

MEMOIRS OF A BUSY LIFE BY JAMES RYDER RANDALL

Being Reminiscences Of The Author Of "Maryland My Maryland."

THE AUTHOR OF "MARYLAND, MY MARYLAND"

This is the fourth of a series of reminiscent articles by James R. Randall, author of the Maryland State song. The fifth will appear in next Sunday's SUN.

My life in New Orleans two years before the war between the States was probably the most romantic and, in a worldly sense, the happiest of my existence. Emerging from the Florida wilderness, and entering the best social life of the Paris of America created a wondrous change in my career.

Except in the matter of health, all of my faculties were wrought up to exaltation within their limitations. Especially was this true of the poetic gift. The clerical work in the shipbroker's office became more and more distasteful. The conversion of foreign currency into our Federal money was very apt to be interrupted by poetry which possessed me like a spirit not to be denied utterance. If I ever publish a volume the reader will be surprised at the quality and variety of the sentimental and amatory themes. I had almost at a leap

my strategy I did not hesitate for a moment to put it there.

But the noblest and most genuinely gifted of the editors was Donelson C. Jenkins, who chiefly conducted the literary department and to whom I owe much of the success I had in the way of encouraging counsel. He was then a bachelor. His mind was philosophical and he was thoroughly equipped all around in literature. His serious disposition did not court or attract familiarity, but I felt a mysterious affection for him and he, after his own fashion, returned it fervently. We even roomed in the same dwelling and had many a nocturnal symposium.

When the city was captured we parted. I went out with General Lovell and his force. Jenkins vanished. Of all the Delta people he is the only survivor. I met him two years ago in Los Angeles. He was happily married and a father. He was not greatly changed in appearance, and was as

but his practically did not turn to clerical drudgery.

He had come at the invitation of a rich uncle, a cotton factor, and after a trial at the deck, summarily abandoned that kind of business and, being a born newspaper man and a stenographer, he easily procured a good position on the staff of a daily journal. We roomed together and we visited in couples. He got theatre and opera tickets, sharing them with me, and in that way I saw and heard most of the best dramas and musical masterpieces.

There was a family which we were specially pleased to cultivate, and there was reciprocal agreeability. The head of the family was a widow, about 45 years old, and around her were her 13 children, six males and seven females, their ages ranging from 25 to 8. They were all devout Catholics. The eldest daughter was not more than 25, but she was evidently predestined for the cloister. She had a classic and ethereal beauty, but of such a character as daunted any man from lovemaking. The other grown girls were handsome and evidently not averse to marrying; but when the war had desolated this admirable shrine only one wedded and soon died. The rest joined religious sisterhoods all over the world and not one now survives.

The eldest son was to use one of John Temple Graves' flamboyant rhetorical phrases, as "handsome as a Greek god. He was mortally wounded at Gettysburg and died on the way to Williamsburg in Lee's retirement from Maryland. Another, youngster and very comely, was killed in battle. Another son died in a military hospital; a fourth was drowned after the war. It is one of the dark and inexplicable mysteries of life, only solved by the way of the cross and Christ's summons to follow Him from the Mount of Olives to Calvary, that we can understand how it happens that a saintly woman like Madame Freret had to endure such calamities, including the loss of her whole estate. I am told that the younger boys, little saints when I knew them, turned out badly.

Twelve years after the war I met the dear, stricken old lady on the streets in New Orleans. I stopped her and sympathetically told her how much her sorrows had wrung my very soul. She raised her faded eyes to mine and said: "Ah, monsieur, I thought that my heart had turned to stone, but you see it is tender yet." Dear, good, holy madame, you are now in heaven and all your tears have been wiped away, and no doubt many of your children who preceded you to eternity are with you now! I do not even pray for your soul. It is surely safe, for you were a veritable martyr, and your everlasting home is with God.

THE FATEFUL WOMAN.

But when the Freret family was in all of its happy environment there came to them as a guest one of the most remarkable of young women, who had most to do, in some weird way, in inducing me to go to the Pointe Coupee and there fulfill my destiny, so to speak, in writing "My Maryland."

This girl had been born of French parents in the Island of Guadeloupe, and when driven out settled at St. Louis, Mo. She had neither beauty, health nor any of the physical charms that ordinarily attract young men. If ever woman had marked unmistakably the sign of early death on her countenance, it was she. Yet she was an enchantress; nearly all men were at her feet.

She and Riordan appeared to have become engaged to be married. I will pause here and enter into no further details. Suffice it that Riordan was driven to Charleston, S. C., where he made a fortune as a newspaper proprietor and editor, married, became paralyzed and eventually died heartbroken in New York. He would have remarried in Charleston if his partner the wonderful Francis W. Dawson, had not been so imperious a nature. Had Riordan waited about one month Dawson would not have been in his way, for imprudently protecting the honor of a charge not related to him, he was assassinated.

Both of these men, whom I intimately knew and who had every reason to expect that I would have preceded them to the eternal land, have been dead for a considerable time, and I remain, like the Cardinal, though younger than he is, veraciously asserting that I feel as capable of work as I did 25 years ago, without a pain, ache or disease, in the possession of what seems perfect health and apparently destined to reach a great age—though that may be

A sorrow's crown of sorrow
In remembering happier things,
JAMES R. RANDALL.



JAMES R. RANDALL AS HE IS TODAY

become, as far as I could, the master of my art.

When importuned to have the book given in a permanent form to the world I said: "My nature is now so serious and my aims and objects so fixed in higher things that I may omit the love poems altogether." Then the old and young ladies present protested in chorus, ejaculating, "Oh, please do not! We cherish the patriotic and devotional lyrics; but we are impatient to read the love poems!"

Such is life. The eternal feminine persists in all bosoms and through all of the ages.

NEW ORLEANS JOURNALS.

The two morning papers were The Delta and True Delta.

Mr. Henry J. Leavy owned the former, and I drifted to him as if instinctively. He was a very handsome man, and, with a keen business intellect, had a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness. He was married to an excellent lady, a daughter of Judge Monroe, of Kentucky, and a happier mated pair I never knew. Their hospitable home was ever open to me, and gladly did I avail myself of such gracious, cordial, sincere association. He encouraged me in poetry and published all of the poems I sent him. He would have taken prose articles with the same alacrity, but at that time I had no aptitude for newspaper writing, never dreaming that when the stress came I was to be for more than a quarter of a century the editor of the Augusta (Ga.) Chronicle, fighting reconstruction, along with Alexander H. Stephens, Benjamin H. Hill and Herschel V. Johnson. When I made up my mind, in a later day, that my prose side had to be educated, and when as a husband and father bread had to be won, poetry was abandoned and rarely returned to. I had done my best in poetry—far beyond my sane expectations—and I grimly entered upon practicality and prose. The imaginative instinct remained, blossoming frequently into unrhymed prose.

Some time in the eighties of the last century I was secretary of Hon Joseph B. Brown, then a Georgia United States Senator. This gave me freedom of the Senate floor, and one day I met the Secretary of the Senate, one of the famous "fighting McCook brothers" on the Union side. I had just published "At Arlington"—one of the last of my productions of the kind. Ex-Union general as he was, McCook was extravagant in its praise. I said: "General, it is my intention to publish a book of my poems." To my amazement he replied sentimentally: "Don't you do it. You don't need it. If I could go down to posterity with 'My Maryland' in one hand and 'Arlington' in the other I would let everything else go!"

By some inadvertence THE SUN republished "At Arlington," after a fashion, but omitted the three final verses which are the glory—if it has any—of the poem. In my own opinion, it is the high-water mark of my poetry as a work of art, just as Father Lambert and Father Cronin, along with the distinguished Charles J. O'Malley, contend that, artistically, my "John Pelham" is at the head. But none of the general public will put "My Maryland" in the rear, because it has something in it, I suppose, defiant of all art.

SOME PERSONAL SKETCHES.

This is a digression, but it would come in as I went along. I will return to the Delta people. The editor-in-chief was Judge Alexander Walker, then an old man and considered a powerful political writer. He also edited an evening paper of his own and gave this curious reason: "There is so much to be said on all sides of a question that I am not always satisfied with what Walker says in the morning daily, and, if necessary, I want to grill him in my evening edition."

The all-round writer was Durant da Ponta, the most versatile and brilliant, if rather unscrupulous, genius I have ever encountered. He was encyclopedic in his information, and a pro of the first order. He was married, had two sons and was a thorough bohemian. Studying the official report of the first battle of Manassas, he wrote an elaborate sketch of that conflict which extorted the praise of General Beauregard himself.

The matter-of-fact Walker visited a wounded son in a Richmond hospital and subsequently went over the battlefield. Returning home and to the sanctum, when the editors were assembled, he spread Da Ponta's printed sketch on the table and said:

"In the course of this narrative, you (turning to the author) locate a house which was burned during the conflict. I can swear from personal inspection that no residence or structure of any kind was ever there."

delighted to see me as I was to look one more, for the last time, on him. May God bless him here and hereafter!

Walker died many years ago. Da Ponta through the Louisiana lottery made a fortune, built a palace on St. Charles avenue and about 10 years ago died of heart disease suddenly at Coronado Beach, Cal. His fortune departed when the lottery bubble burst, and one of the newly rich Hebrew brethren bought his house at the bargain counter, soon passed away himself, but left it to his widow.

AN ODE VENTURE.

Episodically I may mention that when the cornerstone of the Clay monument was to be laid with conspicuous pageantry a dedicatory ode was required.

John W. Overall, the editor of the True Delta, was a prolific versifier and was chosen as the poet of the occasion. The Delta folk, not fancying him overmuch, asked me to compose an ode in opposition and I did so. My production was circulated on the streets along with that of Overall. It was a creditable poem for a boy of 19 years and worth incorporating in any volume I may issue from the press. It very likely mortified Overall, much to the glee of his Delta rivals.

Overall, in some female scrape, shot and killed an actor and soon, when New Orleans was captured, vanished from the public view. I doubt if any of the younger generation ever heard of him, yet he had vast ambition for literary fame.

I could fill a very respectable volume with reminiscences of New Orleans in those youthful days, but must repress all desire to do so, only referring to such matters as may hasten, as it were, the object of these articles, as prescribed by the editor.

When I first reached New Orleans a college mate, Edgar L. d'Aquin, son of a rich retired merchant, called upon me at the broker's office. With the ardor of a French Creole he embraced me and the tears sprang to his eyes as he noticed my forlorn and emaciated condition. Instantly he carried me to his own elegant and comfortable home and made me his companion. The whole family—father, mother, numerous children of both sexes and nearly all ages—welcomed me as if I were one of their own and for six months cherished me as a son or brother.

Oh, those were halcyon days! There was one girl, the eldest girl, but still at school. She was lovely and charming beyond expression. I never had any amorous feeling at all in that direction, but night after night with the old folk and this lovely being, together with an uncle and a handsome female cousin, I played cards and kept away from the streets and dangerous temptations. In that way and other associations of a like nature and the sovereign protection of God I can truthfully say that I preserved throughout a rectitude of life which few men in the world, young or old, can credit themselves with as a personal record.

Of all that family now only one remains, the beautiful girl. She married a German of opulence, is a living resident in Frankfurt and has 13 widow children, mostly females. I have vainly endeavored to learn the fate of the rest, only knowing that my dear friend Edgar, newly married to his cousin, went to war as captain of artillery and was killed at the second battle of Manassas. Heaven rest his soul, for he was one of the kindest as well as the bravest of men and I have never found another friend like him when most needed.

A WARTIME INCIDENT.

Just when the war was imminent three of us, all Georgetown College boys and about the same age, walked laughingly up Rampart street. We paused at a soda fountain to refresh ourselves. A young lady waited on us, and one of the party complained that his beverage was not sweet enough. Another jokingly said: "Mademoiselle, just stir that fellow's glass with your dainty finger; that will sweeten it."

The three joyous youngsters were Leopold Armand, John Laurans and James R. Randall. As colonel of a Louisiana regiment Armand was killed at the battle of Mansfield. At Shiloh John Laurans fell dead, the bullet that slew him passing through letters from me and his wife into his faithful heart. He had been married to his only love a few months before. He sacrificed for his country everything dearest in life, and I have never ceased praying for the repose of his soul.

In the first year of my residence at New Orleans there arrived in the city, much to my delight, a young man of my age—about 20—B. R. Riordan, of Washington, who had been a devoted chum of mine at Georgetown College. Never were two young men more differently constituted and yet who fitted in with each other so harmoniously. He was highly practical, although at college he wrote some respectable verses,