions on all subjects were fixed in her early teens and it never occurred to her that they needed revision. I once said to her, "I never heard you say 'I think' or 'I believe' that so and so is true. You always say you know it is true." "Yes," she replied, "because I do know I am right." My father, on the other hand, was skeptical, philosophical, questioning everything except fiction, for which he did not care. He was very fond of poetry--Pope, Burns, Scott, Hood. But my mother fought vainly against the spirit of the age. All her children took their mental bias from their father. She went too far in her rigid fundamentalism. It was wrong to whistle on Sunday, to play with toys, or at any time to make any statement not absolutely in accord with Genesis.

Several times when I was small, a circus came to Raymond. My father considered them low and unfit places for ladies, and would not dream of going himself. Anyway, he had little money so we knew that going to the circus was not to be hoped for. However, we saw the pitiful little procession and once I saw a girl walk a tightrope from the top of the tent. My eldest brother drove his four small sisters into the house, not even permitting them to see a circus parade, thinking it unbecoming in a "delicate female" to view one. This was before I was born, and they long resented it. He had grown up, and I hope grown wiser, before I was old enough to view a parade. But not until long after I was married would a lady go to the post office, nor put her foot on the street on election day. For a girl to go buggy riding with a young man meant they were engaged, and even then it was thought rather fast. My first proposal came from a young man who never called on me or sat down in my home. He would write formal notes in the third person, asking to escort me to a dance, church, a prayer meeting, then wait for me at the front door! And there he would leave me. He was twenty-five; I was fourteen.

Footnotes

1. Her father was Philip Augustine Lee Dabney, born in Gloucester County, Virginia, in 1800. Her mother, Elizabeth Osborne Smith, was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in 1802. They moved to Mississippi, as did her uncle, Thomas Gregory Dabney, and his wife, Sophia.

2. Westmoreland Davis.

3. But reports of other contemporaries indicate that she was indeed very pretty.

4. Lelia Dabney never married.

5. Lizzie--Elizabeth Osborne Dabney--became Mrs. W. W. Porter and lived for many years in California.

6. Susan Dabney Smedes later wrote a life of her father, *Memorials of a Southern Planter*.

7. Ida married a Mr. Armstrong and continued to live in Mississippi.

8. Marye became a lawyer and lived for many years in Vicksburg.

9. Ben became a physician in Texas.

10. John Davis Dabney practiced medicine in Mississippi and later in Birmingham.

11. Martha Dabney never married, but became a teacher.

12. Mary's husband was William Lynch Ware. He never recovered entirely from that chest wound, for tuberculosis followed and he died about twelve years later.

Footnotes by Letitia's great-grandson Thomas Marshall Miller (February 2002)

Up to this point, Letitia's *Recollections* has been reproduced as typed by her daughter, the librarian Emily Van Dorn Miller Danton, including the few misprints or antiquated spellings. The footnotes above were appended by Emily Danton at that time. Here are additional comments.

Letitia's father was Philip Augustine Lee Dabney (1800 – 25 April 1878; he did not use the "Philip" part of his name, but went by "Augustine L. Dabney"). His parents were Benjamin Dabney and Sarah Smith of Virginia; see *Sketch of the Dabneys of Virginia* by W. H. Dabney (1887, reprinted 1999 by Heritage Books, Bowie, Maryland). Letitia's mother, Elizabeth Osborne Smith (14 August 1810 – 7 May 1905), was born to Yeamans Smith and Ann Osborne Marye in Virginia. (The above birth year—1810—disagrees with that given in Emily Danton's footnotes, but was taken from Elizabeth's tombstone.)

Anna Letitia Dabney was their youngest child and was born on 8 January 1852 in Raymond, Mississippi, and died in New Orleans in 1946. She had seven children. Letitia and her husband are buried in Live Oak Cemetery in Pass Christian, Mississippi, on the Gulf coast.

"Mrs. Davis" was Annie Harwood Lewis Morriss (Mrs. Thomas Gordon Davis). She was the daughter of Col. Christopher Staats Morriss (not "Morris" as in the *Recollections*) of Gloucester, Virginia, and Nancy Harwood Lewis Thurston, who were old friends of Letitia's father Augustine Dabney. Annie was the granddaughter of a Revolutionary War officer, Henry Morriss. The Davis family—Annie's husband's—had gone from Virginia to Mississippi around the same time as the Morrisses and the Dabneys. Annie moved from Mississippi to Richmond after her father died in 1851, and to Charleston after her marriage. Annie's husband spent much time in Mississippi managing their five plantations. He and their daughter Jeannie (b. 1856) died in a "pestilence" (malaria or yellow fever) in Mississippi in 1860. Another son, Tom, had died the previous year. Annie's only surviving child was Westmoreland Davis, Governor of Virginia from 1918-1922. "Morley" was born 21 August 1859 on a ship in the North Atlantic, traveling between Liverpool and Boston. See J. T. Kirby, *Westmoreland Davis: Planter, Politician, 1859-1942* (University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 1968).

The Burleigh plantation of Letitia's uncle was built on land originally settled by Moses Collins, Sr. and Jr., and their families. The elder Collins died in 1816. In 1835, Jr. sold 3,953 acres of his land to Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney (4 January 1798 – 1 March 1885), who then moved from Virgina with his brother Philip Augustine Lee Dabney and others. Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney had been involved in the War of 1812: when he was 14, his mother's overseer was drafted to defend against a potential British attack at Old Point Comfort, Virginia. His mother couldn't do without the overseer, so her enthusiastic son was sent instead. After 3 weeks there with his uncle, the danger had passed, and the young veteran returned home. Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney and his first wife (Mary A. Tyler) had two children who died young. He then married Sophia Hill, and they had sixteen children, two of whom fought in the Civil War (Edward and Virginius, the latter on Robert E. Lee's staff). Sophia is the "my aunt" mentioned in the *Recollections*; her death on 17 December 1860 is noted. The Burleigh house of Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney was built on the site of the Moses Collins house. Some of the land, including the site of Burleigh, is now owned by descendants of Burleigh slaves. Dabney named the plantation after Elizabeth I's chief minister, Lord Burleigh (whom he

must have admired). A detailed map of Burleigh, drawn in July of 1860 by the civil engineer (and Letitia's brother) F. Y. Dabney, survives, and a biography of Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney (*Memorials of a Southern Planter*, by his daughter Susan Dabney Smedes, "Cousin Sue" in Letitia's *Recollections*) was published in 1887 (Cushings and Bailey, Baltimore, 1887) and reprinted many times, most notably in an edition (Knopf, New York, 1965) that contains important historical notes by editor Fletcher M. Green. Some early editions of the book include a picture of "Mammy Harriet" who is referred to in Letitia's *Recollections*. Susan Smedes (10 August 1840-1913) married Rev. Lyell Smedes on 1 November1860; eleven weeks later, he died. Lyell's "brother George" is mentioned in the *Recollections*. As a young woman, Susan had taught Choctaw Indians who lived on Burleigh land (they were the original owners); in 1887, Susan became a teacher to Sioux Indians in the Dakota Territory, with her sister Lelia ("cousin Lelia" in Letitia's *Recollections*) as an assistant. She wrote the book Memorials of a Southern Planter and ended her days in Sewanee, Tennessee, sharing a house with three of her sisters.

Letitia's "sister Lizzie" was Elizabeth Osborne Dabney [13 (or 12) September 1839 – 20 August 1918]. She married Col. William Wood Porter (b. 1827 in Virginia, d. 17 January 1907 in Santa Rosa, California, just north of San Francisco), who was one of a number of Southern sympathizers who came from California to fight in the Civil War. He was raised in Mississippi, obtained a law degree, and went to California in 1853, apparently as part of the gold rush. After some time in California, he began a law practice in Stockton, and shortly afterward he became the county district attorney. He then moved to Santa Rosa and set up a practice. He spent the entire war as Aide-de-Camp to Generals Crittenden, Polk, Beauregarde, Pemberton, Johnston, and Gregg. He led the 50th Tennessee Infantry in the Battle of Raymond, Mississippi, where he met Letitia's sister. He returned to his law practice in California after the war but then came back to Mississippi to marry Lizzie, and she moved to Porter's home in Santa Rosa, California. They had five children. Porter was appointed to a Supreme Judgeship in New Mexico Territory by President Cleveland, and he served for several years. In 1878, Elizabeth's parents, Philip Augustine Lee Dabney and Elizabeth Osborne Smith, moved to Santa Rosa and remained there until they died. All are buried in the Porter/Dabney Cemetery in Santa Rosa, along with Letitia's "sister Martha."

"Cousin Ida" was born at Burleigh in 1848. See Emily Danton's footnote 7.

Letitia's three oldest brothers, who served in the Confederate Army, were Thomas Gregory Dabney, Frederick Yeamans Dabney, and Marye Dabney. F. Y. Dabney (22 March 1835 – 16 March 1900) was a captain in the Engineer Corps. Marye (11 November 1846 – 21 December 1911) was a private in the 3rd Mississippi Infantry. One of the brothers (I believe Marye, captured at Port Hudson, Louisiana) spent the latter part of the War as a prisoner at Johnson's Island on Lake Erie, and part of that time General James McPherson was in charge; after the Battle of Vicksburg, Letitia's sister Mary met with McPherson to obtain supplies, and he recalled reading one of her letters to her brother while he was in command of the prison camp. McPherson was killed July 22, 1864, in the Battle of Atlanta.

Letitia's uncle's "son Benjamin" was the third Benjamin born to Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney. The first lived nine years. The second only 8 days. The third is referred to as "Benjamin 2nd" in family records, and was born at Burleigh on 4 November 1846. He married Virgina Carraway, and became a physician in Bonham, Texas.

Letitia's "brother John" was John Davis Dabney—see Emily Danton's footnote 10. Because of Dr. John Davis Dabney's experience with yellow fever—indeed, he had had it himself at one point—he was sent by the Army to Cuba during the Spanish-American War to help with the yellow fever problem there, but he fell ill and ended up not being of much help to the Army.

Letitia's sister Martha Chamberlayne Dabney [October(?) 1841 – 21 July 1888] moved to Santa Rosa, California, near her sister Elizabeth Porter, and became a respected teacher and Secretary of the Santa Rosa Teacher Association. Santa Rosa was considered a Confederate town during and even more so after the Civil War, full of C.S.A. veterans and citizens. Martha never married. She was named after father's only sister, Martha Burwell Dabney, who had married Dr. Lewis Chamberlayne. In 1888, Martha contracted cancer and went to San Francisco for an operation. She was given chloroform prior to the surgery and never regained consciousness. One of her pallbearers was Judge J. G. Pressley, commanding officer of the 25th South Carolina Infantry during the Civil War. Presiding at her funeral was Rev. Dr. J. Avery Shepherd, who had given the benediction at the opening of the 1st Confederate Congress in 1861, and who was present at the inauguration of Jefferson Davis as President of the Confederate States of America.

Dr. Moncure had a plantation "Woodburne" about 13 miles outside Raymond, Mississippi, not far from the "Burleigh" plantation of Letitia's uncle Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney. Dr. Moncure's wife was Coates Moncure, who was Letitia's aunt by marriage (Coates Moncure was a sister of Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney's wife Sophia Hill). A third sister—or half sister—was Olivia Campbell Smart, who was married to Dr. Smart. A half-brother was Dr. Campbell Smith. Dr. Smart owned the plantation "Auburn;" Dr. Smith's was "Midway." All were Virginians who immigrated at about the same time. A Moncure daughter, Agatha, married Letitia's oldest brother Frederick Yeamans Dabney. They lived in Crystal Springs, Mississippi, and still have descendants there.

Letitia's sister Mary (Mary Smith Dabney Ware) wrote three books on her travels around the world. In the final one, *A New World through Old Eyes* (Putnam, New York, 1923)," she appended *with Reminiscences from My Life*. Among other stories, Mary told of meeting her future husband (Lt. William Lynch Ware) as a wounded officer (wounded in both legs) that she was nursing at the Dabney home, and of going to Vicksburg after its fall, meeting with Generals Grant, Sherman, and McPherson, to get wagons, mules, and supplies to take back to Raymond. Lt. Ware, fighting again in eastern Mississippi, was shot in the chest. Mary journeyed to bring him back to Raymond, where she nursed him once again, and they were married during his convalescence. Their first child died at age one. About 6 years later, Lt. Ware died. One year after that, a second daughter died at age 6-1/2. Mary was left with one son, Sedley Ware, who became a professor at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. Mary Dabney Ware spent her final years

in Sewanee. She died in 1931. Letitia Dabney Miller lived with the Wares in Sewanee for some years.

Letitia had one other sister, not mentioned in the *Recollections*, Ann Robinson Dabney, known as "Nannie." She was named after her father's first wife (Ann Robinson), who had died (leaving no children). Nannie is buried in Live Oak Cemetery at Pass Christian, Mississippi.

Letitia's "Cousin Emmy" was Emmeline Dabney (1845-), a daughter of her uncle Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney. Emmeline married Maj. Benjamin H. Greene, who eventually became the US Surveyor General.

"Dry Grove" is about 10 miles south of Raymond, Mississippi, and is the nearest village to the Burleigh plantation of Thomas Smith Gregory Dabney.

Letitia's mother-in-law was Emily Donelson Van Dorn Miller (1827-aft 1908), youngest sister of Confederate Major-General Earl Van Dorn, and daughter of Judge Peter Aaron Van Dorn and Sophia Donelson Caffery of Port Gibson, Mississippi. (Peter was a native of New Jersey; and Sophia was a native of Tennessee.) Emily's "other son" mentioned in the *Recollections* was Earl Van Dorn Miller, a cotton planter and hunter in Raymond, Mississippi. Emily's Van Dorn heritage is given in a book by A. V. D. Honeyman, *The Van Doorn Family in Holland and America* ((Honeyman's Publishing House, Plainfield, NJ, 1909, reprinted in 1991), which includes much family information provided by Emily Miller. Letitia Miller named her only daughter (who transcribed these *Recollections*) after her mother-in-law.

Letitia's sister-in-law, "Fanny", was Frances Bowmar, wife of Letitia's brother Thomas Gregory Dabney (15 December 1844 - 5 March 1929). Fanny's father was Dr. Joseph H. D. Bowmar of Kentucky, who apparently never practiced medicine because of his early marriage to a wealthy plantation owner in Louisiana. Dr. Bowmar's memoirs are on file in the "Dabney, Thomas Gregory, Collection" at the University of Southern Mississippi, along with Dabney's memoirs, as well as a copy of Letitia's *Recollections*. Thomas Gregory Dabney enlisted in the 12th Mississippi Infantry at age 16 in March of 1861. He ended the Civil War a Major, and was captured at the Battle of Port Hudson, Loiusiana, late in the war, and was a prisoner at Ship Island. After the war, he was noted for construction of the system of levees along the Mississippi River.

"Tom Marshall" was Thomas Alexander Marshall (abt 1812-), a lawyer in Vicksburg, who was married (13 March 1844) to a different Letitia Miller (abt 1824-), a sister of William Trigg Miller (1814-abt 1847). All three were born in Kentucky. William Trigg Miller was married to Emily Van Dorn, and their son Thomas Marshall Miller (19 January 1847 – 31 August 1920) became Letitia Dabney Miller's husband. Thomas Marshall Miller was a lawyer in Vicksburg when he married Letitia on 11 April 1872; from 1886-1893 he was Attorney General of Mississippi. They moved to New Orleans in 1894. Thomas Marshall Miller died there in 1920.

Letitia describes the weaving, sewing, and knitting during the Civil War. Her cousin Sarah Dabney (4 November 1838 -) knitted hundreds of pairs of socks for Confederate

soldiers. In 1918, during World War I, her photograph appeared in the *New York Times*, showing her knitting one of 600 pairs of socks for soldiers overseas. [The photo is reproduced in *Women of the South in War Times* (1920).] During the first year of the Civil War, she married Lt. John Randolph Eggleston, who served aboard the ironclad *Merrimac* in the Confederate Navy. Sarah's father told of one attack the *Merrimac* made on the *USS Congress*: The *Merrimac* ran under the stern of the *Congress*, and Lt. Eggleston was ordered to "do his duty." He looked to the *Congress* and saw his former messmates "with whom he had had many a frolic, and whom he was now called upon inexorably to slay. He gave the word and they were in fragments; the ship was set on fire and burned to the water's edge with her dead and wounded. What a war!" Eggleston was also aboard the *Merrimac* during its famous battle with the ironclad *Monitor*; see Captain Eggleston's Narrative of the Battle of the Merrimac for his full description.